

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Homes & Communities Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1BY on Monday, 14 March 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor T Wendels (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs R Holloway (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor M Brock, Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor S Carlton, Councillor R Crowe, Councillor Mrs L Dales, Councillor L Goff, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor J Lee, Councillor T Wildgust and Councillor Mrs Y Woodhead

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor J Kellas and Councillor Mrs P Rainbow

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

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

70 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

The Chairman advised that the proceedings were being recorded by the Council and that the meeting was being livestreamed and broadcast from the Civic Suite, Castle House.

71 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2022

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

72 POLICING IN NEWARK AND SHERWOOD - PRESENTATION FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING ACTING INSPECTOR MATT WARD

The Committee considered a verbal presentation delivered by Acting Inspector Matthew Ward which provided Members with an overview of the current situation in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour; Drugs; and Rural Crime.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

- ASB was always present but incidents were subject to peaks and troughs.
- Operation Grip targeted particular beat areas. Initially this was Hawtonville and the Town Centre, but now predominantly it was the Town Centre.
- There had been a reduction in incidents in the Magnus and Devon areas.
- Uniformed patrols had been increased in hot spot areas – Odeon/Market Place. This had led to a reduction in reports on incidents.
- ASB was predominantly youth related.
- Public always asked to report incidents so that the Police are aware.

- Drug patrols were carried out with Community Police Officers.
- Desire to do more but limited due to resource implications.
- Police visits into schools were increasing post pandemic.
- Early Intervention Officer allocated to visit secondary schools.
- Visits also made to primary schools to try to engage them in early intervention – long term approach.
- School visits looking to be expanded to the Sherwood side of the district.
- Key issue is the identification of those involved.
- 17 individuals had been issued with an Anti-Social Behaviour Contract which had seem to have had a positive effect.
- Try to stop ASB before it escalates into something more serious.

Drugs

- There was an operation in place which was targeting both users and suppliers.

Rural Crime

- The current Rural Beat Manager was being upskilled – this was county wide, not just for the Newark & Sherwood district.
- The appointment of an additional Beat Manager was planned for the Collingham/southern area.
- The promotion and engagement around rural crime was constantly ongoing.
- The Police will be hosting a rural policing and partnership show case at the Newark Showground on 16 April 2022. This was an opportunity for people to attend to see how the Police tackle rural crime. This will be widely advertised: farmers; businesses; parish councils; schools etc. It is intended that this will become an annual event with NSDC hosting the first one.

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

It was noted that there had been an increase in the use of motorbikes and quadbikes on the Sustrans route around the Middlebeck area creating ASB with a Member querying how it was being addressed. The Member also stated that he had witnessed 2 young males taking drugs in a public house. He had reported the incident to the door supervisors and it had been dealt with.

In response, Al Ward requested that should such drug taking be witnessed it also be reported to the Police as they needed to be aware of such issues so it can be targeted into the Police activity. He noted that drug use in the night time economy also fell into the ASB category as once the drug was taken, the behaviour of the individual changed. Tackling the local supply of drugs was planned but such premises also needed to be targeted. He noted that a drug dog could be utilised but any stop and search must be based on legal grounds.

In relation to the Sustrans route, Al Ward noted that this had been a problem with many years. Operation Jericho took place when sufficient resources were available. He added that it was a countywide resource which Officers could apply to utilise and that such resource involved the use of specialist off road bikes. Work was also ongoing with housing associations to prevent 4 wheeled vehicles getting on to the track.

A Member noted that there had not been a Safer Neighbourhood Meeting for 3 years. He added that bike thefts were problematic as was the racing of motorised scooters and general speeding of vehicles, especially on the Hawtonville estate. He suggested that the Police website required updating so that the public knew who to report incidents to. He also stated that there needed to be more engagement with teenagers to keep them occupied.

Al Ward advised that the website allowed a postcode to be entered which then provided the reader with the name and contact details of the Officer who dealt with that area, together with an interactive map, noting that vehicle nuisance was known to the Police. In relation to engaging with teenagers, activities were advertised through the Police's Facebook pages,

A Member noted that the previously used off-road vehicle used on the Sustrans route had gone some way to keeping the peace. He added that it had been reported to him that the bridges on the route were frequently used for dealing drugs and a location for ASB. Al Ward again encouraged that all such incidents be reported to the Police.

It was noted that the Police activity appeared to be focussed on the Newark area with a Member querying what was being done in the Sherwood part of the district. Al Ward confirmed that there had been a concentration of resource in the Newark area and that the Sherwood area had not received the same level of policing. He had been party to recent discussions about an increase in Police activity in the Sherwood area but as yet, nothing had been set.

In acknowledging the partnership work already undertaken between the Council and the Police, a Member queried what more, if anything, the Council could do or the individual Councillors themselves. Al Ward stated that his team worked closely with the Community Protection Officers and that as covid restrictions continued to ease, he would wish to undertake additional patrols with them. He added that, if possible, he would wish to work in Castle House for 1 day every 2 weeks.

In response to the issue of rural crime, Al Ward stated that there were not specific numbers being reported in comparison to other incidents, the cost and monetary value was much higher. He added that there had been a greater focus on rural crime since the new Police & Crime Commissioner had been elected. He noted that the size of the area was problematic and that there was a low reporting of incidents.

In drawing the discussions to a close, the Chairman thanked Al Ward for his attendance.

73 SHERWOOD & NEWARK CITIZENS' ADVICE - ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020-21

The Committee considered the report jointly presented by the Homeless Strategy Officer and the Chief Officer of the Sherwood & Newark Citizens' Advice (SNCA).

The report set out the performance targets for the commissioned Debt Management & Homeless Prevention Service to residents in the District for the financial year 2020-21 and the issues faced by the service during and post the pandemic lockdowns.

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 2020/21.

74 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the Homes & Communities Committee before the Council changed to a new governance structure.

He asked Members to reflect on the situation in Ukraine and to think about the Ukrainian people, their families and friends, some of who, lived in the district. In condemning the unprovoked attack he noted that much was being done to support ongoing efforts and pledged a commitment to support and welcome refugees when asked to do so by central Government.

He thanked residents of the district who had immediately gathered donations and care packages for the people of the Ukraine.

In relation to the Council's resettlement pledge, the Chairman advised that a third Afghan family had been housed in January with arrangements ongoing for the fourth and fifth (and final) properties being sourced in the district.

The Chairman advised that there had been no need to activate the Severe Weather Emergency Provision as the two identified rough sleepers had decline the offer to utilise the temporary accommodation.

In relation to the consultation on Tenant Satisfaction Measures launched by the Regular for Social Housing, the Chairman advised that the Council's focus had been to ensure that tenants were aware of the consultation and how they may give their views. This was done via a programme of events, social media posts and articles in newsletters. This was supplemented by face-to-face drop-in sessions in Newark and Rainworth, online drop-ins, attendance at community groups and contacting tenants directly.

The Chairman provided an update on flooding activities, stating that the Southwell scheme was nearing completion and that the Environment Agency continued to develop an outline business case for a flood alleviation scheme to protect Lowdham. External funding sources to assist with flood prevention at Girton were being pursued.

In relation to how residents could contact the Council a "webchat" was launch in February with some 300 customers using it in the first few weeks.

The Chairman took the opportunity to highlight a number of milestones and changes made to housing services. He advised that to-date, 264 new units of accommodate had been completed, 45 currently under construction, 10 progressing through planning with further sites being expired to build potentially 45 more units. This would result in 30 additional units being built to the target set of 335. He added that a new Housing with Care scheme, Broadleaves, had opened in Boughton.

He advised Members that the savings of £1m realised from integrating housing services back into the Council were protected and earmarked for improving a number of housing services.

In closing, the Chairman thanked all previous and current Members for their valuable contributions during his Chairmanship.

75 EMPTY HOME STANDARD PILOT - INTERIM UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to provide Members with an interim update on the empty home standard pilot, which included decoration preparation.

It was reported that following a review of the core letting standard a pilot scheme had been approved which included decoration preparation in addition to the revised core letting standard together with an additional sum of up to £500 per property to meet individual tenant needs to help them start well in their tenancy. Information contained within the report related to the first half of the pilot scheme for the period 1 October – 31 December 2021. This related to void works; starting well fund; and both tenant and officer feedback.

In considering the report a Member queried as to how long it took to get residents back into empty properties. The Director advised that there was a variety of reasons as to why a property may remain empty e.g. the carrying out of planned works was easier when the property was empty.

A Member queried how long the process took to bring a property back into use after it had been abandoned or left. The Director advised that the Council had to wait for court proceedings to take place before they could take possession of the property. If a tenant simply left, the Council had to locate them to try to get them to sign if back over rather than going through the courts.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the positive outcomes of the pilot to-date, be noted;
- (b) the continuation of the pilot be endorsed; and
- (c) it be noted that a final outturn report would be provided following the closure of the pilot at the end of March 2022.

76 RESPONSIVE REPAIRS POLICY

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which detailed the new Responsive Repairs Policy and sought Members' approval prior to consideration by the Policy & Finance Committee.

It was reported that the Policy applied to general needs and all communal areas of stock managed by the Council, including leasehold properties. The proposed new Policy would cover all responsive repairs including: general build; mechanical and electrical; communal heating; lighting; boosted water systems; fire related works; door entry systems; and lifts.

In considering the report a Member queried how an incident of accidental damage would be dealt with. The Business Manager advised that each incident would be dealt with on an individual basis.

AGREED (unanimously) that the new Responsive Repairs Policy be endorsed and recommended to Policy & Finance Committee for adoption.

77 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EXEMPT REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided a list of exempt business considered by the Committee for the period 14 September 2020 to date.

The report set out the individual reports and whether they should be released into the public domain or remain exempt.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted with the items which are no longer considered exempt being released into the public domain.

78 PHASE TWO CONSULTATION OF TENANT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented jointly by Tenant Engagement Officers which sought to update Members on progress made with regards to the consultation and implementation plan for tenant engagement in housing services.

As reported, the Committee had approved a review of tenant engagement in January 2020 with phase one of that review being considered by Committee in March 2021. Comprehensive details of phase two were contained within the report with a proposed new tenant engagement board structure being detailed in paragraph 2.8.

In considering the report Members thanked the Officers for the work undertaken to-date in encouraging tenant engagement in housing services.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the progress in the implementation of the Housing Services tenant engagement review be noted;
- (b) the findings on how tenants would like to be involved be noted;
- (c) the new engagement structure be endorsed; and

- (d) the proposal to implement the Local Influence Networks be supported.

79 FUTURE USE OF THE HAWTONVILLE LOCAL OFFICE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Customer Services which sought Members approval for the permanent closure of the Hawtonville Local Office and that the site be included on the Council’s approved and ongoing HRA development programme.

The report set out that the office had been closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic and had not subsequently been reopened. No complaints had been received in relation to the office being closed. It was noted that the way in which customers contacted the Council had changed during the office closure and that alternative active resources for tenants had become available.

In considering the report Members noted the alternative methods of being able to contact the Council.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the closure of the Hawtonville Local Office be approved; and
- (b) the site be included in the Council’s approved and ongoing HRA development programme, which met the local evidenced housing need, be approved.

80 DECARBONISATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING STOCK - BRIEFING

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which outlined some of the key issues facing the Council in retrofitting the social homes to meet net zero by 2050. The report outlined some fundamental key questions that required answering to shape the objectives, timeline and delivery of the decarbonisation strategy going forward.

The report set out the key factors in relation to social housing stock achieving zero carbon emissions within the Government’s Clean Growth Strategy and the cost thereof for that and social housing to achieve C-rates Energy Performance Certificates by 2035. Details on heating sources were provided, noting that any must contribute to a reduction in fuel costs, thereby enabling tenants to move out of fuel poverty. Paragraph 3.6 of the report provided Members with a list of what considerations needed to be explored for each home.

In considering the report, the Director noted that it would take a number of years to achieve zero carbon emissions. A Member queried whether it was an opportune time to sell off the Council’s old stock and purchase new sustainable properties. In response the Business Manager advised that it was cheaper to modify existing Council stock. It was noted that there was a developing market around such modifications which would lead to a reduction in the costs to carry out such works. It was further noted that Government funding to progress the works would be vitally important to achieving a successful outcome.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Decarbonisation Briefing be noted.

81 HOUSING SERVICE COMPLIANCE 3RD QUARTER OUT TURN PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which sought to provide an overview of compliance performance of the housing service at the end of December 2021.

The report set out compliance performance to provide Members with an oversight and input into the essential services. The report included information on the following:

- Landlord responsibilities for a range of building safety measures including fire protection, gas, lifts, asbestos, electrical and water. It also summarised details of the Council's housing stock.

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

82 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER 3 21/22

The Committee considered the report presented by the Transformation Manager which set out Q3 of the Community Plan Performance Report (October to December 2021). Members were also provided with housing performance indicators, attached as an appendix to the report.

In considering the report, the Chairman commented that he welcomed the aspirational targets set within the housing performance indicators.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

83 YORKE DRIVE REGENERATION PROJECT - UPDATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to update Members on progress with the Yorke Drive and Lincoln Road Playing Fields Regeneration Project.

It was reported that four submissions had been received to address levels of noise emanating from the factory to the east of the site with the original and revised layouts being shown at paragraph 3.1.3 of the report. A public consultation had been undertaken on the revision, details of which were reported, together with a timeline for delivery.

In considering the report, a Member noted that there was no provision of bungalows within the scheme. The Director advised that this was partly due to the Council's commitment to existing tenants and the availability of bungalows in other areas. It was also noted that there were accessible apartments within the scheme, together with ground floor accommodation, with a Member commenting that he had not received any representations about there being no provision of bungalows.

AGREED that the progress on the regeneration of the Yorke Drive Estate and Lincoln Road Playing Fields be noted.

Meeting closed at 8.54 pm.

Chairman