

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, Nottinghamshire, NG24 1BY on Monday, 30 January 2023 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 D Cumberlidge, Councillor Mrs L Dales, Councillor P Harris,
Councillor S Haynes, Councillor Mrs L Hurst, Councillor J Kellas,
Councillor N Mison and Councillor M Pringle

53 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

54 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.

55 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2022

Minute No. 41 – Climate Emergency Update

The Chairman provided Members with an update on the Green Rewards app, advising that information had been forwarded to all Town and Parish Councils.

AGREED that the minutes from the meeting held on 28 November 2022 were a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

56 CHANGE TO AGENDA RUNNING ORDER

The Chairman informed the Committee that the running order of the Agenda would be amended.

Agenda Item No. 10 – Update to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2026/26 would be taken next. The Agenda would then resume its published running order.

57 UPDATE TO THE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022/23 TO 2025/26

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Financial Services which updated Members on the position of the currently approved Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The report provided extracts of the forecasted financial position of the authority when the MTFP was set at full Council on 8 March 2022. It was reported that the Government's expected consultation paper on the Fair Funding

Review had been delayed until after 2023/24. Paragraph 1.8 of the report set out the updated position based on the increases in inflation set within the Budget Strategy, together with the assumption that the changes in local government financial system would not be implemented until 2025/26 at the earliest.

Members considered the report and noted that the final version of the MTFP would be considered by Cabinet on 21 February 2023 before being presented to full Council on 9 March 2023.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.

58 ACTIVITY REPORT AND FUTURE PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE ENVIRO-CRIME ENFORCEMENT PILOT PROJECT

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to provide Members with an update on the enviro-crime activity undertaken by Waste Investigations Support & Enforcement Ltd. (WISE) as part of the enforcement pilot. Members views were also sought as to what criteria might be included in any future contract specification.

Included within the report were the duties and activities undertaken by WISE with paragraph 1.2 providing statistical information thereon, this also included information as to the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued, paid, remained outstanding and cancelled. The information was further broken down into FPNs issued within each of the district wards together with the number of patrol hours by WISE operatives.

In considering the report, Members raised a number of queries which the Business Manager responded to. These included, but were not limited to: how the areas to patrol were determined; the reason for the high proportion of FPNs not paid or cancelled; effectiveness of partnership working between WISE and the Council; effects and possible remedies of littering from vehicles; working in schools to educate students; evidence gathered to aid in possible prosecutions; do FPNs act as a deterrent; are sufficient and appropriate receptacles provided to stop littering occurring; and training of WISE operatives.

Members were in agreement that the issue of littering from vehicles was a matter for concern. They noted that the litter was mainly from fast-food outlets and queried what more, if anything, could be done to prevent this. The Business Manager advised that it was challenging to catch the offender and also to prove who actually threw the litter from the vehicle. He added that on occasion a receipt was found alongside the litter which detailed the premise the food was purchased from. However, despite the premise having CCTV, it was not permissible to view the footage for the purpose of identifying the individual and again, this would not provide evidence of who threw the items from the vehicle.

In relation to the number of FPNs either cancelled or payment remaining outstanding, the Business Manager advised that there would always be a period of time between the FPN being issued and payment being received which accounted for the high number remaining unpaid. He added that FPNs were cancelled for a number of

reasons e.g. false details being given to WISE operatives (name and address) or possibly the perpetrator being underage or deemed to be vulnerable on further investigation. He further added that several perpetrators who had not paid their fines had recently been successfully prosecuted.

Members suggested a number of issues be considered for inclusion in future contract specifications, these being: a review of whether FPNs were effective and appropriate for identified repeat offenders; that there be specific targeting of littering where it had a visual impact on an area e.g. removal of all the litter rather than just cigarette ends; that a review of the provision of bins be carried out to ensure they were appropriate for the area they were located in e.g. if there was a known issue with cigarette ends then the bin should have a specific disposal cavity for those. It was noted that the existing good working relation with cleansing services resulted in a review of the provision of bins where littering was identified as an issue.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the enforcement activity of the Enviro-Crime pilot to-date, be noted; and
- b) when areas of service activity or performance were considered for inclusion in any future contract specification, the comments made by Members, as above, also be considered.

59 COMPLIANCE UPDATE - HOUSING STOCK PRESENTATION

The Committee considered the presentation delivered by the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to present Members with an overview of the Housing Regulatory Framework and the Council's compliance thereon. Additional information was contained in a briefing note that was circulated ahead of the meeting and this is attached as an **appendix** to the minutes.

The presentation highlighted the four elements of the framework being: Regulator of Social Housing; Housing Ombudsman; Building Safety Regulator; and Dept. of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities with further details being provided as to the Council's responsibilities for each one. The aforementioned briefing note highlighted the actual performance of housing compliance services as at the end of December 2022.

In considering the presentation and briefing note, Members commented that it was pleasing to see that the gas servicing situation continued to improve and requested further information as the reason why tenants were refusing access to the remaining 26 properties that were non-compliant.

In response as to whether the Council engaged with tenants, other than when access to their properties was needed, the Director advised that information was sent out to tenants on a quarterly basis, advising of what the Council, as their landlord, was doing e.g. the need for annual safety checks. The Annual Tenant Report was also sent out. The Director acknowledged that further consideration needed to be given on other methods of communicating with tenants, other than the written word. She added

that a review had just been launched as to the customer experience from gas and electricity servicing and findings from that would be used to further improve the customer experience.

In light of the findings of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, a Member queried whether the Council was compliant with all necessary fire safety regulations. The Director advised that the Council did not have any properties over 18m high but did, nevertheless, adhere to best practice for that type of property. She added that it was her intention to provide a briefing on this issue to the wider Council.

In noting that overseas developers did not appear to be adhering to the new building regulations issued following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, a Member queried whether the Council were experiencing such issues and also whether the Council's more constant partners were adhering to regulations. The Director advised that the Council undertook stringent checks on any partners they engaged with and that all landlords would have to abide by the same conditions. This would include ensuring that any materials used during a development met with all the necessary health and safety regulations. In response to whether the Council's housing service were informed of any environmental issues arising e.g. damp and mould in properties, the Director advised that in the case of enforcement, it sat within the Public Protection Business Unit and work was currently being undertaken to strengthen how this type of issue was assessed, understood and responded to, both from an enforcement stance and as a landlord.

In response to who was responsible for the installation and upkeep of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, the Director advised that it was the Council, as landlord, to install such devices but the tenant was required to carry out regular checks to ensure they were in working order. In noting that many individuals did not realise that carbon monoxide monitors had an expiration date, the Director advise that this could form part of wider publicity about similar issues.

AGREED (unanimously) that the presentation and compliance performance exceptions be noted.

60 BRIEFING ON PROPERTY COMPLIANCE ACROSS THE CORPORATE ESTATE

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Corporate Property which sought to update Members on compliance management across the estate with a focus on the corporate estate and tenanted properties.

The reported provided Members with an overview of the core elements of compliance related activities together with statistical information as to the number and type of sites managed and visited. Also provided were details of occupancy levels across the estate and budgeted rental income receipts together with projected figures. Paragraph 2 of the report set out in further detail examples of compliance servicing and repairs and necessary annual reviews, with these being noted as: fire, gas and electrical safety; legionella; asbestos; air conditioning systems; lifts and lifting equipment; and fall arrest systems.

In response to whether tenants could report any issues directly themselves by accessing and using the Council's bespoke web-based application, Concerto, the Business Manager advised that tenants were offered that facility.

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

61 COST OF LIVING PRESENTATION

The Committee considered the verbal update provided by the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing relating to the Council's response to the Cost of Living Challenge. The Director advised that the Council's response to this so far had focussed on four elements: residents; tenants; businesses; and colleagues. She further advised that more specific initiatives were currently being discussed and that these would be presented to Cabinet in February for consideration.

AGREED (unanimously) that the verbal update be noted.

62 HOUSING STRATEGY PRESENTATION

The Committee considered the presentation delivered by the Housing Development Officer which sought to provide Members with details of the development of a Housing Strategy which would demonstrate the Council's vision for housing and also outline issues and actions on housing delivery. It was noted that whilst it was not a statutory document, it would support and link into a number of other policies and strategies e.g. the local plan and would provide RP Stakeholders, developers/applicants and residents with a clearer picture of the Council's priorities and funding.

Contained within the presentation were details of housing within a national context, together with policy and legislative drivers. Also included were details of work already undertaken from a local context together with key housing facts from within the district and the key findings of that work. It was noted that three themes had emerged:

Theme 1 – enabling housing growth and regeneration;

Theme 2 – meeting the district's housing needs and aspirations; and

Theme 3 – driving excellence in housing standards across tenures.

Members welcomed and supported the development of a Housing Strategy, noting that it would offer opportunities for collaborative working with partners. Members noted that some of the proposals were contrary to the Council's Local Plan and queried how this would be resolved. In response, they were informed that the Strategy's development would involve working with the Council's Planning Policy & Infrastructure Business Unit on such issues.

In response to a Member raising the issue of the cost of utilising emergency accommodation, the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing advised that new emergency accommodation was currently being developed in Newark, following which a review would be undertaken of the emergency accommodation at Wellow Green.

AGREED (unanimously) that the presentation be noted.

63 CUSTOMER STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

The Chairman of the Customer Strategy Working Group, Councillor Peter Harris, provided the Committee with a verbal update on the work of the group undertaken to-date.

He advised that two meetings had taken place, with the third happening the following day. He noted that the input from the Tenant Engagement Group representative had been valuable. The main themes that had emerged so far were noted as:

How the Council engaged with its customers;
How that engagement took place (how do they get in touch);
How are enquiries handled;
How can the Council constantly improve their engagement with customers.

Councillor Harris stated that a pilot project may be developed in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holder, with the final report and recommendations being present to Cabinet, possibly in March or April 2023. He also advised that the report which was to be considered by the Working Group the following day would be circulated to Members of the Committee, asking them to forward their comments to feed into the Groups considerations.

AGREED (unanimously) that the verbal update be noted.

Councillor Harris left the meeting at 19:45 hours

64 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (JANUARY 2023 TO APRIL 2023)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period January to April 2023.

65 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2022

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 1 November 2022.

66 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2022

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6 December 2022.

67 MINUTES OF CABINET (PERFORMANCE) MEETING HELD ON 20 DECEMBER 2022

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet (Performance) meeting held on 20 December 2022.

68 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 DECEMBER 2022

NOTED the Minutes of the Executive Shareholder Committee meeting held on 20 December 2022.

69 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

NOTED the items listed for future meetings.

Meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Chairman