

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, 2 September 2024 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor A Brazier, Councillor P Farmer (substitute), Councillor A Freeman, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor M Shakeshaft and Councillor T Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Brazier, Councillor I Brown and Councillor P Taylor

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor S Forde, Councillor R Jackson and Councillor T Wendels

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

The Chair advised that the meeting was being recorded and live streamed from Castle House.

30 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

31 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JULY 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 22 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2025 AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Financial Services which provided Members with the forecast position for the 2024/25 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets. The report also provided Members with information as to the performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income and on major variances from planned budget performance, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Details were provided as to the current position (as at 30 June 2024) variances. Table 1 showed an unfavourable variance against the revised budget of £0.074m on service budgets, with an overall favourable variance of £0.145m that would require transferring to the General Fund reserve. Table 2 provided an overview of projected Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn for 2024/25 with an unfavourable variance on the net cost of HRA Services against the revised budget of £0.025m and a reduce transfer to the Major Repairs Reserve of £0.048m. Details of the overview of the Projected Capital Outturn 2024/25 were also provided.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.145m be noted;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.048m to the Major Repairs Reserve be noted; and
- c) the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £63.232m be noted.

33 HOUSING COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE REPORT 2024/25 - Q1

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which sought to provide Members with the performance position as of 30 June 2024 (Q1). The information was presented in a new format which had regard to compliance including actions to rectify any identified issues. The focus of the report was on exceptions performance, which were outside of the council's target parameters. Full details of the performance indicators, along with associated commentary, were included at Appendix 1 to the report. In presenting the report, the Business Manager advised that since it had been written, there had been an improvement in the compliance levels for gas and oil servicing and also the EICR certifications less than five years old.

In considering the report, Members queried as to the reason for the spike in properties without a gas safety certificate and how this had been rectified. In response, the Business Manager advised that the service was provided by an outside contractor who had failed to adhere to the contract terms and conditions. These issues had now been resolved. In relation to whether 100% compliance could be reached, she advised that despite the best efforts of the Council and the contractors, some tenants would not engage and that this resulted in the Council having to commence legal proceedings to gain access to their property.

In noting the changes to the red, amber and green (RAG) ratings, a Member queried whether this had the potential to drive down performance. The Business Manager advised that the changes had been made following comment received from the Regulator that the Council's target setting was too wide. She added that performance was constantly monitored with any necessary action being taken accordingly.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note:

- a) the exceptions to performance of the housing service compliance functions; and
- b) the new format for performance for Quarter 1, 2024/2025 onwards.

34 RESIDENT PANEL REFRESH

The Committee considered the joint report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Manager and the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Resident Panel Refresh. The report provided Members with the background to the establishment of the Panel in 2018 together with the number of residents involved as of December 2023. Details of the proposed refresh were reported which was separated into 5 key elements: data cleanse; youth engagement; demographic profile; tailored consultation; and long-term engagement with commentary provided for each of the elements.

In considering the report Members noted the number of residents involved and the demographic thereof. They queried as to what the target number of residents was to ensure that the Panel was representative of the district. The Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that it would be between 1000 and 1200. In response to the number of residents who participated in consultations, the Officer advised that tracking engagement would be a tool to determine the number of active participants and would enable targeted consultations in the future. She advised that knowing the demographic of existing Panel members would allow a more targeted approach to engage with under-represented groups.

Members noted and commented that they would wish to understand the reason for the 16–24-year-olds age group having no representation on the Panel. It was suggested that consideration be given as to how Panel members might be energised to respond when they received communication from the Council. Members requested that the next update report include statistical information as to the number of Panel members and how this might be increased.

AGREED that the progress of the Resident Panel Refresh be noted.

35 GREEN REWARDS PROGRAMME - UPDATE

The Committee considered the joint report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Manager and the Transformation Officer which sought to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Green Rewards Programme. The report set out the background to the development of the App and how it is used as a tool by local authorities to encourage residents to undertake environmentally friendly activities and to reduce their carbon footprint. The implementation of the App assists with the delivery of the Council's climate change ambitions as outlined in the Community Plan. The report provided details of how the App worked and how winning participants were chosen monthly and the reward received. It was reported that there were currently 611 members, an increase of 5.4% since April 2024, the largest growth in the county.

In considering the report a Member noted that use of an App was generally done using a smartphone and queried as to the usage rate for the older generation. The Transformation & Service Improvement Manager advised that demographical information was not collected but that he would raise the point with the external provider. A Member suggested that consideration be given to emphasising the

secondary benefits of the Green Rewards Programme by an individual going to the park or shopping locally and that these habits help to save carbon emissions. It was also suggested that some of the activities in the App be revised in an attempt to keep it 'fresh'. Adding to this it was also suggested that certain activities be promoted on a monthly basis and that completion would benefit from double points being awarded.

In noting that a video had been recorded and streamed, a Member suggested that the timing of this in relation to people signing up to the App be reviewed as this would give an indication of whether the Council's promotion of the scheme was effective. It was also suggested that there may be possible benefits to corporate sponsorship thereby promoting a company's green credentials and that work be carried out with ambassadors, individuals who use the App and who could promote a healthy lifestyle.

In closing the debate, the Chair asked that elected Members be approached to sign-up. He also suggested that there be a targeted approach to younger ambassadors as they had the potential to make longer term positive changes.

AGREED that the progress of the Green Rewards Programme be noted.

36 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER 1

The Committee considered the report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which presented to Members the Quarter 1 Community Plan Performance Report (April to June 2024). Members were asked to review the Community Plan Performance Report attached as Appendix 1 together with the Compliance Report attached as Appendix 2. Members were appreciative of the new format and the informative way information was presented.

In considering the report a Member noted the increase in the average time to re-let a Council property from the same quarter the previous year. In response, Members were advised that there had been a resource issue in the Voids Team and that work was ongoing to recruit additional staff.

Members also noted the spike in fly-tipping and whether the reason for this was known. They were advised that it was ultimately a trend in behaviour. Enforcement Officers could not cover the whole district but if identified, fly tippers were actively punished. The number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued was high and the enforcement officers were very active. Members noted that much of the fly-tipping was done by individuals who did not care, adding that it was shameful and there was no excuse for such behaviour. In referring to the specific quarterly indicator for the number of positive outcomes resulting from CCTV intervention, Members requested that statistics in relation to fly-tipping be included in the report in a year's time.

AGREED that the Community Plan Performance Report Q1 be noted.

37 PRESENTATION FROM PORTFOLIO HOLDER - PUBLIC PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Committee considered the presentation delivered by Councillor Paul Taylor, the Portfolio Holder – Public Protection & Community Relations. Detailed within the presentation were a number of actions taken which fell within his remit, including some of the following: Public Protection - Food Safety inspections and Permitted Installation inspections; a full review of CCTV provision; increased resource within Community Safety and Private Sector Housing Teams; completion of Safer Streets 4 and commencement of Safer Streets 5; ASB and actions taken; establishment of a new sanctuary scheme; involvement in the emergency and recovery response for Storm Babet and Storm Henk following which involvement in the Multi Agency Flood Partnership; lighting installed at St. Mary's Church; domestic abuse housing alliance accreditation process; safety challenge event; review and implementation of PSPO; Community Development – Community Grant Scheme; Community Lottery; community group support; humanitarian assistance and responses; engagement with under-represented groups. Also included were the proposed actions to be taken during 2024/2025.

In opening his presentation, Councillor Taylor sought to clarify for Members the difference between Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and criminal offence, by reading out the definition for both, adding that the Police were responsible for enforcement in relation to criminal behaviour and that the Council enforced actions to prevent ASB.

In considering the presentation, Members raised a number of issues, many of which focussed on the review undertaken of CCTV, which included camera locations, the age, make and model of the cameras and the business case for the in-house CCTV monitoring. One of the issues raised was in relation to why there was an apparent disproportionate provision of CCTV in Newark compared to other areas in the district, with Ollerton being cited. The Portfolio Holder advised that there was an identified problem in Newark but would consider other areas if there were issues. He asked Members to encourage all residents to report any incidents of ASB so that behavioural patterns could be identified.

In relation to the control room for CCTV monitoring coming back in-house, a Member queried how this would work in practical terms and whether it would be 24 hours per day monitoring with Fixed Penalty Notices being issued when incidents were taking place. The Portfolio Holder advised that it would be newer more modern equipment that was to be monitored 24 hours per day. The Council's ASB Officers would not be on duty for the same duration but the Police would be and therefore incidents could be referred to them. The Member queried the benefit of bringing the control room back in-house as there would be no additional Police resource to react to reports of ASB therefore the location of the control room would be irrelevant.

A Member queried whether the location of the cameras was dependent on the reporting of incidents, noting that Newark and Balderton had better coverage than any other areas in the district. The Portfolio Holder advised that choosing the location for the cameras was done scientifically. He added that the majority of the funding was from grants which with a set number of criteria, adding that some issues were beyond the Council's control.

In noting the proposal to bring the control room back in-house, a Member queried as to whether the proposed new operation would be better as the current partnership arrangement offered an economy of scale. The Portfolio Holder stated that it would be better in-house and that the CCTV monitoring operatives would know the area better rather than being stationed at the Police HQ. In response the Member queried as to the evidence for that statement. The Portfolio Holder advised that notice to quit the agreement had already been given and that it was known that the current equipment would no longer be supported. The new equipment would be able to offer the Police with a better and quicker resource when they wished to view footage as they would be able to input filters into the search facility rather than trawling through hours of footage as was the case currently. The Member also queried what had been done to maintain the current provision. The Portfolio Holder stated that as it was known that new equipment needed to be purchased then there had been no discussions in relation to maintaining the existing provision.

In referring to the flooding events following Storms Babet and Henk, a Member queried what the embedding of internal improvements had been. The Portfolio Holder advised that there had been a lack of staff able to respond to certain issues. Resource provision had been increased following a review of service provision. A meeting with the Mayor of the East Midlands Combined Authority was scheduled to discuss flooding responses. There had been an issue with partners not being proactive in their approach to flooding and work was ongoing to improve this. He noted that some work was at a national level, citing the Environment Agency. A review of how the Council communicated what was happening had also been undertaken.

In noting that Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) were the lead authority for flooding issues, a Member commented that whilst NSDC took on more responsibility, it needed to be made clear to residents where responsibility lay. The Portfolio Holder was in agreement with this and advised that this would be included in future communications. It was noted that NCC had recognised the efforts of NSDC in relation to flooding within the district.

In relation to ASB at Northgate, specifically the vandalising of charging points for Tesla vehicles, a Member asked whether anything could be done to help the company e.g. provision of surveillance. The Portfolio Holder advised he would speak with Officers about this matter.

In returning to the issue of bringing the monitoring of CCTV equipment back in-house, a Member stated that he would wish to see a full breakdown of the splitting of the existing partnership and the actual physical benefit of it being located in Newark, including the costs thereof as opposed to the partnership being unchanged. The Portfolio Holder advised that paper had already been considered at full Council and Cabinet but that a more detailed breakdown was being developed. He noted that not all the benefits were financial.

A Member queried whether the reporting of ASB incidents had the potential to shift the issue to other locations and that this may skew the data used to choose the location of cameras. The Portfolio Holder advised that urban areas typically had more cameras. He again urged everyone to report any incidents of ASB or criminality as until they were, they could not be counted in statistical information.

A Member noted that partnerships were beneficial for a number of reasons, citing: intelligence; skills and expertise sharing and that buying equipment in bulk with partners would result in a cost benefit. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the benefits of partnership working but that dissolving the partnership would allow NSDC to have better coverage for their district.

In closing the debate, the Chair commented that the Criminal Prosecution Service often let down residents and that ASB sometimes turned into criminal behaviour. He also commented that all Members had been affected by recent flooding events following reports from residents.

AGREED that Councillor Paul Taylor, Portfolio Holder – Public Protection & Community Relations be thanked for his attendance.

38 KIDDEY STONES - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee considered the verbal update of the Chair of the Kiddey Stones Working Group, Councillor Andy Freeman.

Councillor Freeman advised that the Working Group had met on 15 August 2024 to discuss the siting of the artwork known as the Kiddey Stones with a bespoke installation at the front of Castle House. He noted that the two key objectives within the remit of the Working Group were: whether the proposed installation aligned with the Council's Community Plan priorities; and the shaping of the public consultation. There had been discussions in both areas which had resulted in amendments to the background information which sat alongside the consultation. Agreement had also been reached that the consultation be circulated to all parish councils to enable district wide consultation. Consensus had been reached that the consultation would allow the public to offer their opinion in a fair and inclusive manner. He advised that the consultation process had been launched that morning via the Council's media channels, which had included the full detail of the proposal on the Council's website, a press release with the Newark Advertiser and Newark Radio. Discussions would continue with key stakeholder groups with the consultation being live until 30 September 2024. Following the ending of the consultation, the results would be collated and analysed by the Consultation & Engagement Lead Officer before presentation to Cabinet in December. He noted that there were no further meetings of the Working Group scheduled with the results of the consultation being reported to the November meeting of the Committee for consideration.

In considering the verbal update a Member of the Working Group commented that she would wish to view the results prior to them being reported to the full Committee. The Chair of the Working Group commented that all members of the Working Group were also members of the Committee and therefore an additional meeting was not required. In response to the suggestion that consultation also be circulated to the Residents Panel, the Transformation & Service Improvement Manager advised that this could be actioned.

AGREED that the verbal update by the Chair of the Kiddey Stones Working Group be noted.

39 DIGITAL STRATEGY - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee considered the verbal update of the Chair of the Review of the Digital Strategy Working Group, Councillor Neil Ross.

Councillor Ross advised that the first meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for 30 September. He commented that it would be useful to review the capability of ICT and digitisation borne from the pandemic and also to assess how artificial intelligence (AI) might benefit the Council. He noted that the work of the Information Sharing with Members Working Group was relevant and how this linked to customers. The Working Group would also look at governance issues; what media platforms were used for communicating with residents and the Council's current Document Retention Policy. The work would build on the 2021 strategy by undertaking the review.

AGREED that the verbal update by the Chair of the Review of the Digital Strategy Working Group be noted.

40 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2024)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period August to November 2024.

41 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY 2024

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23 July 2024.

42 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

AGREED that the provisional items for future Agendas be noted and that the following be brought to a future meeting of the Committee:

Attendant at Committee by Councillor Rowan Cozens – Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture & the Arts.
Tenant Engagement Strategy
Food Waste

Meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman