

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, 28 October 2024 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor N Allen, Councillor A Brazier, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor S Forde, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor S Michael (Substitute), Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor M Spoons and Councillor T Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Brazier, Councillor R Cozens, Councillor S Crosby,
Councillor S Haynes and Councillor R Holloway

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor T Wendels

43 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.

44 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

45 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 2 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

46 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Environmental Policy & Projects Officer which provided Members with progress of the Climate Emergency Strategy and associated Action Plan. The report set out the background to the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019 and the work undertaken since that time resulting in the Council's agreed target for carbon reduction and the development of the Action Plan to deliver the vision outlined in the Climate Emergency Strategy. Details were provided in relation to the initiatives which the Council were committed to which included: the Green Rewards App; Climate Awareness Training; Net Zero Accelerator Training Workshops; Solar PV Installation; Local Area Energy Plan; Energy Efficiency Improvements to Homes; and Electric Vehicle Charge Points. Paragraph 9 of the report provided detailed information as to the monitoring and measuring of the Council's carbon emissions and how this would assist in being accountable to residents. It also enabled identification of areas with high carbon emissions suitable for targeted action.

In considering the report, Members raised a number of queries in relation to; incentives for using alternative methods of travelling to work for staff; use of solar panels and battery storage on Council owned buildings; timeframe for the adoption of using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel; supply and planting of trees in the District; the Council's own energy consumption; engagement with landowners and farmers in relation to biodiversity and tree planning. Members were provided with the information as requested with a written response also being issued.

AGREED that the Annual Update on the progress of the Climate Emergency Strategy and associated Action Plan be noted.

47 TENANT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE - EMBEDDING THE TENANT VOICE

The Committee considered the report and presentation of Tenant Engagement Officers which provided Members with a progress report on tenant engagement methodology and practices together with new activities towards maximum compliance with the new consumer regulation regime.

The report provided Members with the background to the changes to tenant engagement, highlighting that the latest changes were as a result of the introduction of the new consumer standards. Paragraph 1.5 of the report set out the new regulatory framework, listing the grading descriptions for standards compliance. Paragraph 2 of the report provided details of the Council's performance around tenant engagement for 2023/24 in comparison to previous years. Details of the existing tenant engagement framework and the review undertaken were reported together with statistical information on the tenant engagement survey carried out. Details of how the tenant voice at the Council was to be re-engineered following the appointment of the Tenant Participation Advisory Services (TPAS) were reported in paragraphs 6 and 7.

In considering the report, Members raised a number of queries in relation to: the benefits of the 'getting to know you' visits; data collection of tenants who responded with repeat issues; proportion of housing stock in the Sherwood constituency; did tenants in the Sherwood constituency engage with the Council; benchmarking with other local authorities and their engagement with TPAS; recruitment of officers in order to comply with Awaab's Law; possible training session for Members on housing issues in order for them to assist their constituents; and analysis of the type of complaints. Members were provided with the information as requested with a written response also being issued.

AGREED that the following be noted:

- a) the responsibilities of the Council as a housing authority in relation to consumer regulation;
- b) progress and planned engagement with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service on creating a new tenant engagement structure;

- c) feedback from the tenant engagement survey to be used alongside tenant satisfaction measures performance and learning from complaints to inform the workplan for service improvement for the next 18 months;
- d) the way in which the activity in c) above fits in the programme of scrutiny for the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee;
- e) the results of the TPAS re-engineering project will be reported to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee in June 2025 to scrutinise the detailed action plan and plans for implementation; and
- f) the endorsement for approval by the Tenant Engagement Board and Cabinet.

48 RESIDENTS SURVEY TEMPERATURE CHECK - FINDINGS

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which provided Members with a summary of the findings of the Resident Survey Temperature Check.

The report set out the background to the district wide consultation for the 2022 Resident Survey with details of the number of responses and how these were gathered. It was reported that in July 2024 approval was given to undertake the temperature check with the aim of aligning the survey with the Local Government Association (LGA) project of 'Are You Being Served?'. Details of the approach taken were reported in Paragraph 2 of the report with subsequent paragraphs detailing the topics covered in the questions, how the survey was conducted and the results of the Council's survey against that the LGA.

In considering the report, Members raised a number of queries in relation to: the outcome of Question 15; the demographic of the respondents to Question 9; and were the questions asked in isolation or was context given. Members were provided with the information as requested with a written response also being issued.

AGREED that the following be noted:

- a) the findings of the Resident Survey Temperature Check;
- b) that the Community Plan 2023-2027 set out that it is important to listen to the views of residents; to capture district wide views of residents, using feedback to allow the Council to drive service improvement and deliver services that meet the needs of residents; and
- c) that the Council conducts a district wide consultation every four years, with the next resident survey planned for 2026.

49 PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR R. COZENS - PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HERITAGE, CULTURE & THE ARTS

The Committee considered the presentation delivered by Councillor Rowan Cozens, the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture & the Arts. Detailed within the presentation were a number of projects undertaken, together with information as to how these were resourced. These included: Daisy Exhibition over Newark Market Place; Book Themed Art Benches; Surfboard Art Installation; Music Around the Forest at Vicar Water Country Park; Polish Community assisting in Curating Local Exhibition at Newark Civil War Centre (NCWC); Alive with Music events; Installation of Community Designed Sculpture at Vicar Water; Photography Competition; Newark-on-Sea; Inflatable Whale Exhibition; Hidden History Walking Tours; Tour of Britain; Activities delivered by NPO; Equality, Equity & Diversity Inclusion Training for all staff; Learning and Participation Events for those with SEND; Restoration of Kidney Stones; Changing Places Style Facility; and the Castle Gatehouse.

In considering the presentation, Members raised a number of queries. Two questions to the Portfolio Holder had been submitted prior to the meeting which had focused on the location of the events and that they appeared to be Newark centric. The Portfolio Holder advised that herself and Officers were actively trying to address this issue but noted that the Palace Theatre, Newark Castle and the NCWC were all based in Newark and as major assets, attracted specific funding. She added that the Alive with Music events had resulted in the development of conversations with residents in the west of district.

A Member acknowledged that whilst the Sherwood constituency did not have the aforementioned major attractions, in terms of visitor numbers, Sherwood Forest attracted a higher volume, suggesting that events to promote the Sherwood Forest experience and Robin Hood be held at the Visitor Centre. The Member also queried whether it was possible to loan bundles of artifacts, taken from the museum's collection, to local schools. In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that she would speak with Officers in this regard.

A Member queried what the latest position was in relation to the appointment of the Senior Tourism & Visitor Economy Officer and how the Destination Management Plan was progressing. The Portfolio Holder advised that she would speak with Officers and provide a response after the meeting.

In referring to the two Alive with Music Events, a Member commented that he had attended both events and had been impressed with the subsequent discussions about the learning and practicing of music, querying how the Portfolio Holder saw the Council being able to assist in the gap created by the lack of funding for this type of activity in education. He noted that this type of learning easily transferred to skills required for future careers but not just in music. In response, the Portfolio Holder advised that there should be a celebration of what was already on offer and that this should be publicised.

In noting the presentation, a Member commented that there was no reference to the income generated by Sherwood Forest or the Showground, adding that the current spend on culture was too high. The Portfolio Holder stated that she would welcome a

fuller conversation with the Member to address his comments. She added that years of austerity had led to a lack of funding for provision of the creative industry, especially for young people and that a continuation of this neglect would be against current trends in both education and Government.

In referring to the responses received to the Residents' Survey, a Member noted that the Heritage, Culture & the Arts Portfolio was the lowest of their priorities. He also referred to the action within the Community Plan in relation to the displaying of artifacts outside of Newark and how this was progressing. In response, the Portfolio Holder commented that it was difficult to ask specific questions in the gathering of data. It was, however, possible to look at footfall and the number of views of an exhibition. It was also possible to view data captured by the Newark Towns Fund, noting that any responses to consultations were only as good as the questions asked and how the responses were interpreted. She added that there were officers who were Newark focused but that events could be held in the Sherwood constituency.

A Member noted that in the finals of the recent BBC Young Musician of the Year contest, none of the finalists had attended a state school. He queried as to what the Portfolio Holder thought was the impact on young people from the lack of funding. In response, the Portfolio Holder commented that schools had been starved of funding for music for a number of years. She added that the amount spent on sport provision should be reviewed, noting that funding would be made available if a talented athlete was identified but that this would not be the case for a talented musician.

In closing the debate, the Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for her presentation and Members for their questions.

AGREED that Councillor Rowan Cozens, Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture & the Arts be thanked for her attendance.

50 DIGITAL STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

NOTED the verbal update of the Chair of the Digital Strategy Working Group, Councillor Neil Ross.

51 FORWARD PLAN OF CABINET - OCTOBER 2024 TO JANUARY 2025

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period October 2024 to January 2025.

52 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2024

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 September 2024.

53 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2024

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 24 September 2024.

54 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Presentation by Portfolio Holder for Climate & the Environment.

Review of HRA Business Plan Assumptions.

Projected General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and Revenue & Capital Outturn Report to 31.04.25 as at 30.09.24.

Newark Town Fund Update.

Update on Kerbside Glass Recycling.

Update on Outcome of Kidney Stones Consultation.

Meeting closed at 8.21 pm.

Chairman