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NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Policy & Performance Improvement Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Monday, 13 June 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor R White (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P Rainbow (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor L Brailsford, Councillor L Brazier, Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor S Carlton, Councillor M Cope, Councillor D Cumberlidge, Councillor Mrs L Dales, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor Mrs L Hurst, Councillor N Mison and Councillor T Wildgust (substitute).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Mrs E Davis (Committee Member), Councillor P Harris (Committee Member) and Councillor J Kellas (Committee Member)

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

2 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

The Chairman advised that the proceedings were being audio recorded and live streamed by the Council.

3 INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee, setting out the Committee's remit and purpose. She advised that the Committee would work alongside the Cabinet to support the decision making process. She also noted that the Committee could review and feed into the design of Council strategies and policies.

4 APPOINTMENT OF POLICY & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO:

AGREED that the following Members be appointed to the Tenant Engagement Board and the Planning Policy Board:

Tenant Engagement Board

Councillors: Lee Brazier; Simon Haynes; and Penny Rainbow.

Planning Policy Board

Councillors: Lydia Hurst; Penny Rainbow; and Ronnie White.

5 PRESENTATION - EVENING ECONOMY STRATEGY

The Committee considered the presentation jointly provided by the Business Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy and the Economic Growth Officer which sought to advise Members as to the draft findings of the survey undertaken to formulate the Evening & Night Time Economy Strategy.

Members were provided with an executive summary as to the purpose of the survey and what the specific aims were, together with how this was undertaken and who was consulted. The survey focussed on four specific towns within the district, those being: Newark; Southwell; Ollerton; and Edwinstowe with the findings being provided by location. In addition to the responses to the questions asked within the survey, further information was gathered and highlighted for consideration. Four separate visions for success had been developed together with recommendations as to how this may be achieved.

In considering the presentation it was noted that in order to visit the named towns the use of a car was generally required with a suggestion being made that a working group be established to look at issues with public transport. It was also noted that late night bus services were being decreased and whether it was possible for some sort of subsidy to be made available. The Business Manager noted the comments and advised that the issue would be considered by the Night Time Economy Strategy Group.

In relation to the reported CCTV 'blind-spots' in the Newark Market Place, the Business Manager advised that Newark Town Council had been involved with the survey and that those specific issues would be discussed when the details of the survey were considered.

It was noted that a number of the proposals appeared to be reliant on private businesses establishing new ventures which was not without risk. The Business Manager advised that work was ongoing as to how people could be incentivised to set-up in the area, noting that the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy would form part of that consideration. It was also noted that from meetings held with existing businesses, there had been talk about the possibility of creating Business Improvement Areas.

Noting that the proposals would have cost and resource implications, Members queried whether any additional funding had been identified. The Business Manager advised that it would take a number of years to develop the Strategy, noting that funding and resource may be available from the Shared Prosperity Fund; Growth Bid Budgets; and other public sector partners.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Newark & Sherwood Evening and Night Time Economy Strategy be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

6 NEWARK & SHERWOOD COMMUNITY LOTTERY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager which sought to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Newark & Sherwood Community Lottery since its launch in May 2021.

The report set out the impact of the scheme since its launch, providing information as to the number of 'good causes' registered with the lottery who were receiving financial support through ticket sales. It was also reported that regular marketing and promotion of the lottery was undertaken together with the number of supporters purchasing tickets each week. A sum of £33,134.40 had been generated in the first year of operation. It was proposed that an annual report would be presented to the Committee to ensure Members were informed of the positive contribution the lottery made to the voluntary and community sector organisations within the District.

In considering the report Members queried how the lottery was promoted. In response they were advised that it was done through a combination of social media posts and targeted information to community groups. It was also promoted by Gatherwell (the external provider of the lottery platform) through their national promotional programme.

Members were informed that it was free for an organisation to join the scheme and that there was no requirement that they be a charity. They would need to provide certain information for verification and validation by the Council.

In acknowledging the success of the scheme, Members queried whether it was possible to be provided with information as to the actual benefits experienced by the participating organisations. It was agreed that this would be included in future update reports.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

7 PRESENTATION - REVIEW OF EMPTY HOMES STANDARD PILOT

The Committee considered the presentation given by the Business Manager – Housing & Estates in relation to the Empty Homes Pilot Review and the recommendations arising therefrom.

The presentation provided Members with information as to the process followed when the Council let a home to a tenant and that the standard of a property when re-let had been identified as an area for review. It was noted that the average annual void cost per property was £1,300.00 and a summary of customer satisfaction was reported in relation to tenants who had experienced the Council's moving in services.

Details of the six month pilot were provided which included: decoration/condition as part of empty home standard (property centred); and a 'starting well' fund to provide assistance based on the new tenants needs (tenant centred) with tenants being asked as to their satisfaction with the scheme which led to an increase of 98% in March 2022 compared to March 2021 which was 93%.

In considering the presentation Members noted that the funding did not cover issues relating to accessibility. The Business Manager advised that such works were paid for from an alternative fund.

In relation to the purchase of such things as white goods and carpets, the Business Manager advised that the Council dealt with local suppliers. The tenant would chose the item or carpet they wanted and the Council would pay the agreed supplier direct. She added that if the tenant required funds to carry out decorating, they would be provided with a voucher for Wilkos. She also advised that the Council rarely decorated a property but rather prepared it ready for a tenant to decorate themselves.

In response to whether a property was left in a bad state of repair, the Business Manager advised that a recharge would be raised against the tenant. Should it not be known where the tenant had gone, details would be kept on file should they return to the area and wish to let a Council property again.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet be recommended to:

- (a) adopt the decoration preparation and starting well fund as part of the Empty Homes standard; and
- (b) approve additional funding of £275,000 being transferred to base budgets to facilitate the service improvement from the Efficiency Savings reserve.

8 COUNCIL'S ANNUAL BUDGET 2023/24 OVERALL CORPORATE BUDGET STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services which set out, for Members consideration, the General Fund and HRA Budget Strategy for 2023/24.

It was reported that following the change of governance arrangements the Council's Section 151 Officer was required to present a report on the overall budget strategy for the forthcoming financial year to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee for consideration prior them making recommendations to Cabinet. The report contained information as to the budget proposals and strategy, the budgeting assumptions, the risks in preparation of the budget and the budget timetable. It was also reported that the budget would be predicated on the priorities within the Community Plan and that resource allocation would be linked to spending priorities.

In considering the report Members raised a number of issues, querying how the rising cost of fuel was being managed. The Director – Resources/s151 Officer advised that assumptions had been made in relation to inflation levels as part of the process of setting the budget. The proposed final budgets would be presented to Committee in December for consideration.

In response to whether the Government's recent announcement in relation to Right to Buy had been factored into the budgets, the Business Manager advised that budget implications would be included in reports to the September meeting of the Committee.

In relation to a query about the level of staff vacancy provision being set at 5% both the Director – Resources/s151 Officer and the Business Manager provided a detailed response, advising that the 5% provision would potentially lessen the impact on Council Tax.

The Business Manager also advised that the expected reforms to the financial settlement from the Government had remained unchanged since 'brexit'. The settlement itself remained unchanged with only inflation being applied. The s151 Officer advised that the Council were lobbying the Government for a 3 year settlement.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the overall General Fund and HRA budget strategy be noted and recommended to Cabinet for approval;
- (b) the consultation process with Members be noted;
- (c) budget officers continued to work on the assessment of various budget proposals affecting services for consideration in setting the Council's budget; and
- (d) budget managers work with finance officers in identifying further efficiency savings, increasing income from fees and charges where appropriate and identify new sources of income.

9 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER 4 2021/22

The Committee considered the report presented by the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to present to Members the Quarter 4 Community Plan Performance Report (January – March 2022). Members were asked to review the Community Plan Performance Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The report set out that performance reporting, going forward, would now be used as a tool for change with the information contained having been sourced by analysing data and progress against key activities, as well as district statistics, customer feedback and workforce information.

In considering the report Members thanked Officers for the new style of performance reporting. They raised a number of queries in relation to the reduction in the percentage of unemployment, how issues surrounding tourism were being addresses and how the maintenance of planted trees could be progressed. The Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that he would consult with the relevant business units and provide responses to the questions both as an attachment to the minutes and as a written response to Members.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Community Plan Performance report be noted.

10 REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE'S FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan of the Executive for the period May to August 2022 with it being noted that Committee may wish to establish a Working Group in November 2022 to review the Council's Promotion of Tourism.

AGREED that the Forward Plan of the Executive be noted.

11 REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE'S RECENT DECISIONS

AGREED that the Executive's recent decisions from the Cabinet meeting held on 7 June 2022 be noted.

12 MEMBERS ICT PROVISION - REQUEST FOR WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form proposed by Councillor S Haynes and seconded by Councillor N Mison requesting the establishment of a Working Group to review the Council's current Digital Strategy, specifically in relation to what options would be possible to assist Members to maximise their efficiency through being digitally connected.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) approval be given to the establishment of a Member Digital Tools Working Group;
- (b) Councillor S Haynes to be appointed as Chairman of the Working Group;
- (c) Councillors M. Cope, L Dales and N Mison be considered as members of the Working Group; and
- (d) following agreement to establish the Working Group, a Review Initiation Document would be produced and the opportunity to be part of the Working Group would be made available to all Members of the Council.

13 ASB - REQUEST FOR WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form proposed by Councillor R White and seconded by Councillor P Rainbow requesting the establishment of a Working Group to consider issues surrounding Anti-Social Behaviour.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) approval be given to the establishment of an ASB Working Group;
- (b) Councillor R White to be appointed as Chairman of the Working Group;

- (c) Councillors L Brazier, B Brooks, S Carlton, L Hurst and P Rainbow be considered as members of the Working Group; and
- (d) following agreement to establish the Working Group, a Review Initiation Document would be produced and the opportunity to be part of the Working Group would be made available to all Members of the Council.

14 RESOLVE TO INVITE EXTERNAL PARTICIPANTS TO NEXT MEETING

AGREED (unanimously) that the Police & Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire and Acting Inspector Matthew Ward be invited to the next meeting of the Committee.

15 SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

AGREED that

- (a) the following items be included on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Committee:

Report from Chairman of Members' ICT Provision Working Group
Report from Chairman of ASB Working Group
Presentation by Police & Crime Commissioner and Acting Inspector, Matt Ward (ASB specific)
Presentation on Residents Survey 2020
Report on Community Safety Partnership
Topic Request Form for establishment of a Working Group to feed into a Customer Strategy
Report on Community Plan Performance – Quarter 1
Report on Financial Performance Reporting – Quarter 1
Report from Chairman of Tenant Engagement Board as to Role and Remit of Board

- (b) the following items be added to future meetings of the Committee:

Tenant Annual Report
Newark Towns Board Update
Review of Tourism
Playing Pitch Strategy
STAR Results (to be reviewed by Tenant Engagement Board)

Meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

Chairman

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POLICY & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

13 JUNE 2022

APPENDIX TO MINUTES

Response to question regarding the positive results on the unemployment data:

The service provided a response to show that we believe it is a combination of job density being higher (more vacancies than ever), a big reduction in 16-24 year olds has also been noted (into work and education after pandemic) and there has been also been a rise in self-employment. The Restart Scheme, Kick Start Scheme and DWP programmes are also proving successful at the moment.

Response to question regarding the museum and what we do to promote with one example being coach trips:

The service have responded to say that we offer bespoke packages to tourism group travel. Pre-COVID we had exhibited at the Group Travel Shows as part of our marketing drive and become part of the Visit England Explorers Road. Alongside that we deliver ongoing promotion through the economic growth and communications teams.

Response to question/suggestion received about a tree sponsorship scheme to empower residents to take ownership and look after a tree themselves:

The service have provided some assurances in terms of the planting programme and also will look into the idea in a bit more detail and if other local authorities have done anything similar.

- *Some of our trees planted as part of the Urban Tree Challenge have failed, which is to be expected with any large-scale planting schemes.*
- *We will be looking at the options and suitability of replacing them this autumn.*
- *The failed trees are mainly ‘whips’ which don’t require as much water as larger ‘standard’ trees which we have also planted this year and are doing well thanks to the team watering them regularly.*
- *These trees are planted in the autumn/winter when they are dormant so that when spring comes around they have an established root system to take them through the summer.*
- *Sometimes the failure is down to uncontrollable factors such as disease or other environmental factors.*

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