

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, 11 September 2023 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor M Pringle (Chair)
Councillor N Ross (Vice-Chair)

Councillor N Ross, Councillor A Amer, Councillor A Brazier, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor S Forde, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor M Shakeshaft, Councillor T Smith, Councillor T Thompson, Councillor T Wendels and Councillor N Allen

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor P Rainbow (Committee Member)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Brazier

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

The Chair advised that the proceedings were being recorded by the Council and that the meeting was being livestreamed and broadcast from the Civic Suite, Castle House.

19 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Agenda Item No. 13 – Topic Request Form (Support for Affordable Active Lifestyles)
Councillors: Forde, Freeman and Pringle together with Deborah Johnson, Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development declared an Other Registrable Interest as Directors of Active4Today.

20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21 INCREASE IN FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS - 2024/2025

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development which sought to notify Members of the increase in frequency in meetings of the Committee for the 2024/2025 municipal year, commencing May 2024.

The report outlined the rationale for the increase, which was to ensure the effective transaction of Council business. The report also noted that a special meeting of the Committee had been convened on 25 September to consider the draft Community Plan and that an additional meeting had been convened on 23 October 2023.

AGREED (unanimously) that the increase in the frequency of meetings of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee commencing in May 2024 be noted.

22 RESETTLEMENT UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Assistant Business Manager – Housing & Estate Management which sought to update Members on the resettlement programmes operated by the Council.

The report set out that the schemes currently available in the UK, providing a description of each of them at paragraph 1.4 of the report. Further details of the schemes operated by the Council were provided. This included how long a family or individual could remain in the UK, the type of accommodation they were provided with together with a note of the number of households and individuals included under each one. It was reported that support was available for local authorities to meet additional housing needs related to resettlement and homelessness and that the Council had submitted a successful funding application. The funding supported the purchase of 14 homes to assist with alleviation of housing pressures, details of which were provided in paragraphs 2.10 and 2.11 of the report.

In acknowledging the work carried out by the Council, as detailed in the report, a Member commented that there could be further pressures in the future should the Council be required to provide accommodation for asylum seekers. In response, the Assistant Business Manager advised that there was not currently any specific request in relation to this but would keep Members updated should this change.

In response to what the process was for transitioning families into the community should they be remaining in the UK for a period of time, the Assistant Business Manager provided a brief outline of the integration process to introduce families to the existing community.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress made in the delivery, development and monitoring of all the Resettlement Programmes be noted and welcomed.

Councillor Amer entered the meeting during the above item.

23 HOUSING COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE REPORTS - Q4 2022/23 & Q1 2023/24

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which sought to provide Members with an update of the Housing Compliance Assurance overview and actions arising at the end of Q4 and Q1 (31 December 2022 to 30 June 2023).

The report focussed on exceptions performance that were outside the Council's target parameters. The performances were related to the Council's legal and regulatory landlord responsibilities for 27 building safety measures, including fire protection, gas, asbestos, electrical and water. The appendices to the report provided the full details together with associated commentary of the performance indicators. Paragraph 2 of the report provided information on the performance exceptions in relation to: Gas

Servicing; Oil Servicing; and EICR Certifications less than 5 years old, with all three receiving an amber rating – within 10% of target.

In considering the report, a Member queried what the average time was to complete the enforcement process to gain access to a property to carry out legal and regulatory safety measures e.g. gas servicing. The Business Manager advised that there was a back log in the Courts and that it could take up to 3 or 4 months, adding that the Courts did not consider cases chronologically. It was noted that attempts to gain access to the property continued throughout the enforcement process with the Council seeking to mitigate the risks during that time.

A Member also queried what liability the Council had should a problem arise before access could be gained. In response, the Business Manager advised that the Courts would take into account the length of time and the process followed in trying to gain access. Members also requested information as to what the underlying cost was to the Council of enforcement action.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the compliance performance for the end of the financial year be noted;
- b) the items for action and changes for the next financial years reporting be noted; and
- c) the underlying cost to the Council of enforcement action be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

24 PROPERTY REPAIR AND LETTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNCIL OWNED HOMES

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Services which set out the process of repairing and allocating the Council's rented housing and temporary accommodation, the performance and satisfaction with the services and sought recommendations for further improvements and investigation.

The report provided Members with details of the work undertaken by the team who were dedicated to the repair of properties. Details of the 'relet journey' were reported together with statistical information as to the Council's performance. The report also provided information as to tenant scrutiny and the lettings standards for temporary accommodation. Details of the development of an "Empty Homes Improvement Plan" were provided, which would include temporary accommodation.

In considering the report, a Member queried as to why the Starting Well Fund had a take-up of less than 50%. In response, Officers advised that not all tenants required the help and that it was only available to new lettings.

In response to the proposed support with the maintenance of gardens and trees, Members were advised that this was a draft proposal and would be funded out of savings realised from bringing Housing Services back in-house. Further details would be provided when the pilot initiative had been finalised. A Member requested that

consideration be given to tenants who could not afford to carry out works themselves but were not necessarily in receipt of benefits.

In relation to a query raised about how lessons were learned from complaints made by tenants, Members were advised that complaints were reported to the Tenant Engagement Board for consideration and what could be learned from them, were there any themes emerging, what actually happened. Officers also considered complaints in detail on a monthly basis with a view to how changes could be implemented to improve service provision. These were then reported back to tenants in the annual tenants' report.

The Chair requested that following submission of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures to the Regulator of Social Housing, a report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee, showing the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey. The report also to include any changes to the Home Standard brought about by the current consultation.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee endorse the following recommendations:

- a) there are discussions in the housing sector about furniture poverty and the value of carpeting homes as part of the landlord's lettable standard. It is proposed to take this initiative to the Local Influence Networks to explore the benefits and challenges of providing floor coverings in all new lettings;
- b) recognition that there is no simplified version of the Fit to Let standard currently available to applicants and tenants to ensure we do what we say we will. This Committee supports a request to involve tenants to design a simplified Fit to Let standard to hold the service to account and promote feedback inc. complaints;
- c) to support the introduction of a satisfaction measure for quality of temporary accommodation from Qtr. 3 2023-24;
- d) to support the develop of a policy to pilot the Council assisting tenants with maintaining trees within their gardens using funds available from efficiency savings; and
- e) these align to the Council's objective of creating more and better-quality homes through our roles as landlord, developer and planning authority.

25 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - REVENUE & CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2024 AS AT 30 JUNE 2023

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services which sought to provide Members the forecast outturn position for the 2023/24 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets. The report also highlighted performance against the

approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income; reported on major variances from planned budget performance; and reported on variations to the Capital Programme as in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The accounts showed an unfavourable variance of £0.7463 on service budgets with an overall unfavourable variance of £0.020m which would be met from the General Fund Reserve. The variances were broken down in the report.

In considering the report and noting the unfavourable variances, a Member queried whether this was of concern. The Business Manager advised that it was usual for this time in the financial year. In response to the low percentage level of spend on Projected Capital Outturn, the Business Manager advised that Finance Officers continued to liaise with Project Managers in order to reflect the position as accurately as possible.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the General Fund projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.130m be noted;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.131m to the Major Repairs Reserve be noted;
- c) the variations to the Capital Programme at Appendix C be noted;
- d) the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £109.711m be noted; and
- e) the Prudential Indicators at Appendix F be noted.

26 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (AUGUST 2023 TO NOVEMBER 2023)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period August to November 2023.

27 27 JUNE 2023 - MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 27 June 2023.

28 11 JULY 2023 - MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 11 July 2023 be noted; and
- b) in relation to Cabinet Minute No. 11 – Commercial Plan Update a report be presented to a future meeting of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee providing an update as to the performance of the Commercial Strategy.

29 SUPPORT FOR AFFORDABLE ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form proposed by Councillor P Peacock and seconded by Councillor L Brazier requesting the establishment of a Working Group to reassess how the Council are supporting their communities and helping them to identify ways in which to remain active.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) approval be given for the establishment of an Affordable Active Lifestyles Working Group;
- b) Councillor C Brooks be appointed as Chair of the Working Group;
- c) Councillors: A Brazier; R Jackson; K Roberts; and T Thompson 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.

30 SHARING INFORMATION WITH MEMBERS

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form proposed by Councillor J Kellas and seconded by Councillor R Jackson requesting the establishment of a Working Group to consider what information can be shared with Ward Members and in what format and the frequency of sharing the information. This is to ensure that Ward Members are kept informed of what was happening in their areas so that they may answer questions when asked.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) approval be given for the establishment of an Information Sharing with Elected Members Working Group;
- b) Councillor J Kellas be appointed as Chair of the Working Group;
- c) Councillors: N Allen; R Jackson; M Shakeshaft; and T Smith 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.

31 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

NOTED the provisional Agenda items for future meetings.

Meeting closed at 7.15 pm.

Chairman