

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 November 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor R White (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P Rainbow (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor L Brazier, Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor S Carlton,
Councillor Mrs L Dales, Councillor P Harris, Councillor S Haynes,
Councillor Mrs L Hurst, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor M Pringle,
Councillor L Goff and Councillor T Wildgust (Substitute)

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D Lloyd

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Cope (Committee Member), Councillor D Cumberlidge (Committee Member) and Councillor N Mison (Committee Member)

37 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Agenda Item No. 8 – Newark & Sherwood District Council’s Tree Strategy
Councillor Carlton raised a personal interest as a Director of Sherwood Forest Trust

Agenda Item No. 9 – Community Plan Performance A2
Councillor Carlton raised a personal interest as a Director of Active4Today.

38 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

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.

39 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2022

AGREED that the minutes from the meeting held on 17 October 2022 were a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

40 NEWARK TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN AND TOWN DEAL

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to update Members of the following: the work undertaken in developing the Town Investment Plan (TIP); the delivery of identified priority projects in the TIP through the Newark Town Deal (NTD); the report on the assurance of the Towns Fund and Levelling UP Fund Round 1; and related future interventions and opportunities.

The report set out the process for creating the Newark Town Investment Plan (TIP), together with details of the identified 10 priority projects and noted that there was also a list of some 30 potential future projects which may emerge and/or be priorities beyond the initial 10, setting a possible 30-year time frame for activity and focus. The financial position of the projects was detailed in the report together with project outputs and risks with paragraph 2 setting out the next steps for the projects.

In considering the report, Members raised a number of queries. In relation to the 78 students having progressed through the Construction College, Members queried how many had secured subsequent employment. Officers advised that some of the courses on offer were sponsored by industry and the students undertaking the courses were on work placement. Officers advised that a report would be brought to a future meeting providing further information.

In relation to the high-speed fibre broadband, a Member noted that fibre broadband had been installed in Newark some 15 years previously but had not been rolled out to some villages in the district. In response, the Director acknowledged that some previous aspirations for fibre broadband had not been realised but there was potential to lobby to have provision in other areas of the district.

In response to what action might be taken should apprentices at the YMCA not complete their courses, the Director advised that there would be regular monitoring and evaluation meetings which would enable any worrying trends to be spotted and corrected, if necessary. Further details on numbers would be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Member also queried as to whether any other qualification would be included in the prospectus for the Air & Space Institute, specifically those which did not require further or higher education, that could be done either part-time or by attending night-school. The Director advised that there would be pathways to alternative education routes, both higher and further education which could be undertaken either full or part-time. He advised he would speak with the Programme Manager and project sponsors about the issue raised.

In relation to the 20 Minute Cycle Town, a Member queried as to the current usage figures. The Business Manager – Economic Development & Visitors advised that there were currently 3 docks in the town with a 4th one planned and there were approximately 267 users. Discussions were being held with Brompton Bikes' marketing team to target local employers who may want to partner with the scheme. It was noted that advanced discussions were also being held with Newark Hospital. Members would be kept informed of numbers as the project progressed.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the process followed in the development of the Town Investment Plan be noted; and
- (b) the progress made in the delivery assurance and monitoring of the Town Deal and other proposals within and related to the Town Investment Plan be noted and welcomed.

41 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Environmental Policy & Projects Officer which sought to provide an update to Members on the 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; Carbon Reduction Support; Solar PC Installation; Decarbonisation Plan; Brunel Drive Master Plan; Climate Awareness Training; LAD2 Energy Efficient Improvements to Homes; and Tree Planting. Paragraph 3 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, a Member queried whether anything was being done to enable the recycling of milk carton lids and what incentives were in place to encourage residents to recycling glassware. The Environmental Policy & Projects Officer advised she would confirm this with Environmental Services that milk carton lids could go in the grey recycling bin.

In relation to the Green Awards app., a number of Members queried how this had been advertised and whether it could be promoted again in an attempt to encourage additional people to sign up. In response, Members were advised that it had been promoted on social media and a promotional stall had been present at an event held at Sherwood Forest. There was also cross promotion with other local authorities. She added that there was a target of 100 per quarter for people to sign-up. Members suggested this was promoted through parish councils who could assist with encouraging take-up of the App.

A Member queried what lessons had been learned from the use of electric vehicles by the Council's Community Protection Officers. He advised that this issue had formed part of discussions at the ASB Review Working Group around whether electric or hybrid vehicles would be a better solution. In response, the Officer advised that the charging points at Castle House were not sufficiently powerful to quickly charge the existing vehicles and acknowledged that a hybrid vehicle would be a better option in some situations. She added that the next procurement cycle was in 2025/2026 and all relevant information about electric vehicles would be fed into the Brunel Drive Master Plan.

In relation to tree planting and access to free trees by residents, Members queried how many residents had already expressed an interest. In response they were informed that 441 residents had already signed up for a free tree. These sign-ups were as a result of the offer for a free tree for those who completed the residents survey. This was in addition to the usual annual promotion of the scheme which would be undertaken early next year.

A Member queried whether any data was available in relation to the LAD2 scheme to enable comparisons to be drawn as to whether the programme of works had resulted in energy efficiencies. The Environmental Policy & Projects Officer advised she would speak with the relevant Officer and ask for a written response to be provided.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the inclusion of Southwell Leisure Centre and new Council services in our net carbon neutral target and incorporated into the annual carbon footprint calculation going forwards be endorsed; and
- (b) the progress on the action plan and its key targets be noted.

42 NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S TREE STRATEGY

The Committee considered the joint report of the Director – Communities & Environment and Development Manager – Environmental Services which provided Members with the opportunity to review the Tree Strategy and the implications thereof.

The Leader of the Council was in attendance at the meeting and presented the report to Committee, endorsing the recommendations that they forward the report to Cabinet for consideration. He provided a summary of the background to the development and proposal to adopt the Tree Strategy and the options considered together with the financial implications as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report. He added that it would be the intention to consult with key partners (Sherwood Forest Trust; RSPB; Woodland Trust; and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust) prior to releasing the strategy to the public for consultation.

In considering the report, Members agreed that it was a document that the Council could take pride in. It provided information as to the importance of trees both nationally and within the Newark & Sherwood district; what the current situation was locally; how the Council protected the trees within its district; clear objectives for tree planting in the district; how local communities would be engaged; and how the Council maintained its tree stock.

In relation to existing working partnerships and joint working, a Member queried whether partnership working was the 'direction of travel' for the Council and whether this was cost effective. In response, Officers advised that the Council were looking to become part of existing well-established partnerships with private landowners and that a proportion of the work undertaken to-date had been grant funded.

A Member raised issues surrounding planning developments and what, if anything, could be done to ensure that developers did not damage or remove trees during their works. Officers advised that other than planning regulations there was nothing further that the Council do. The Leader advised that there had been an increase in Tree Protection Orders to protect trees from developers, but that help was also needed from the community to identify trees at risk.

In relation to the damage mature trees could do to public pavements, it was noted that these had been planted many years previously and that the lessons learned was that the right tree must be planted in the right place. In acknowledging the right tree in the right place comment, a Member suggested that future public engagement must include information to ensure that communities knew the importance of that statement. Officers advised that a Green Champion Scheme would hopefully be launched in the new year and that the Council would be seeking to identify Green Ambassadors.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet be recommended to:

- (a) support the Council's green ambitions to 'enhance and protect the district's natural environment' as stated in the Community Plan;
- (b) support the release of the Tree Strategy to the public for consultation via the Council's website; and
- (c) support and approve the proposal to fund the increase in budget for essential tree survey and maintenance work.

Councillor Harris left the meeting and did not participate in the remainder of the meeting.

43 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE Q2

The Committee considered the report presented by the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to present to Members the Quarter 2 Community Plan Performance Report (July-September 2022). Members were asked to review the Community Plan Performance Report attached as Appendix 1 together with supplementary documents (Appendices 2-4) which highlighted customer feedback and also to consider the Council's performance against its objectives.

In response to questions submitted, the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that:

The Newark & Sherwood Community Lottery, whilst experiencing a slight decline, was still performing well. It continued to be promoted on social media and nationally by the promoter;

Repairs undertaken at first visit had declined by 10% but work was ongoing to improve the efficiency of tradesmen; reactive repairs had improved from the previous year but were still above target. It was reported that the way in which priorities were listed had been amended;

The length of time taken to answer a call had risen by 17 seconds in comparison to the previous year. This was noted as being partly due to the increase in the number of calls being received which was a direct result of queries relating to energy rebate grants, household support fund and the first council tax recovery run of the financial year.

In noting the contents of the Performance Report, Members welcomed the inclusion of Southwell Leisure Centre into the facilities run by Active4Today. They also thanked residents for organising their own litter picks, thereby contributing to the cleanliness of their communities. Members also welcomed the improvement of visitors to the National Civil War Centre and the Palace Theatre.

In noting the previous comment about the Community Lottery, a Member queried whether it was possible to widen the way in which a ticket could be purchased as, at present, this could only be done by committing to a monthly direct debit. In response, it was advised that this method of purchasing a ticket had been adopted following advice from Gambling Aware but enquiries as to possible changes would be made.

In relation to fly tipping, a Member queried whether a trial had been run at the Newark Household Waste Recycling Site that permitted the use by small vans and what the outcome of that trial had been. The Officer advised he would refer the request to the Waste – Environment Team for a written response.

In noting the 6.8% of Town Centre retail premises vacant across the district being better than the 9% target, a Member requested that, if possible, comparable data with other similar town centres be included in future reports.

The Member also queried what measures could be put in place to better communicate with tenants the process that has to be followed in relation to reactive repairs and that the Council's response time was improving. The Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing, who was in attendance at the meeting, advised that repairs would be an area of focus during the next financial year and that the Tenant Annual Report would have a 'spotlight' on all services.

In relation to the improvement of health and wellbeing of local residents, specifically those residents that smoked, a Member queried what measures were being carried out to promote a reduction in the current numbers. The Director advised that Cabinet were to receive the updated Health & Wellbeing Strategy for consideration in December and that the Council had signed-up to a non-smoking proposal, together with the work undertaken with businesses who had a prevalence of employees who were smokers.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Community Plan Performance report and supplementary documents be noted.

44 GAS SERVICING UPDATE

The Committee considered the verbal report of the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to update Members on the latest position with the gas safety programme for Council owned housing.

The Director advised that at the end of September the percentage of compliant properties was 87.96%, which had led the Council to refer themselves to the Regulator of Social Housing. The Regulator had found the Council to be in breach of the acceptable level but were now content with progress to remedy the issue. The Council were to undertake an audit of the service and refer this to the Regulator for scrutiny. When the findings of the audit were accepted by the Regulator the Order would be removed. The Director assured Members that the issue remained her top priority and that she would continue to hold daily and weekly meetings until it was satisfactorily resolved.

In considering the update, Members welcomed the progress made in increasing the percentage of compliant properties to 98.96%. They queried whether it was possible to put a clause in tenancy agreements which required the tenant to allow the Council into their property to carry out such safety checks. The Director advised that such a clause was already included but that work was ongoing to strengthen it and also to widen it to include electrical safety checks.

The Director further advised that the Tenant Engagement Board were looking, in depth, at the issue in an attempt to understand the barriers and reluctance of tenants to allow Council contractors access to carry out such checks.

AGREED (unanimously) that the verbal report be noted.

45 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT Q2

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Resources/Deputy Chief Executive which sought to update Members on the forecast outturn position for the 2022/2023 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 30 September 2022): variances. Table 1 showed the General Fund Revenue Outturn with a projected unfavourable variance against the revised budget of £0.655m on service budgets. Table 2 provided an overview of projected Housing Revenue Account Outturn for 2022/23 with an unfavourable variance against the revised budget of £0.194m. Details were also provided as to the Capital Programme.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Committee note the following:

- (a) the General Fund projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.655m on services;
- (b) the Housing Revenue Account projected unfavourable outturn variance of £0.194m on services; and
- (c) the capital outturn position of £67.109m.

46 REVIEW OF HRA BUSINESS PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Resources/Deputy Chief Executive which sought to provide Members with an overview of the key assumptions made within the production for the 30-year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

The report set out the background to the development and maintenance of the HRA Business Plan, setting out some of the key assumptions which would affect the Plan from an external perspective. These external factor assumptions would then be considered when looking at internal factors e.g. setting of rent, capital improvements or revenue services. The agreed assumptions would then be fed into the overall HRA Business Plan which in turn would form the basis of the HRA Budget and Rent Setting report.

AGREED (unanimously) that the assumptions presented to be utilised in the update of the 30-year HRA Business Plan be endorsed.

Councillor Goff did not participate in the above vote as he had temporarily left the meeting room.

47 MEMBERS DIGITAL TOOLS WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the joint report of the Director – Resources and Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development which sought to provide Members with a summary of the review undertaken by the Members Digital Tools Working Group.

The report was presented by the Chairman of the Working Group, Councillor Simon Haynes, who provided Members with a brief outline of the work undertaken by the Group which had led to the recommendations set out in paragraph 3 of the report, that following the District/Parish Elections in May 2023, all Members would be offered a laptop as standard, or a windows tablet as an alternative option, on request.

AGREED (unanimously) that the recommendations of the Working Group in relation to the provision of hardware, software and training for the new cohort of Members elected in May 2023 be endorsed, for a final decision to be taken by the Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development and Governance.

48 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REVIEW MEMBER WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Communities & Environment which sought to present to Members the findings of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Working Group.

The report was presented by the Chairman of the Working Group, Councillor Ronnie White, who provided Members with a brief outline of the detailed work undertaken by the Group which had led to the recommendations as reported in paragraph 4.0, with details of the financial implications, should the recommendations be endorsed, being provided in paragraph 5.0.

In considering the report a Member commented that in the past he recalled that speakers had been attached to columns e.g. lampposts or CCTV cameras, in areas such as parks. This enabled the CCTV operator to speak to an individual who may be acting in an anti-social way in an attempt to deter them. In response, the Business Manager – Public Protection advised that he could not recall the use of speakers. He added that replacing existing cameras was being considered and as part of that such things as flashing blue lights were included. He advised he would raise the Members' query but noted that continued use of any deterrent would eventually lose its impact.

In noting that many individuals who participated in ASB had existing mental health problems, a Member queried what could be done to help them. The Director – Organisational Development & Governance advised that most known individuals would have existing mental health support. For anyone who did not, then they would be signposted to the most appropriate source of help.

In relation to the range of mileage that an electric vehicle could travel and whether their use was appropriate for Community Safety Officers, the Business Manager advised that current mileage was approximately 150 but this did not account for variable speeds, traffic conditions, idling in traffic etc. so a figure of 90 miles was used before the vehicle required charging.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the proposed recommendations as summarised in paragraph 4.0 of the report that aim to reduce ASB and ultimately help make residents feel safer in the district be endorsed; and
- (b) the recommendations of the Working Group be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

49 CUSTOMER STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

NOTED that the Membership of the Customer Strategy Working Group as follows:

Councillor Peter Harris (Chairman)
Councillor Lydia Hurst (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Betty Brooks
Councillor Rita Crowe
Councillor Donna Cumberlidge
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Mike Pringle

Dale Shaw (Tenant Engagement Board Representative)

50 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (NOVEMBER 2022 TO FEBRUARY 2023)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period November 2022 to February 2023.

51 MINUTES OF CABINET HELD ON 4 OCTOBER 2022

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 4 October 2023.

52 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

NOTED the items listed for future meetings.

Meeting closed at 8.13 pm.

Chairman