

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, 26 June 2023 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor M Pringle (Chairman)
Councillor N Ross (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor A Brazier, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor S Forde, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor M Shakeshaft, Councillor T Smith, Councillor T Thompson and Councillor T Wendels

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen, Councillor L Brazier and Councillor L Tift

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor A Amer (Committee Member)

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Chair 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.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 MARCH 2023

AGREED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2023 were a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed all Members of the Committee to the first meeting of the new municipal year, adding that scrutiny was vital for the residents of the district. Not only did the Committee hold the Cabinet to account but were integral in the development and shaping of Council strategies and policies. The work of the Committee would also involve looking for ways in which the Council could make improvements to services and to the performance of its partners.

5 APPOINTMENT OF POLICY & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO:

AGREED that the following Members be appointed to the Tenant Engagement Board and the Planning Policy Board:

Tenant Engagement Board

Councillors: Alice Brazier, Penny Rainbow and Neil Ross

Planning Policy Board

Councillors: Andy Freeman, Mike Pringle and Karen Roberts

6 PRESENTATION AND REPORT - BASSETLAW AND NEWARK & SHERWOOD COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS & PERFORMANCE/REVIEW OF PRIORITIES

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to provide Members with an update on the work undertaken by the Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood Community Safety Partnership. The report also set out the current performance and explained the choice of priorities for the current year.

The report set out that the establishment of a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was a statutory requirement and the responsible authorities that formed that partnership. Further details specific to the BNSCSP were provided and how it operated in practice. Paragraph 2.5 listed the priorities for 2023/2024 together with the rationale for each one.

In considering the report Members asked a number of questions of the Business Manager and also Inspector Charlotte Ellam of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority, who was in attendance at the Committee.

In noting the 9% variance in crime for 2022/2023, a Member queried as to the reason for that. Inspector Ellam advised that there had been 727 additional crimes recorded compared to the previous year and to identify the specific reasons for that would require a lengthy and complex discussion.

In relation to additional funding for CCTV cameras, a Member queried whether the recordings from those were being used as evidence to prosecute offenders. Inspector Ellam confirmed that evidence was used as appropriate. In response, the Member stated that a clear message needed to be sent out to the public that the cameras were monitored and action would be taken against individuals who were found to be engaging in unlawful behaviour.

In response to what action the Police were taking to combat the increase in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Newark Town Centre, Inspector Ellam advised that the Police's Town Centre Strategy had been updated with one aspect of that being a review of how known individuals could be targeted through a recently established Anti-Social Behaviour Panel. Initially this may be availability of diversionary activities or referrals to social care but if that was not appropriate, then enforcement action for example, community behaviour orders, injunctions and appropriate action if the behaviour was straying into criminal activities. In relation to available resources, the number of Beat Managers had been increased to four. Two were deployed in the traditional role of patrol, engagement and problem solving and one was a dedicated Project Beat Manager whose role it was to engage with businesses, focus on retail

crime and what measures can be taken to better secure their premises. Newark Town Council had provided an office space in the Buttermarket and this would be where the Town Centre Beat Managers would be based. She noted that with the coming of the summer months, there would be a focus on deploying Officers to specific locations and times within the town centre. In advising that the Police held monthly performance meetings, Inspector Ellam noted that she was mindful that by targeting a specific location, it had the effect of displacing the ASB to another area and that was why the individual carrying out the ASB must also be targeted.

Inspector Ellam was asked about what resources were available in areas outside of Newark. She advised that there were only finite resources and these had to be focussed on areas with identified issues but that work was ongoing to deploy resources to the Ollerton area.

A Member noted that there was a perception that the reporting of low-level crime and ASB was low and queried how the reporting of an incident could be better communicated. Inspector Ellam advised that the Police's Engagement Strategy had been reviewed, noting that effective communication was vital. A review on how social media could be used had also been undertaken. This could involve the reporting of operations the Police had carried out so that the public could see that action was being taken. There was also a dedicated Officer in the Communications Team who publicised upcoming operations. The Business Manager advised that comments and posts on social media, i.e. Newark Spotted were also monitored and checked against what had been officially reported to the Council and/or the Police. She added that the Council were looking at ways in which to let the public know how to report an incident.

In relation to the Gypsy Roma and Traveller Community priority, a Member noted the comments about the lack of services and whether any had been specifically identified. The Business Manager advised that there was a working group which met monthly. From that there were sub-groups, one of which was looking at that specific issue and engagement with the community. She added that due to their close proximity, the Council naturally built relationships with the community. However, other agencies used the Council as messengers rather than engaging directly themselves but that this was being reviewed with a view to improving and building on existing relationships.

A Member queried with Inspector Ellam what action could be taken to stop offenders returning to their previous criminal activities when released from prison, specifically referring to a known burglar in the area. Inspector Ellam advised that it was difficult to make a structured plan around one individual. It was vital that the Police received community intelligence either directly or through reports to other organisations e.g. Crime Stoppers as without that knowledge they could not formulate a plan.

In closing the debate, the Chair advised that he would welcome a further report in 6 months as to what plans there were to tackle the issues rather than a statistics led report, thanking the Business Manager and Inspector Ellam for their attendance at Committee.

AGREED (unanimously) that the performance and priorities of the Community Safety Partnership be noted.

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to update Members on the delivery of the identified priority projects in the Town Investment Plan (TIP) through the Newark Town Deal (NTD).

The report set out the process undertaken in developing the TIP and noted that the final Newark TIP had captured a clear ambition to target legacy projects across the following four pillars of intervention: Skills, Education & Business; Connectivity; Town Centre, Regeneration & Culture; and Town Centre Residential. The pillars of intervention then helped define the ten priority projects, as detailed in paragraph 1.5 of the report together with a further thirty potential future projects. The report also provided details of the latest position of the projects and their associated finances and how those were monitored and evaluated with the next steps for the projects being detailed in paragraph 6.0. It was also reported that the Council's Auditors had been asked to carry out an audit of the Towns Fund Process and Levelling Up Process to provide an additional level of scrutiny and to identify any issues which could be learned from for possible future projects.

In considering the report, a Member commented on the work that had gone into securing the funding and developing the projects to their current stage. He queried whether there had been any issues/lessons learnt that could help with any similar projects in the future. In response, the Director advised that speed and cost inflation had been reflected upon as had the fact that it was challenging to make progress at an early stage when dealing with a £47m capital programme, noting that any impact of the projects was not immediate and could be generational. He added that it was the intention to feed back to the Government the competitive nature of the bidding process for funding, in that the ambition of the bidder was limited to the timetable and the word count of the submission documentation.

In response to what the latest position was with the recruitment of new members to the Newark Town Board the Director advised that the Board was in the process of refreshing their remit and membership noting that the Board was different to that of the one initially established.

In referring to the Gateway Project and the development of the Full Business Case for that, a Member queried how much of the Newark Lorry Park would be required to successfully deliver the project. The Director advised that a report would be taken to the September meeting of Cabinet in relation to the relocation of the lorry park, adding that the works for A46 bypass also had implications with National Highways providing clarity as to how much land they required in August 2023.

In relation to the YMCA project, a Member advised that he would like to see more in-depth information as to the outputs, aims and what was deliverable as he had concerns about the long-term viability of the project. The Director advised that the Full Business Case went into some of that detail and could provide information to the Committee after the audit had been carried out.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress made in the delivery, assurance and monitoring of the Town Deal and proposals within the Town Investment Plan be noted and welcomed.

8 POLICY & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development which sought to present to Members the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee’s Annual Report 2022/2023 for approval. Attached as an appendix to the report was an overview of the area and services the Council covers together with an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Committee. It also provided a review of the work undertaken by the Committee throughout the previous year which included: working groups; shaping policies and strategies; driving service improvement; and scrutinising and questioning performance.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report content and structure be approved.

9 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE Q4 AND PRESENTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development which sought to present to Members the Quarter 4 Community Plan Performance Report (January to March 2023). Members were asked to review the Community Plan Performance Report attached as Appendix 1.

In considering the report and presentation given, a Member queried as to the current level of annual rent debt. The Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised he would forward a written response.

A Member suggested that it would be beneficial to be able to compare the statistics in the report to that of pre-pandemic levels. The Transformation & Service Improvement Officer advised that not all the information contained in the report would be available from pre-pandemic years but would amend the report to include that where possible to provide comparative data.

AGREED that the Quarter 4 Community Plan Performance Report (January to March 2023) be noted.

10 NEWARK & SHERWOOD COMMUNITY LOTTERY

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Newark & Sherwood Community Lottery since its launch in May 2021.

The report set out the impact of the scheme since its launch, providing information as to the number of ‘good causes’ registered with the lottery who were receiving financial support through ticket sales. It was also reported that regular marketing and promotion of the lottery was undertaken together with the number of supporters purchasing tickets each week. A sum of £32,510.40 had been generated in the second year of operation.

In considering the report and noting that the membership target of 60 good causes had been achieved, a Member queried whether further promotion of the lottery would be undertaken. A Member also commented that it would be beneficial to have

an illustrative graph provided in the next report to enable Members to track progress. This would identify the geography of where the lottery tickets were being purchased and which organisations had signed up. It could also provide information as to whether there had been a spike in sales following a social media campaign and whether that should be repeated. In addition, a Member also requested information as to responses from charities that had benefited from funding in an area with a high purchase rate and also from one with a lower purchase rate, thereby enabling Members to consider what further promotions could be carried out. The Business Manager – Housing Services advised she would forward the comments to the Sports, Community Facilities & Events Manager for response.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

11 TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which provided Members with a draft Tenant Engagement Strategy for consideration and onward recommendation to Cabinet for approval.

The report set out that the Tenant Engagement Strategy sat alongside the Council's Consultation & Engagement Strategy 2022/2027 which set out how the Council sought out, listened and acted on the views of tenants and leaseholders. The Council's strategy outlined the importance of tenant engagement in every aspect of housing services and what the approach looked like, including how the tenant engagement team could support effective engagement; supporting the Council to create vibrant and self-sufficient local communities where residents looked out for each other and actively contributed to the local area.

In considering the report a Member requested that they be provided with the Action Plan which was referred to in Point 5 of the Strategy, when available. In noting the number of new tenants reported with a figure of 165, he also queried whether information was available as to the number of tenants who returned following and initial engagement. He suggested that if someone had chosen not to engage further, were they contacted and asked why, as that would be an effective form of feedback. The Member also commented that the proposed method of tenant involvement, in the form of a menu, required additional detail as it was unclear from the document, as presented, the time commitment required in order to participate.

A Member queried whether the Tenants' Newsletter had been distributed and not solely via email, as not all tenants had an email address. The Member also advised that on speaking with tenants in her area, only very few of them were aware of the Local Influence Network (LIN) groups. She suggested that information on these be included in future newsletters.

In noting the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, a Member queried how different these were from those previously used. The Business Manager advised that they were similar and could easily be incorporate into the performance indicators. The Member also queried how Officers ensured that they were engaging with a wide cross-section of tenants. The Business Manager advised that some of that was done through the work of the LINs. She provided an explanation as to how tenants could

be engaged, for example, by a door-knock or a letter drop. Also, the Community Link Groups met in community centres and the Tenant Engagement Officers would sometimes drop in to speak to the tenants present. This provided information as to what the local issues were and what potential solutions the tenants would wish to see actioned.

Members also requested that a future report be presented to Committee providing statistical information on the take-up of the options and as a follow-up of the above comments.

AGREED (unanimously) that the new Tenant Engagement Strategy be endorsed and recommended to Cabinet for approval, subject to the above comments of the Committee being reported to Cabinet for consideration.

12 STAR SURVEY RESULTS

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which sought to present to Members the findings of the Survey of Tenants and Residents for 2022/23 (STAR). The findings reported how satisfied Council tenants were with a range of measures relating to their Council home, tenancy, communal services and neighbourhood.

It was reported that the survey took place in February and March 2023 with some 545 tenants being surveyed, 10% of which was undertaken via telephone. The survey was carried out by an independent survey provider with the final report being provided in early May 2023. The questions used were similar to those asked in 2021/22 to ensure that comparative data was available. The survey carried out featured the 12 Tenant Satisfaction Measures to allow the Council to obtain a baseline benchmark before conducting the official Tenant Satisfaction Measure survey in September 2023.

In considering the report and presentation, a Member noted the impact that ASB had and queried what, if any, sanctions were available to the Council as a landlord against those involved in such behaviour. The Business Manager – Housing Income & Leaseholder Management advised that there were limits as to what could be done. If it was a Council tenant engaged in such behaviour then enforcement action against the tenancy agreement could be taken but that could be a lengthy process. He noted that this could then negatively impact on the Council's performance targets as neighbouring residents would want to see action taken swiftly to resolve the issues. He also noted that it could be a Police response that was required.

A Member noted the time taken to carry out housing repair to a Council property which was exacerbated by the difficulties in recruiting skilled workers e.g. plumbers to the Responsive Repairs Service.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note:

- a) the overall positive levels in satisfaction for housing services;
- b) the full STAR Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report;

- c) that the report had been shared with the Senior Leadership Team on 16 May and would be shared with the Portfolio Holder for Homes & Health with a presentation being given to the Tenant Engagement Board and Performance Cabinet; and
- d) there will be a survey in September 2023 following the introduction of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that, in part, potentially replace the current and ongoing arrangements for STAR.

13 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2023

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive/Director – Resources which sought to provide Members with the provision 2022/23 financial outturn position on the Council’s revenue and capital budgets. The information contained in the report included: general fund revenue; housing revenue account; capital programme; provisions and impaired estimates on debtors; usable reserves; and collection fund. The report provided a summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the revised budget together with any surpluses/deficits that had been allocated to or from reserves.

The accounts showed a favourable variance of £0.746m on service budgets with a total favourable variance of £0.565m which was broken down in the report. The Deputy Chief Executive gave the context to the level of the positive variance and how this may be applied going forward.

In considering the report, a Member queried whether it was possible for the Council to invest in Government Bonds. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that it was and that all possible investments were contained in the Treasury Management Strategy. This was contained in the overall Budget Strategy which was considered at the Audit & Governance Committee before being presented to full Council for approval.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note:

- a) the final outturn of revenue and capital spending for 2022/23;
- b) the variation to the capital programme, as set out in paragraph 1.15;
- c) the capital financing proposals as set out in paragraph 1.16;
- d) Capital Programme reprofiling of £28.643m rolled forward into 2023/24 as per appendices E and F;
- e) the movement in Provisions and Impaired Estimates on Debtors;
- f) the creations of the new reserves, as outlined in paragraph 1.26; and
- g) the individual contributions to, and withdrawals from, the revenue and capital Usable Reserves.

14 BUDGET STRATEGY 2024/2025

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive/Director – Resources which sought to provide Members with information to enable the Council’s budget process to proceed encompassing agreed assumptions. The report set out the General Fund, Capital and HRA Budget Strategy for 2024/25 for Members’ consideration, prior to the detailed work commencing.

The budget process would result in setting the budget and the Council Tax for 2024/25 and the Housing Revenue Account budget and the rent setting for 2024/25.

The Strategy took into consideration agreed financial policies on Budgeting and Council Tax, Reserves and Provisions, Value for Money and also a set of budget principles which set out the approach to be taken to the budget process. These policies had been reviewed and updated as appropriate and were attached as appendices to the report.

The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was approved on 9 March 2022. The report set out a summary of the financial forecast identified within the current MTFP assuming that Council Tax at average Band D would increase by the same rate as in the 2023/24 financial year, namely 1.94%.

The report also set out a number of underlying assumptions which would be applied in compiling the draft budget for 2024/25 including staff costs, provision for inflation and fees and charges.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee:

- a) recommend to Cabinet the overall General Fund, Capital & HRA Budget Strategy for 2024/25;
- b) note the consultation process with Members;
- c) note that Budget officers continue work on the assessment of various budget proposals affecting services for consideration in setting the Council's budget; and
- d) note that Budget Managers work with finance officers in identifying further efficiency savings, increasing income from fees and charges and in identifying new sources of income.

15 CABINET FORWARD PLAN - JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2023

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period June to September 2023.

16 TOPIC REQUEST FORM - STANDARD OF SOCIAL HOUSING FOR RESIDENTS

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form (TRF) submitted by Councillor Penny Rainbow and seconded by Councillor Linda Dales in relation to the Standard of Social Housing for Residents.

In presenting the TRF to the Committee, Councillor Rainbow advised that she wished to improve her understanding of what the process was for reletting Council properties and how this might be improved. The Chair advised that due to the work being undertaken by Officers it was not appropriate to establish a Working Group at this time. He requested that Councillor Rainbow submit a more specific issue for his consideration and support. This would then be given to Officers for them to report back to Committee at a future meeting, together with their general feedback on the work currently being undertaken as detailed in the Officer response on the TRF.

17 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

NOTED the provisional Agenda items for future meetings.

Meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman