

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Homes & Communities Committee** Broadcast from Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1BY on Monday, 15 March 2021 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs R Holloway (Vice-Chairman - chairing the meeting)

Councillor Mrs K Arnold, Councillor M Brock, Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor Mrs I Brown, Councillor M Brown, Councillor S Carlton, Councillor R Crowe, Councillor L Goff, Councillor Mrs L Hurst (Substitute) and Councillor J Lee

ALSON IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs P Rainbow

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Dales (Committee Member) and Councillor T Wendels (Chairman)

The meeting was held remotely, in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

The Committee wished the Chairman a speedy recovery.

109 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND AS TO THE PARTY WHIP

That no Member or Officer declared any interest pursuant to any statutory requirement in any matter discussed or voted upon at the meeting.

110 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

That there would be an audio recording of the meeting undertaken by the Council.

111 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2021

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and to be signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the order of business on the agenda would be changed. Agenda Item 17 would follow Item 15, followed by Item 16.

112 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Council continues to press ahead with delivery of a number of projects and improvements. The Safer Streets project continues with all the elements within the project due to be completed by the end of March. The new Community Hub at Chatham Court, which is part of the Safer Streets project is progressing well with many partners showing an interest in operating their services from the Hub.

The Chairman advised that during the past year of Covid restrictions, crime across Newark and Sherwood has fallen, unfortunately this has not been matched with a similar fall in anti-social behaviour. The Council and the Police are continuing to work together to have plans in place that use all the powers available to manage and reduce anti-social behaviour. The police have dedicated patrols in ASB hot spots, and these are supported by the Council's Community Protection Officers. We have shown our commitment to addressing these issues by the appointment of two additional community protection officers for a temporary period of 12 months.

The Chairman highlighted that the Energy and Home Support team have successfully completed a project at Fairholme Park, Ollerton to move residents from LPG to mains gas, reducing running costs for those living in these hard to heat park homes which has not been an easy feat during a year of significant challenges.

Looking forward, the Chairman advised of a consultation to be launched with housing tenants through their next rent statement about what they would like to see in this year's Annual Tenant Report. The Council will shortly start preparing the document which is a requirement of the Regulator to show how we are performing and how we invest in services. The report for 2019-20 can be found on the Council's website.

The Chairman then informed the Committee that from the end of the month the Grounds Maintenance service for our Council homes will be delivered by our in-house team, enabling us to control the quality and improve the streetscape for Newark and Sherwood District. We have also been able to recruit two of our apprentices into full time roles within the team which is fantastic.

The Chairman went on to advise of the commencement of more in depth Fire Risk Assessments of our communal areas including checking of individual fire doors with the aim of improving fire safety for our tenants.

The Chairman was pleased to inform the Committee that the Council had been successful in securing £11,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support with the complexities for rough sleeping and our long term project to support rough sleepers into accommodation is on track for April 21.

Now we have a roadmap out of lockdown, the Council are looking at how we bring all services back on line in a managed way and the chairman took the opportunity to thank all colleagues at the Council for their continued commitment and knew that they will do their best to ensure a smooth transition.

Finally, the Chairman reminded the Committee of having just passed the first anniversary of bringing our housing service back into the Council. The team will be inviting members over the next month to take a look at what the newly formed Directorate has been up to.

113 SHERWOOD & NEWARK CITIZENS' ADVICE – ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019-20

The Committee considered the report from the Homeless Strategy Officer informing Members that Sherwood & Newark Citizens' Advice (SNCA) had achieved the performance targets for the commissioned Debt Management & Homeless Prevention Service to residents in the District for the financial year 2019-20.

The Chief Officer of Sherwood & Newark Citizens' Advice, Jackie Insley, was in attendance at the meeting to present the annual report to the Committee.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted, particularly the performance outturns for the commissioned debt management and homeless prevention service to residents in the District for the financial year 2019-20.

114 FORWARD PLAN – APRIL 2021 TO MARCH 2022

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for April 2021 to March 2022 with the Chairman inviting Members to put forward any items they would wish to be considered by Committee at a future meeting.

One Member requested a six monthly Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) update be provided to Committee Members, with a further Member requesting an update on the Chatham Court improvements.

115 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT – STRATEGY AND PROJECT DELIVERY

The Committee considered the report from the Homeless Strategy Officer to update and seek approval to fund targeted intervention projects to deliver the Councils Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2024, funded from homelessness prevention grants/reserve.

The report proposals are practical and will help to support services for those facing challenges around securing and maintaining a safe and secure home. The Housing Advisory group have also had sight of these proposals and support the allocation of funds, with a clearly set out rationale. There are synergies with the internal housing service as well around making links and achieving better alignment.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Members noted that the report had been presented to SLT on 19 January 2021 and supported the proposals.
- (b) the Members considered the contents of the report and approved the funding proposals to successfully deliver the Council's five year Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024.

116 REVIEW OF CUSTOMER ACCESS SERVICE OPENING HOURS

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Customer Services to review the opening hours of the Customer Access Service (CAS) Contact

Centre and to recommend alignment with the opening times of the main Council Contact Centre.

The Tenants Forum had met in February and had agreed unanimously that the opening hours should be altered in line with recommendations. They felt that tenants needed to have uniformity across all council services.

The Committee discussed the report and requested further data be brought to the next meeting with respect to usage at different times of the working day and noted that this does not affect the out of hours emergency calls.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) an updated report be brought back to the next meeting with further data on usage for consideration.

117 REVIEW OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Public Protection reviewing the Council's existing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, which is scheduled to be reviewed every three years.

At the February meeting of the Housing Advisory Group felt the overarching policy was good and brought together housing within the wider council. The group recommended that Officers look at other linked policies e.g. effective tenancy and estates management and recharges when balancing leaving tenant damage to be at their cost versus essential repairs such as glazing that are a health and safety issue and a blight on the look of an area.

Other partner organisations had been consulted and their consultation comments were reviewed and if appropriate, changes made to the policy.

The Committee found it to be a good detailed useful document and wished to pass on their thanks to the teams involved.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted and the adoption of the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy by the District Council for the period 2021 – 2024 be approved.

118 PROPOSAL FOR PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS – NEWARK TOWN CENTRE AND SITES IN BALDERTON

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Public Protection informing the Committee of the incidents of anti-social behaviour in Newark Town Centre and Coronation Park, Balderton Lakes and Lakeside shops in Balderton and to seek approval to begin a consultation process on the use of Public Space Protection Orders within these locations.

The report advised the Committee that through the Community Plan the relevant objective considered the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour and increasing

the feeling of safety in our communities.

A Committee Member suggested that the consultation could also perhaps include other parts of the District in reducing anti-social behaviour.

AGREED (unanimously):

- (a) to support the proposal to consult on the possibility of introducing a Public Space Protection Order in Newark town centre; and to,
- (b) support the proposal to consult on the possibility of introducing a Public Space Protection Order on Coronation Park, Balderton; and to,
- (c) support the proposal to consult on the possibility of introducing a Public Space Protection Order on Balderton Lakes, Balderton; and to,
- (d) support the proposal to consult on the possibility of introducing a Public Space Protection Order at Lakeside Shopping Centre, Balderton; and to,
- (e) agree the terms of the PSPO as set out in paragraph 4.2
- (f) agree the list of consultees as set out in paragraph 4.4; and that,
- (g) a further report setting out the results of the consultation be brought back to the Committee.

119 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Public Protection updating Members on performance with regard to corporate health and safety within the previous calendar year and to demonstrate that the Council's legal responsibilities are being met.

The Council's corporate Health & Safety Policy sets out the responsibilities of various posts within the organisation. Elected Members provide the Council with leadership and strategy direction and determination in the allocation of budgets to enable services to be delivered.

The Committee requested a letter be sent to the Chief Executive so that they could pass on their thanks to all staff including Helen Ellison and her team having provided risk assessments for staff as well as mental health support.

The report also advised the Committee that the Health and Safety Policy will be taken to the next Committee meeting taking place in June to review, update and implement.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Health and Safety activity for the past year be noted and to;
- (b) support the action plan set out in paragraph 9.1.

120 SOCIAL HOUSING WHITE PAPER “THE CHARTER FOR SOCIAL HOUSING TENANTS”

The Committee considered the report from the Tenant Engagement Officer informing Members of the Charter for Social Housing Tenants White Paper released in November 2020 and the future positive impact this will have on the relationship between tenants and the Council going forward.

The report also set out the new responsibilities placed upon the Council (and Members) as a stock holding authority and landlord.

The Tenant Engagement Officer provided a brief presentation to the Committee on the key elements of the Social Housing White Paper “The Charter for Social Housing Tenants”.

Following the Housing Advisory Group meeting in February 2021, the involved tenants and Housing Advisory Group members confirmed discussions had taken place on the White Paper with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and some members had taken part in webinars to discuss the new roles of the Regulator and Ombudsman.

The report advised the Committee that involved tenants are currently updating the terms of reference and related procedures to present to the Council to endorse. The group are also looking at existing and future ways to improve meaningful tenant engagement and involvement.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted and:

- (a) the Director of Housing and Health and Wellbeing is nominated as the ‘responsible person’ who is the point of contact and ensures compliance with the housing regulatory standards until such time as any legislative guidance being issued;
- (b) the Business Manager for Asset Management is nominated as the ‘responsible person’ for ensuring Health and Safety in Council properties and buildings in advance of any legislative guidance being issued; and to
- (c) support the production of an action plan to address the requirements of the Charter with regular updates on progress reported to Homes and Communities Committee.

121 CUSTOMER JOURNEY – TENANT ENGAGEMENT REVIEW UPDATE

The Committee considered the report from the Tenant Engagement Officer updating on the outcomes of Phase 1 of the review into tenant engagement and involvement agreed at Committee on 16 March 2020.

The report also provided a number of proposals to move the tenant engagement arrangements forward, utilising efficiency savings.

The Housing Advisory Group having met in February 2021 had commented that

tenants were concerned about budgets and value for money, and the group support the need to invest in tenant participation and engagement. In increasing resources this will enable the existing Tenant Engagement Officer to achieve the outcomes from the review and build on community spirit.

The group recognise the standard expected from the Government White Paper, realising it will be a challenge but welcomed the proposals.

The Committee discussed the community chest enabling small community based projects to grow district wide.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted and:

- (a) support the pledge set out in 5.2 around tenant influence;
- (b) approved proposal set out in 5.3 – 5.15 for:
 - 1. the recruitment of an additional Tenant Engagement Officer;
 - 2. the pilot of “Let’s Connect” digital project and;
 - 3. a community chest budget of £20,000 for community based and tenant led improvements.
- (c) to note that further feedback will come to this Committee on the customer journey findings as they are available.

122 GAS SERVICING ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered the report from the Compliance & Safety Manager providing details of the current access procedures to carry out gas servicing and an opportunity to consider alternatives designed to improve access and ensure the Council continues to comply with its statutory duty under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.

The report explained that the Council rarely achieving 100% compliance, currently 99.7% and alternative means of gaining access, including incentives, are always worth considering. This is especially important following the COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted in even greater difficulty in accessing properties due to tenants concerns over admitting gas engineers into their home and the report considered the alternatives.

AGREED that the contents of the report be noted and approved the recommendations to:

- Cap off external gas meters in the circumstances described at 3.11
- Install Service Interval Timers in the circumstances described at 3.14
- Monitor costs of failed access to the Council before revisiting incentives
- Revisit the impact of the above recommendations in 12 months time

123 HOUSING SERVICE COMPLIANCE PERFORMANCE – QUARTERLY REPORT

The Committee considered the report from the Compliance & Safety Manager

providing an overview of compliance performance of the housing service at the end of December 2020.

The report advised that performance remained strong across the compliance functions and remains the highest priority, especially the provision of gas servicing in keeping tenants safe in their homes.

AGREED (unanimously) that the performance of the housing service compliance functions be noted.

124 HOUSING SERVICES QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered the report from the Transformation Manager providing an overview of performance and satisfaction within housing services for Quarter 3 of 2020/21.

The report informed the Committee that the Housing Advisory Group when meeting in February requested that the Committee explore a dedicated Complaints Officer to deal with all forms of grumbles and complaints at the first stage. This role could receive all complaints and have authority to resolve any issues arising and be the single point of contact for tenants giving greater reassurance.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the performance of the housing service be noted;
- (b) Members feedback their observations about the content and presentation of performance information;
- (c) Members support the recommendation set out in 9.6 to explore a Complaints Officer and;
- (d) a future agenda item from involved tenants around ASB scrutiny be noted.

125 UPDATE ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN NEWARK AND SHERWOOD

The Committee considered the update from the Health Improvement and Community Relations Manager providing an update on the current position regarding refugee resettlement in Newark and Sherwood and consider future scenarios for the management of the programme in a changing national and global landscape.

The report reminded the Committee of the origins of the scheme that In 2014, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme was launched nationally and the government made a pledge for the UK to accept 20,000 vulnerable persons displaced by the conflict in Syria.

NSDC made an initial pledge to accept 45 individuals from approximately 10 families over the course of the programme, which ran until March 2020.

NSDC received its first families in November 2016 and, with continuing Member support, has since resettled 65 individuals from 13 families which exceeded the original pledge.

Unfortunately, due to risks and mitigations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, international arrivals under the UKRS were suspended in March 2020 and have not yet been able to resume.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the contents of the report be noted and;
- (b) a further report be presented to Members when information is available in relation to the resumption of the programme.

The Committee thanked Cllr Holloway in her chairing of the Homes and Communities Committee in the Chairman's absence.

Meeting closed at 8.33pm.

Chairman