

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Leisure & Environment Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts, NG24 1BY on Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor R Jackson (Chairman)  
Councillor N Mison (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor S Carlton, Councillor M Cope, Councillor D Cumberlidge,  
Councillor P Harris, Councillor Mrs L Hurst, Councillor J Kellas,  
Councillor J Lee and Councillor Mrs Y Woodhead

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor L Brailsford (Committee Member)

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

NOTED Councillor S. Carlton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 12 – Active4Today Performance Update Report as he was a Council appointed Director on the Active4Today Board.

15 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTIONS TO RECORD THE MEETING

NOTED that the Council would undertake an audio recording and live streaming of the meeting.

16 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2021

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman provided an update to the Committee on the developments that had taken place within the Committee's remit since the last meeting held on 21 June 2021.

Dukeries Leisure Centre

The new pool had been completed in July and had been officially opened by Rebecca Adlington. The pool had been delivered on budget and was already having a positive impact in the community. It was also assisting Active4Today to recover from the effects of the pandemic with membership at the Leisure Centre having increased beyond the pre-Covid levels.

## The Council's Carbon Footprint

A report included on the Agenda informed Members of the ongoing work to reduce the Council's carbon footprint, of which the leisure centres were one of the main contributors. The Council had procured the support of a specialist consultant to look at options for investing in photovoltaics (PV) on Council buildings, including the leisure centres. This could have a dual effect of reducing energy costs and also reducing the Council's carbon footprint. Castle House already had PV on the roof and did not use gas as an energy supply which was further evidence of how seriously the matter was taken.

During the next committee cycle, the Council would be looking at a major tree planting scheme of 6000 trees at Vicar Water which was in addition to the 6000 plus trees already planted.

The Council had taken delivery of their first 2 electric vehicles and were expanding the range and number of electric vehicle charge points across the district, with 15 becoming available in public car parks in the autumn.

## Recycling

As Members would see from the report on the Agenda, nationally, there would be significant changes in how local authorities recycled. Some proposals previously published as part of the National Waste & Resources Strategy were likely to be included in the new Environment Bill which was due to receive Royal Assent in the autumn. If unchanged this would require garden waste to be collected free of charge as well as a common set of recyclables being collected from the kerbside from 2023, including glass and food waste. As yet, the details of the proposed changes remained outstanding.

Regardless of the proposals, the Council was making progress in recycling. Since bringing garden waste in-house, the customer base had risen by almost 4,000 from the initial figure of 12,000 which had led to a significant increase in the recycling percentage for the first quarter of the year, almost 40%, although it was appreciated that the first quarter was when garden activity would have been at its highest.

## Living in a Clean and Pleasant Environment

This headline is something which the residents of the district tell us is important to them. The Agenda includes proposals in relation to entering into a one year pilot with a company to increase the Council's enforcement activity.

On the whole, people wanted to do the right thing and dispose of litter, dog fouling and cigarette butts in a responsible manner. In order to promote this the Council had increased the number of bins available and had invested in such things as actions days and litter picks throughout the district.

However, there remained a minority of people who did not follow that example and the proposed initiative was to target those people who spoiled the community with their actions. The Council was determined that the district would remain clean and green and a place to be proud of.

Following the Chairman's report, a Member queried whether it was possible for the public to purchase trees which could then be planted in memory of someone they had lost. She added that due to the pandemic, families were often unable to grieve in the usual way and that planting a tree may give them a location and focus. The Chairman advised that he would raise the question and report back.

18 MENTAL HEALTH WELLBEING PRESENTATION FROM THE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT OFFICER

The Committee received a presentation from the Health Improvement Officer in relation to an overview into Mental Health.

The presentation provided Members with statistical information in relation to how people's mental health was a widespread and common issue, affecting individuals from all walks of life yet people remained reluctant to talk about it. Mental health problems could affect a person's physical health, leading to long term health issues. One in four people experienced problems annually with one in six experiencing common problems in any given week e.g. anxiety or depression. Women were more likely to have suicidal thoughts and make suicide attempts but men were three times more likely to take their own life.

Members were informed that the statistical information was collated prior to the pandemic and only related to individuals over the age of sixteen, living in private housing in England, noting that it excluded a number of groups of people and those currently in hospital, prison, sheltered housing or homeless.

The presentation noted the impact the pandemic had had on children and young people's mental health and how schools were struggling to cope with the complexities of that. The Charity, Young Minds, had undertaken 4 national surveys throughout each part of the pandemic resulting in them recommending to Government that they: make wellbeing a priority in the schools catch-up planning; address the inconsistent mental health support available through schools; ensure that local charities and youth clubs provide vital early mental health help and support; and ensure that all young people know where and how to find support.

Members were provided with information as to what was available for residents locally and the number of referrals each organisation had received. They were also informed as to the work undertaken by the Council in their response to the pandemic and the planned future delivery of services.

In considering the presentation Members agreed that they all recognised the issues surrounding mental health and thanked the Officer for her presentation.

In acknowledging the work done in the community, a Member queried what support was available for members of staff and elected Members. In response, the Health Improvement Officer advised that there had been a programme of training within the Council and that each Business Unit had the support of a Mental Health Champion. This was due to be rolled out to include elected Members, adding that she worked closely with Human Resources to identify and help members of staff when necessary. She noted that bereavement was a particular issue during the pandemic, explaining that working remotely at home had removed the support network of colleagues in the workplace.

A Member queried whether the issue in schools was being addressed at both secondary and primary schools. The Health Improvement Officer advised that there was financial support in secondary schools and that all the Head Teachers in the district were supportive and prepared to pilot initiatives to help their students. Primary schools were provided with a great deal of information and resources and also physical activities to undertake with their students. She confirmed that there were networks for both secondary and primary schools.

In raising the issue of self-harming in schools, a Member queried whether data was collated and if so, what was done with it. The Health Improvement Officer advised that due to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) schools were reluctant to share the information they gathered.

In relation to the number of counselling sessions provided free of charge to staff, a Member queried why the Council provided six sessions but Active4Today (A4T) staff were limited to three. The Director – Communities & Environment advised that after A4T staff had received three sessions, managers reviewed the issues to see whether they could assist the individual. If they could not the individual was then entitled to a further three sessions.

In considering the presentation a Member noted his own experiences and the help and assistance he had received. He stated that there was more to do and that the multiple lockdowns, due to the pandemic, had exacerbated the situation.

A Member queried whether there had been any partnership working with Nottingham University who had undertaken a large piece of work on mental health a few years previously. The Health Improvement Officer advised that there had been no direct work with them on mental health but would welcome contact details if available.

In concluding the debate, the Chairman thanked the Officer for her presentation, adding that Members were now better informed on what signs to look out for should a person be suffering mental health issues.

## 19 ENVIRO CRIME - STRENGTHENING OUR ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

The Committee considered a report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to provide Members with a proposal for increasing the Authority's enforcement capacity through a 1-year pilot arrangement with a private sector company targeting low-level environmental crime.

The report set out the process of recruitment for Community Protection Officers (CPOs) and a flavour of the range of positive interventions they have been involved with from April 2019 to March 2020. It also set out the work which had been undertaken by the CPOs during the Council's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic with paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7 highlighting how the role had developed since 2019 to present day.

In order to increase the Council's enforcement capacity, Members were asked to consider recommending to the Policy & Finance Committee a one-year pilot with a company called Waste Investigations, Support & Enforcement (WISE), with details of the work which would be undertaken by them being reported in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.8.

In considering the report, Members stated that any additional resource should also cover rural areas and that parish councils be contacted to ascertain whether there were any issues within their area.

A Member sought assurance that, if approved, the Enforcement Officers would be aware of their specific role. In noting the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) they had issued for other authorities, the Member queried how many had been challenged and upheld. The Business Manager advised that there would be specific criteria of when a FPN could be issued. In relation to the numbers challenged, he advised that of 1800 issued, 88 had been cancelled.

In noting that the Council needed additional enforcement resource, a Member expressed concern about using a company whose business it was to issue FPNs so was pleased to see that a one year pilot scheme was proposed. He commented that he would wish to see the Enforcement Officers also being 'badged' by the Council. He added that he would be particularly keen to see action taken against individuals who did not dispose of cigarette butts correctly and just dropped them on the pavement, suggesting that there was little public awareness that they were not biodegradable. The Business Manager confirmed that the Enforcement Officers would have displayed their company logo together with that of the Council and that they would also have written documentation confirming that they were working on behalf of NSDC.

In response to how the additional resource would be deployed and whether they would deal with fly-tipping, the Business Manager advised that the Enforcement Officers would be deployed as directed by the Council. Their role would mainly focus on low level enforcement and possibly low level fly tipping. The more serious fly tipping cases would be dealt with by the Council as these were far more time consuming. He added that should parish councils contact the Council with a specific issue, resource could be sent to that location.

In noting that the issuing of FPN would be reported and recorded by the Council, a Member queried whether issues of littering found by the Enforcement Officers would also be reported and whether Ward Members would be informed of any issues in their area. The Business Manager advised that not all low level littering would be reported but that low level fly tipping would be. Update reports would be presented to Committee and these could include information as to any particular hotspots in the district. A Member requested that the relevant Ward Members be kept informed of any issues reported by parish councils.

AGREED (unanimously) that the proposals be recommend to Policy & Finance Committee for the implementation of a one year Enviro-Crime Enforcement Pilot Project with WISE.

## 20 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Environmental Policy & Projects Officer which sought to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Climate Emergency Strategy and associated Action Plan.

The report set out the background to the Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency and the proposals for future works to achieve the carbon net neutral target date of 2035. The following proposals were listed with supporting information: electric vehicle charge points; electric vehicle transition; data validation; solar pv feasibility; shovel ready projects; tree planting; residential cycle and car parking standards and design guide; carbon footprint; taxi licensing; and climate emergency project meetings.

In considering the report Members agreed that it was pleasing to see the progression on activities all working towards achieving the carbon net neutral target.

In referring to the transition to electric vehicles for the Council's fleet, a Member queried as to which Committee would make the final decision, noting that the Council was working towards a change in governance arrangements in May 2022. The Director – Communities & Environment advised that a working group had been established to look at the issue and was likely to report back to the Policy & Finance Committee in approximately 18 months.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the project update be noted; and
- (b) further reports providing additional progress updates on Newark & Sherwood District Council's carbon reduction journey be provided as required.

21 LEISURE & ENVIRONMENT REVENUE AND CAPITAL FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2022 AS AT 31 JULY 2021

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services which provided Members with a comparison of Revised Budgets for the period ending 31 March 2022 with the Projected Outturn forecast for the same period. The figures were based on four months' performance information on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, including: general fund revenue and capital programme.

Attached to the covering report was the report being presented to the Policy & Finance Committee on 23 September 2021 which detailed the forecasted financial position to 31 March 2022 of the Council as at 31 July 2021.

It was reported that the current position for the Committee was a favourable variance of £0.182m, with the report noting that these would become more accurate in subsequent months as Officers continued to refine budgets and forecasts.

In considering the report, Members raised no specific questions but commented that the Committee's budget was more favourable than in previous years.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted.

22 ENVIRONMENT BILL 2021

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager - Environmental Services which sought to update Members on the details of the Government's Waste Resource Strategy through the Environmental Bill and the potential implications for the Council.

The report set out the background to the Waste Resource Strategy and the 3 areas for consideration therein: extended producer responsibility; consistency in recycling collections; and a deposit and return scheme. Paragraph 3 of the report set out the new service standards and the implications of how waste would possibly be collected. The report also set out the new statutory duties placed upon local authorities and how these may be funded, details of which were contained in paragraph 4.

In presenting the report the Business Manager sought to impress upon Members the potential additional human resource which would be required together with the financial implications to carry out the new waste collection and management regulations.

In considering the report, Members agreed that the new regulations would be difficult to manage, given the potential costs to local authorities, without additional funding being made available from Government. The Business Manager stated that it was anticipated that any funding available would be used to pay-off existing waste disposal contracts.

Members agreed that residents would welcome a weekly collection service but would push back on any additional costs to provide that service. A Member queried whether each collection stream would require a resident to have a separate bin. The Business Manager advised that this may not necessarily be the case but noted that if all the bins in the district were changed for one existing collection it would be at a cost of approximately £1.2m. He also highlighted the issue of sourcing additional bins, given that each local authority in the country would be ordering at the same time. This would also extend to the purchasing of new vehicles to manage the additional collections and the recruitment of qualified drivers, of which there was already a national shortage.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report be noted; and
- (b) a follow-up report be brought before Members once the Environment Bill had been passed and its implication assessed.

23 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES WORK UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Environmental Services which sought to update Members about the work that had been undertaken by the Environmental Services Street Scene Team and the services they offered.

The report set out that following the establishment of the Environmental Services Team in 2018, had provided opportunities to streamline services and identify new areas of working to increase income for the Council. The internal and external work of the Team was also reported, how they had developed and what services they could provide. The limitations preventing the Team taking on additional work was listed within paragraph 7 of the report.

In considering the report Members welcomed the progress of the team in expanding their work remit.

A Member queried how smaller handheld equipment was powered. The Business Manager advised that at present they remained petrol powered but trials were ongoing with the use of battery powered equipment e.g. lawnmowers. He noted that battery powered equipment for professional use was a little way behind that of the domestic market and that costs remained high. He added that it was his belief that the Council would begin to use battery powered equipment within the next 12 months.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the significant increase in income and work conducted by the Environmental Services Street Scene Team be noted; and
- (b) Members note the capacity for expansion but that the constraints to that expansion still exist.

## 24 ACTIVE4TODAY PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager which sought to provide Members with an update of Active4Today (A4T) for the period 12 April to 31 August 2021 following the sustained impact of Covid on their operations.

Appendix A to the report set out the headline figures in terms of performance over the period and provided an insight into the rate of recovery that A4T were experiencing. The report also outlined the measures that had been developed or introduced to mitigate some of the losses sustained through the pandemic which would enable it to operate on the front foot going forward. It was reported that a staffing restructure had been implemented to support its financial sustainability. A summary of the Company's budget was reported in paragraph 3.3 of the report with further budget details provided in Appendix A. Appendix B of the report provided Members with usage performance data, showing a comparison of usage in both 2019 and 2020, to give Members an idea of the overall current position.

In considering the report Members agreed that it was important to build back confidence with the public to use the A4T facilities, noting that the increase in members at the Dukeries Leisure Centre was an example of that.



A Member queried whether the maintenance of the Newark Sports & Fitness Centre was as had been anticipated when it had opened or whether it required more attention. The Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager advised that he would contact the Managing Director of A4T for a more detailed response but that it was difficult to do a direct comparison of the Dukeries swimming pool to that at the Newark Sports & Fitness Centre as they were very different, with one being a modern design and the other being a more traditional pool.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Active4Today progress report for year to date be noted;
- (b) the ongoing impacts of Covid on the Company's performance be closely monitored and proposals to support the Company through the pandemic be brought to future meetings of the Committee; and
- (c) the proposed Key Performance Indicators for Membership and Usage for year to date 2021/22 (Appendix B) be noted.

## 25 YMCA COMMUNITY & ACTIVITY VILLAGE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager which sought to provide Members with an update in respect of building progress at the YMCA Newark & Sherwood Community and Activity Village.

The report provided Members with details of the Phase 1 completion and the current utilisation with the highlights from April to September 2021 including: 1921 football pitch bookings; 51 athletics track bookings; 41 MUGA bookings; and peak utilisation (16:00-22:00) of 95%. Further details in relation to the MUGA; cycling; skate-park; and 5-a-side football pitches was also provided.

The report also provided Members with details of Phase 2 of the development and what facilities would be included in the building, together with information about community investment; community development partners; education partners; community health partners and research partners.

In presenting the report the Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager advised that the YMCA had extended an invitation to Members to visit the facility prior to its official opening.

In considering the report a Member referred to paragraph 3.8 of the report – Community Investment. He requested that details of the retail/crowdfunding Social Investment Bond by YMCA, with the support of Triodos Bank, be highlighted to the Council's Senior Financial Officers. The Business Manager – Financial Services, who was in attendance at the meeting, advised that the matter had been discussed with the Council's Treasury Advisors in November 2020 when a decision had been made not to progress that type of investment, but added that it could be considered again.

In noting the development of the facility and the various activities on offer, a Member queried whether these would be advertised/marketed/promoted. He stated that he was not aware of what the facility offered and that this was likely also the case for parents in the district. The Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager advised that the focus was currently on the capital build but would raise the issue with the YMCA team.

In concluding the discussion, the Chairman stated that the Committee would welcome a visit to the facility.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress report be noted.

26 PARISH & TOWN COUNCIL INITIATIVE FUND ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Chairman of the Committee which sought to provide Members with an overview of the Parish & Town Council Initiative Fund awards for the 2020/2021 'greener' themed rounds.

The report provided Members with the background to the establishment of the Fund in 2019 with a total budget of £200k, with maximum awards of up to £20k per parish or town council over the 3 year period that the fund would be in operation. The fund focussed on a new theme each year from the Council's Cleaner, Safer, Greener initiative, with the theme for 2020/2021 being the 'greener' theme. Details of how the initiative worked were provided in paragraphs 2.2/2.3 with a summary of the awards made in 2020/2021 being reported in Appendix A.

In considering the report a Member queried what the theme for the next year would be. In response the Health Improvement & Community Relations Manager advised that the current theme was 'safer' with the following year being 'cleaner'. He added that an update report would be provided at the end of the year and that the next Panel to consider applications in relation to the 'safer' theme was due to meet in November.

Members were informed that the period for applications to be submitted for funding for the 'safer' theme would soon be closed and that if required, a reminder could be sent out to the town and parish councils.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the report and Appendix be noted; and
- (b) the Parish & Town Council Initiative Fund 2021/2022 Annual Review be reported to Committee in 2022.

27 MANSFIELD AND DISTRICT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE - ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager - Financial Services which presented the Annual Statement of Accounts for the Mansfield & District Crematorium Joint Committee. The relevant Minute from 24 May 2021 meeting of the Mansfield & District Crematorium Joint Committee was also appended to the report for information.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Annual Statement of Accounts for the Mansfield & District Crematorium Joint Committee be noted.

28 FORWARD PLAN (OCTOBER 2021 TO SEPTEMBER 2022)

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the Leisure & Environment Committee for the period 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2021 and were encouraged to subject any areas of work they wanted to address for the forthcoming year.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Forward Plan be noted and that the following item be added:

Update Report on the Role of the Council's Community Protection Officers.

Meeting closed at 8.05 pm.

Chairman