

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, 10 March 2025 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor N Allen, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor R Holloway,
Councillor S Michael, Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow,
Councillor M Spoors, Councillor T Thompson and Councillor T Wendels

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor A Brazier, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor J Hall, Councillor R Jackson and Councillor K Roberts

82 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.

83 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

84 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY AND 17 FEBRUARY 2025

The minutes from the meetings held on 10 and 17 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

85 BUILDING SAFETY POLICY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to share with Members the draft Building Strategy Policy which now included how tenants and leaseholders in Council owned homes could raise safety concerns together with the Council's own responsibilities to keep homes warm, safe and decent.

As reported, the aim of the Policy was to set out how the Council met the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022, the Fire Safety Act 2021 and other legislative and regulatory changes that had been introduced and proposed following the Grenfell tragedy and how it discharged those duties to residents and other stakeholders to keep residents and buildings safe.

It was also reported that there was a separate Policy for tenants and residents called "Safety in the Home" which set out how the Council managed their health and building safety responsibilities. This Policy outlined how the Council managed all risks identified to ensure effective action plans were in place to mitigate those risks as soon as reasonably practicable for all residents living in those buildings, employees and contractors who would work in and around those buildings and members of the public.

In responding to a query about what process was in place should there be a lift failure at one of the Council's housing with care facilities, the Director advised that this was set out in the Fire Safety Strategy.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Building Safety Policy be endorsed.

86 COMPLIANCE UPDATE - HOUSING SERVICES

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to provide Members with the performance position as at 31 December 2024 (Q3) against the Council's legal and regulatory landlord responsibilities for a range of building safety measures which included: fire protection; gas; asbestos; electrical; and water. The report also summarised details of the Council's housing stock. The information was presented in a new format with regard to compliance, including actions to rectify identified issues. It was reported that the range of the Red/Amber/Green (RAG) ratings had been shortened as recommended by external auditors and the Regulator of Social Housing with the changes detailed at paragraph 2.4 of the report.

Performance exceptions were listed at paragraph 3 of the report and these included: Domestic Gas Servicing; Fire Safety Checks; Fire Door Inspections; Domestic Asbestos & Communal; Water Safety; Stair Lifts & Hoists; EICR Electrical Certification; and Solid Fuel & Oil Servicing.

In responding to a query raised about the number of Red ratings within the performance exceptions, the Director advised that consideration was being given to whether additional resources were required. She also noted that some of the exceptions listed had a very low level of tolerance and that it would only take 1 or 2 issues to put the compliance rating into amber or red.

In relation to incidents of damp and mould, a Member queried whether the Council were aware of the primary causes and whether these were prioritised. The Director advised that consideration was being given as to whether the compliance criteria should be broadened to include this. Work was ongoing to introduce Awab's Law but the reason for incidents of damp and mould could be due to a variety of reasons for example: a cold spot on an external wall; issues with ventilation. The Council employed a Damp & Mould Surveyor and also operated a 24 hour emergency response. She noted that the number of complaints had increased, in part due to the Council actively engaging with tenants to ask them questions about this.

In closing the debate, the Chair referred to the annual fire risk assessment and the work undertaken in relation to fire door repairs and also welcomed the inhouse challenges to the housing teams in a drive to improve service provision.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the exceptions to performance of the housing service compliance functions be noted; and

- b) the new format for performance for Q3 2024/2025 onwards be noted.

87 PROJECTED GENERAL FUND AND HRA REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2025 AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services which provided Members with the forecast outturn position for the 2024/2025 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 31 December 2024) variances. Table 1 showed a favourable variance on service budgets against the revised budget of £1.023m, with an overall favourable variance of £0.250m that would require transferring to the General Fund reserves. Table 3 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 £0.061m and an increase in the forecast transfer to the Major Repairs Reserve of £0.500m. Details of the overview of the Projected Capital Outturn 2024/25 were also provided.

In considering the report, a Member queried as to the increase in variation to the budget for the remedial works at the Newark Castle. The Business Manager advised that he would provide a written response.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.250m be noted;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account projected favourable outturn variance of £0.500m to the Major Repairs Reserve be noted; and
- c) the Capital Programme forecast Outturn of £42.162m be noted.

88 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER 3

The Committee considered the report presented by the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which presented to Members the Quarter 3 Community Plan Performance Report (October to December 2024). Members were asked to review the Reports attached as Appendix 1 together with the Compliance Report attached as Appendix 2.

In considering the report, a number of queries were raised and responded to in relation to ASB; adaptations; and increase in rent arrears. In relation to footfall indicators Members queried whether there was data available that would enable an IP address to be split and whether there was a charge for the removal of graffiti on commercial premises. Members were advised that a written response would be provided.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Community Plan Performance Report for Quarter 3 be noted.

89 COMMUNITY PLAN REFRESH

The Committee considered the report presented by the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which presented to Members the refreshed Community Plan 2023/2027. It was reported that the Community Plan was the key direction setting document used to outline the priorities and vision for the Council for a four-year term. Portfolio Holders, committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs had been working to review progress against the Community Plan as it entered the start of the third year and this had led to the document being refreshed as detailed in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that the refreshed Community Plan 2023/2027 be endorsed and forwarded to Cabinet for consideration at their meeting on 1 April 2025.

90 PRESENTATION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Committee considered the presentation delivered by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Economic Development.

Detailed within the presentation was reference to work undertaken in relation to the areas which fell within the Portfolio Holders remit. These broadly included: within Economic Growth & Visitor Economy - Business Support & Investment Skills; social Mobility, Pride in Place & Place Making; within Planning Development – planning applications; street naming; land charges; agenda forum; Council and Regeneration Projects; Conservation Ecology Leaders; national planning targets (both major and minor); within Planning Policy & Infrastructure – development and production of planning policy documents; spatial planning support of priorities; and infrastructure.

The presentation also provided Members with future proposals for the delivery, reform and reshaping of policies and strategies to enable development and regeneration within the district.

In considering the presentation, Members raised a number of queries.

Social Mobility - a Member requested statistical information as to NSDC's ranking within the whole country to enable comparisons to be made on the Council's progress to improve this.

Education & Skills – the Portfolio Holder advised that conservations were ongoing with Nottinghamshire County Council to develop this area of work.

Capacity to Deliver on all Projects – was this prioritised and was there sufficient resource to deliver? The Portfolio Holder advised that the Economic Growth Team had the expertise to deliver on the projects and had the ability to pivot on projects as priorities changed.

High Street Support – what did this mean in practical terms? The Portfolio Holder advised that this was about high street regeneration. A team of Business Advisors were able to support businesses to develop.

Visitor Economy – a Member commented that the Council must ensure that promotion of our district was a priority to ensure that visitors were aware of what was on offer. The Portfolio Holder advised she would raise this with the Visitor & Marketing Manager for a response.

Results of 2022 Residents Survey – what was being done to bridge the gap between the most important services and residents' opinions. The Portfolio Holder advised that there had been 11 crossovers and they were being addressed regardless of whether they were highlight as priorities of residents.

AGREED (unanimously) that Councillor Claire Penny, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Economic Development be thanked for her presentation.

91 UPDATE ON DIGITAL STRATEGY REFRESH WORKING GROUP

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 final meeting of the Working Group had taken place and listed the key learning taken from the work of the group: the importance of keeping the customer at heart; there must be a balance between analogue and digital communication; acknowledgement that there was poor digital connectivity in certain areas of the district; digital connectivity and infrastructure was essential going forward; acknowledgement of the progression of 5G; acknowledgement of emerging technologies e.g. AI and the need for a flexible approach; how to best engage with communities; digital poverty; how best to measure success and achievements; future benchmarking by comparing to neighbouring authorities; ability to merge systems ready for local government reorganisation. Members were advised that the next step was a presentation of the Digital Framework Strategy to the June 2025 meeting of the Committee.

In considering the verbal update, a Member queried whether anything specific had been discussed in relation to provision into social housing. Councillor Ross advised that maximum connectivity was vital but that the Council were unable to control the installation of infrastructure to achieve that. He added that if individual connectivity was not possible, consideration could be given to providing this at community centres.

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

92 CABINET FORWARD PLAN - FEBRUARY TO MAY 2025

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period February to May 2025.

93 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2025

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18 February 2025.

94 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

NOTED the provisional items for future meetings of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee.

Meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Chair