

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, 4 March 2024 at 6.00 pm.

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

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen, Councillor L Brazier, Councillor J Hall, Councillor P Peacock, Councillor P Taylor and Councillor L Tift

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor K Roberts and Councillor T Smith

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

71 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Agenda Item No. 5 – Review of Grant Funding. Councillor Pringle declared an Other Registerable Interest as a Trustee of Central Notts. CA.

Agenda Item No. 10 – Community Plan Performance Update. Councillors: Rainbow; Shakeshaft; and Wendels declared Other Registerable Interests as Trustees of the Southwell Leisure Centre.

Agenda Item No. 14 – Support for Active Lifestyles Working Group Update. Councillors: Forde; Freeman and Pringle declared Other Registerable Interests as Directors of Active4Today.

72 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 29 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73 REVIEW OF GRANT FUNDING

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Regeneration & Housing Strategy which sought to provide Members with the opportunity to review the range and impact of regular Council funding (through Service Level Agreements (SLAs)) supporting charities and community groups.

The report set out the scope of the grants reviewed and the vision of the Council, as set out in the Community Plan 2023/2027. Details of the current agreements in place were listed at paragraph 1.4 together with the funding per annum. The review

included consideration of whether funding should continue to the organisations listed and therefore the impact of each SLA was included. Paragraph 2 of the report listed the organisations which had demonstrated a positive impact and where it was proposed to continue with their funding.

In considering the report Members welcomed the proposed 10% inflationary uplift to the current SLA values for Citizens Advice, HomeStart, Newark & Sherwood CVS and the Furniture Project with a 3% increase in subsequent years. In response to whether the rolling 3-year grant allocation would be reviewed annually, the Business Manager advised that it would be reviewed on an annual basis with it being reset by the end of the second year.

A Member queried whether the proposal to set the allocation for a 3-year period would prohibit other organisations from applying for assistance. The Business Manager advised that if the organisation/charity aligned to the vision of the Council as set out in the Community Plan, then discussions could be held as to whether assistance could be provided.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note:
  - i. the current range of charities supported by the Council through Service Level Agreement/Grant Allocation;
  - ii. the impact of funding charities for the residents of Newark & Sherwood, as detailed in Section 1.6-1.12 of the report;
  - iii. the move to modernise and standardise the agreements current in place with charities, as detailed in Section 2.3 of the report; and
- b) the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee recommends to Cabinet:
  - i. the move to a rolling three-year grant allocation to provide charities with confidence and stability in their funding, as detailed in Section 2.4-2.5 of the report; and
  - ii. a 10% inflationary uplift be applied to the current SLA values with Citizens Advice, HomeStart, Newark & Sherwood CVS and The Furniture Project, with a 3% increase in the subsequent years.

Having declared an Other Registerable Interest, the Chair did not take part in the above discussion. The Vice-Chair presided during this time.

## 74 BUDGET REPORTS 2024/2025

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Financial Services which sought to provide Members with details of: the spending proposals in the Council’s proposed 2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget; the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the four financial years between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2028; and the Capital Programme Budget 2024/25 to 2027/28. The information was provided in 3 appendices to the report and had been considered by

Cabinet at their meeting held on 20 February 2024 with recommendations being forwarded to full Council for consideration at the meeting scheduled for 7 March 2024.

Revenue Budget: It was reported that the budget proposals had been prepared in accordance with the Council's budget setting strategy for 2024/25, as approved by Cabinet on 11 July 2023. Accordingly, the budget had been derived from the 2024/25 base budget within the MTFP approved by full Council on 9 March 2023. Growth and efficiencies had been included based on engagement with Portfolio Holders throughout the budget setting process. Changes, as described in the Budget Strategy in relation to pay awards and inflation had also amended the base position.

Medium Term Financial Plan: It was reported that the MTFP demonstrated that the Council was able to set a balanced budget for 2024/25, noting that it would need to reduce expenditure and/or increase income to pay for service delivery in future years. The Council would be required to continually consider how best to manage demand for its services as well as continually monitoring and reviewing how best to deliver each service. The report included information on financial projections; fair funding review; retained business rates; council tax; new homes bonus; income from fees and charges; reserves and balances; assumptions made within the MTFP; and the proposed strategy for bridging the funding gap.

Capital Programme Budget 2024/25 to 2027/28: It was reported that the Capital Strategy had been approved by Council on 8 March 2023 and contained the capital appraisal form template and the prioritisation criteria. The capital appraisal forms were circulated to Business Managers to enable bids for new capital schemes. These were then scored in conjunction with the prioritisation criteria with the results considered by the Senior Management Team together with the proposed Capital Programme. Details of the capital expenditure in relation to the general fund and the housing revenue account were included in the report, together with the resources available. Paragraph 5 of the report set out the current plan for financing the proposed capital programme.

In considering the report and appendices, the Members thanked the Business Manager for his presentation of the information and noted the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Committee note the reports as presented to Cabinet on 20 February 2024.

75 PROJECT GENERAL FUND AND HRA REVENUE & CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31.03.24 AS AT 31.12.23

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Financial Services which sought to update Members with the forecast outturn position for the 2023/24 financial year for the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue and capital budgets. The report also detailed performance against the approved estimates of revenue expenditure and income; reported on major variances from planned budget performance; and reported on variations to the Capital Programme for approval, all of which were in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The report provided information as to the current position as at 31 December 2023. This included a projected unfavourable variance on service budgets against the revised budget of £0.331m, which represented a 1.86% of the total service budgets. It was further report that there was an overall favourable variance of £0.636m to be transferred to General Fund reserves. Appendix A to the report set out the variances projected against each of the portfolio holder budgets.

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

- a) the General Fund projected unfavourable outturn variance on service budgets against the revised budget of £0.331m;
- b) the Housing Revenue Account projected favourable outturn variance of £0.025m to the Major Repairs Reserve; and
- c) the Capital Programme forecast outturn of £69.381m.

#### 76 PRESENTATION BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR PAUL PEACOCK

The Committee considered the presentation delivered by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Peacock, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance. He provided Members with details of the remit for his portfolio together with information as to the latest position with the East Midlands Council's and East Midlands Combined Authority devolution. He also provided the Council's framework, detailing delivery themes; connecting aims; objectives; and outcomes.

He stated that the East Midlands Council's Combined Authority would offer opportunities for funding with the first year being focussed on transport. He added that he represented the whole of the district, and that part of that role was to determine how best Newark & Sherwood could benefit from the new Authority.

In considering the presentation a Member welcomed the appointment of a Mayor and the opportunities for additional funding. In noting there had been a shortfall in commercialisation, he queried what measures the Leader had taken in the first year to resolve that issue. In response the Leader advised that it was an ongoing process. Ways in which the Council could reduce expenditure or increase income were constantly monitored, noting that government funding of local authorities had reduced significantly from previous years. He acknowledged that the Council needed to be more commercial, noting that that had been the reason for the establishment of Arkwood Developments Ltd. He advised that the Transformation Team would continue to review ways to increase income, noting that local government finances were volatile at present, but that Newark & Sherwood were well placed in comparison to some other local authorities.

In response to whether he had any intention to revise the allocation of responsibilities within each portfolio, the Leader acknowledged that his portfolio did appear to be larger than some of the others and that it was his intention to review that, noting that some of the newer portfolios would grow organically over time. He added that he was in discussions with the Business Manager – Democratic Services in relation to how the committee cycle facilitated decision making.

A Member queried whether the decision to stop 'days of action' had been due to budget issues. In response, the Business Manager – Regeneration & Housing Strategy advised that they were still going ahead, but rather than the Council leading on them, it was now community led with the Leader adding that he was pleased to see the Council engaging with community groups.

In relation to the issue of the Council's previous commitment to be a paper-light authority some years previously, a Member noted that little appeared to have changed. The Leader acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult to be totally paperless but that the matter perhaps needed to be reviewed.

In noting the current number of vacancies, a Member queried what plans the Leader had to fill those roles. In response, the Leader advised that he was speaking with the Chief Executive with a view to undertaking a Pay Review.

In response to when the Kerbside Glass Recycling would commence, the Leader confirmed that bins were currently being delivered to households and that they could begin using them immediately. The collection of glass would commence on 8 April 2024.

In referring to the devolution deal, a Member expressed concern that county functions may be devolved upwards and queried how that could be counteracted. In response, the Leader advised that the Council needed to make the process of investing in Newark & Sherwood as simple as possible. The Council needed to explain their needs and what the benefits would be if investment was allocated. Any bid for investment must be well rounded and balanced.

In closing the debate, the Chair thanked the Leader for his attendance and for responding to queries raised by the Committee.

77 HOUSING, HEALTH & WELLBEING HOUSING COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE REPORT Q3 2023/2024

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which sought to provide Members with the performance position as of 31 December 2023 in relation to compliance including actions to rectify identified issues and to advise of a change to the format for performance reporting.

The report provided details of performance of housing compliance services with a focus on exceptions performance, which were outside the Council's target parameters. It was reported that performance was shared with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and was a standard agenda item for discussion at Tenant Engagement Board meetings. Performance exceptions were reported as: Gas Servicing – this was 99.65% compliant; Oil Servicing – currently 8 homes where the oil service had not been completed; and EICR Certifications less than 5 Years Old and HouseMark EICRs – currently 41 properties without a EICR electrical certification of less than 5 years old, 34 of which were in a legal process. It was also reported that in relation to gas compliance, the Council wrote to the Regulator for Social Housing on 5 February requesting removal of the regulatory notice with supporting evidence.

In considering the report, the Chair noted the proposed change to the format of the performance report and requested that Committee be presented with both the old and new format to enable a comparison to be made.

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

- a) the exceptions to performance of the housing service compliance functions;
- b) the request to the Regulator for removal of the regulatory notice; and
- c) that the presentation of performance will change from Quarter 1 – 2024/25 reporting cycle onwards.

#### 78 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE Q3

The Committee considered the joint report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Manager and Officer which presented to Members the Quarter 3 Community Plan Performance Report (October to December 2023). Members were asked to review the Reports attached as Appendix 1 together with the Compliance Report attached as Appendix 2.

In considering the report Members queried where the new CCTV control room would be located. The Transformation & Service Improvement Manager advised that a location had not yet been finalised but Castle House was the preferred site.

In relation to anti-social behaviour, Members queried whether specific areas were being targeted. In response, they were advised that the increase was across the whole district but that areas targeted specifically were seeing an improvement. Members also queried whether the new contractors employed to carry out enforcement duties were visiting rural areas. The Transformation & Service Improvement Manager advised that further information would be included in the next quarterly report. The Chair suggested that ward specific information be included in the report from the Business Manager – Public Protection in relation to Bassetlaw and N&S CSP Progress & Performance due to the June 2024 meeting.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Community Plan Performance Report Q3 be noted.

#### 79 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE TARGETS

The Committee considered the report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Manager which sought to provide Members with an update on the performance framework, improvements and indicators that would be used to monitor and measure performance against the 2024/27 Community Plan.

It was reported that following the development of the new Community Plan it was necessary to revisit the overarching framework and how performance was monitored and measured. As part of that process, it was proposed that both the district and

customer sections would be enhanced with the indicators also being reviewed to reflect the new objectives and ambitions. Details of the indicators were contained within the appendix to the report, including: Improve Health & Wellbeing; Increase the Supply, Choice and Standard of Housing; Raising of Peoples' Skill Levels and Create Employment Opportunities for them to Fulfil their Potential; Reduce Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour; Reduce the Impact of Climate Change; Celebrate and Invigorate Community Spirit, Pride of Place and Sense of Belonging; To be a Top Performing, Modern and Accessible Council; and Complaints/Feedback/Customer.

In considering the report Members commented that they had little opportunity to consider and comment on the information, querying the reason for the delay. The Transformation & Service Improvement Manager advised that the recent storms and associated flooding had led to a delay in the completion of the Business Plan Cycle as Business Managers had been reacting to the flooding emergencies with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) giving a 4-week extension to the deadline.

In relation to new indicators, specifically total footfall across all heritage and culture services and site, a Member queried how the proposed target had been derived. The Transformation & Service Improvement Manager advised that additional sensors had been installed and were able to capture additional footfall. He added that all targets had been scrutinised by SLT and asked the Committee to scrutinise the quarterly reports, highlighting any additional information they required.

In closing the debate, the Chair welcomed the report and strongly encouraged all Members of the Committee to scrutinise the information presented to them.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Performance Framework indicators be noted.

## 80 2024 PEER CHALLENGE

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development which provided Members with an update on the Council's Peer Challenge, its approach and timeline.

It was reported that the Local Government Association operated a peer challenge programme which supported continuous improvement by providing effective insight, guidance and challenge to enable continuous improvement, as well as assurance to local leaders and residents.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the rationale and practicalities for an LGA Peer Challenge be noted; and
- b) the Peer Challenge be welcomed and the progress with provisional arrangements be endorsed.

81 MANSFIELD & DISTRICT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

NOTED the Minutes of the Mansfield & District Crematorium Joint Committee held on Monday, 15 January 2024.

82 SUPPORT FOR ACTIVE LIFESTYLES WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The Committee considered the verbal update of the Chair of the Support for Active Lifestyles Working Group, Councillor Celia Brooks.

Councillor Brooks advised that the third meeting of the working group had been held on 1 March 2024 with an emphasis on discussing the progress of the group to-date. The group had looked at a wide range of information covering all areas of the Council's current offer, noting that the focus was now to consolidate the information and agree some firm recommendations in preparation for the final report to committee.

Councillor Brooks also advised that Officers would continue to build on existing data to support the working group's findings and this was being undertaken by several officers across the Council who had been supporting the work of the group. All indications were that the Council provided support to number of activities that enhanced their residents' opportunity to lead an active lifestyle. Councillor Brooks finished by advising she would update the relevant Portfolio Holder of the findings of the group for information purposes.

AGREED (unanimously) that the verbal update be noted.

83 INFORMATION SHARING WITH MEMBERS WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The Committee considered the verbal update of the Chair of the Information Sharing with Members Working Group, Councillor Jack Kellas.

Councillor Kellas advised that the Working Group had last met on 22 February when they had received a demonstration of Power BI which had been designed and developed inhouse. The group were due to receive a demonstration by an alternative provider at their next meeting, following which a comparison of the two would be made.

He advised that in relation to Stage 2 complaints, these would begin to be signposted to raise awareness. He also advised that the Communication & Marketing Manager had attended the previous meeting to speak about how they could assist Members in their role, for example with the use of social media. He also reminded Members that they each had a designated Democratic Services Officer who they should contact for any assistance they required.

In considering the verbal update a Member commented that the breath of work of the group had widened from that originally set. He queried whether the software demonstrated could generate push notifications for Members or whether they would need to log on to find the information themselves. Councillor Kellas replied that it was his understanding that the information would be accessible on the Members'



intranet and that this would have a filtering function with training for Members being provided. The information could also be provided in a report format similar to the Community Plan Performance Report but it should be noted that only a Member's own ward information would be provided.

AGREED (unanimously) that the verbal update be noted.

84 CABINET FORWARD PLAN - FEBRUARY TO MAY 2024

NOTED the Cabinet Forward Plan for the period February to May 2024.

85 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2024

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 23 January 2024.

86 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

NOTED the provisional Agenda items for future meetings.

Meeting closed at 7.59 pm.

Chair