

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Policy & Performance Improvement Committee** held in the Lifespring Centre, Sherwood Drive, New Ollerton NG22 9PP on Monday, 24 June 2024 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor N Allen, Councillor A Brazier, Councillor C Brooks, Councillor S Forde, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor D Moore, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor K Roberts, Councillor M Shakeshaft, Councillor T Thompson and Councillor T Wendels

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Brazier

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor R Jackson

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

The Chair advised that the meeting was being recorded and live streamed.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Agenda Item No.18 – Review of Public Consultation Document: Kidney Stones. Councillors Kellas and Ross declared Other Registerable Interests relating to their roles on the Town Council.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2024

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

4 BASSETLAW AND N&S CSP PROGRESS & PERFORMANCE UPDATE AND REVIEW OF PRIORITIES

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Public Protection which sought to provide Members with an update on the performance data and activities for crime and ASB across the Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood Community Safety Partnership.

The report set out the 2023/2024 performance and activities and set out the priorities for 2024/2025. The appendices were restricted.

In considering the report the Chair stated individual cases could not be discussed.

In noting the report Members asked 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 11.8% reduction in anti-social behaviour a Member asked how accurate the figures were and how the Council ensured their accuracy as in the past the Council had put a lot of time and effort into campaigning for reporting, but that had not been the case recently.

The Business Manager - Public Protection responded that both the Council and Police highlighted the importance of reporting but that was an ongoing issue. Those areas that have seen a drop in anti-social behaviour were specifically targeted for reporting, a lot of actions had been taken and as a result an improvement had been seen. The Council and the Police were actively trying to increase reporting in a number of ways including within press releases. There had been an increase in patrols by the Community Protection Officers who had been making connections with local groups and businesses so that reporting was more real life rather than being seen in news articles. The Council and Police wanted to see more reports but in doing so this could result in seeing more in the % changes.

A Member asked for clarification on the numbers in the report noting that the figures showed that anti-social behaviour had reduced, in comparison to the Nottinghamshire Police statistics, which showed that crime had gone up. This suggested that although the number of reported cases of anti-social behaviour may have reduced, if crime had gone up, then the reduction may not be as significant and that more should be done to push the importance of reporting.

In response Inspector Ellam advised that the crime figures refer to all crime therefore it was a broad subject matter and within the figures there would be a link to anti-social behaviour, but the vast majority were linked to other forms of criminality.

Reductions may refer to specific issues that had been targeted and which fell within the boundaries of anti-social behaviour.

In respect of youth anti-social behaviour particularly relating to a specific core group of young people within the town centre, a lot of work has been done to engage and divert them to make a real change. This group may account for a significant number of reports made over a short period of time and which may affect the figures.

The town centre also had issues with homelessness and street drinking. The partnership needed to work together to find ways of tackling this. Anti-social behaviour covered a broad spectrum and there was a need to adapt and target all issues of anti-social behaviour and actively encourage reporting.

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

5 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2024

The Committee considered the report the Business Manager - Financial Services, which sought to provide the provisional financial outturn position for 2023/24 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 and how any surpluses/deficits that had been allocated to or from reserves.

The accounts showed a favourable variance of £0.252m on service budgets, with a total favourable variance of £0.989m which was broken down in the report.

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

- a) the final outturn of revenue and capital spending for 2023/24;
- b) the variation to the capital programme, as set out in paragraph 1.15 and 1.16;
- c) the capital financing proposals as set out in paragraph 1.20;
- d) Capital Programme reprofiling of £13.588m rolled forward into 2024/25 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 1.27; and
- g) the individual contributions to, and withdrawals from, the revenue and capital Usable Reserves.

6 CORPORATE ANNUAL BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2025/26

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager - Financial Services 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 2025/26 for Members' consideration, prior to the detailed work commencing.

The budget process would result in setting the budget and the Council Tax for 2025/26 and the Housing Revenue Account budget and the rent setting for 2025/26.

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

The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was approved on 7 March 2024. The report set out a summary of the financial forecast identified within the current MTFP, assuming that Council Tax at average Band D will increase by the same rate as in the 2024/25 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 2025/26 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 2025/26;
- 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.

7 PRESENTATION BY COUNCILLOR L. BRAZIER - PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING

Councillor Lee Brazier, Portfolio Holder for Housing gave a presentation on the work of the Housing directorate. Councillor Brazier introduced each business unit of the directorate and gave an overview of their responsibilities and what had been the main focus and achievements in 2023/2024.

At the end of the meeting, the Chair invited Councillor Brazier back to the floor to take questions.

In noting the presentation, a Member commented that as part of ensuring high standards, the Regulator stipulated that the Council engaged with tenants and that the Council had a newsletter, The Tenant Times, which should have paper copies in all community rooms, however, this was not the case in Southwell and asked if this could be addressed. Having access to paper copies was especially important for those tenants who did not have access to online copies. Councillor Brazier responded noting that it was important to know where the newsletter was not accessible and would ensure it was addressed by the Tenant Engagement Team. Councillor Brazier advised he would also raise it with the Business Manager - Tenancy & Estates and ask that Tenancy Officers take copies of the newsletters when they visit tenants.

In noting the presentation, a Member referred to the 50 unit new development scheme detailed in the Community Plan and queried when work would start on this. They also queried, in relation to the 3-5 year program, what would be included and when was it likely to commence. Councillor Brazier responded confirming that in relation to the 50 unit program a report outlining the details of how it would look going forward would be brought to the committee by the Business Manager - Regeneration & Housing Strategy in the next few weeks. In relation to the 3-5 year development program, the priority was to ensure the current stock was at the highest possible standard before going forward with the development program. The Chair raised that the forthcoming report from the Business Manager - Regeneration & Housing Strategy be shared with all Members.

In noting the presentation, a Member asked as to how the 2,500 people on the Housing waiting list would be accommodated, noting that the housing stock reduced in numbers each year as a result of Right To Buy sales and what would the priority be in terms of addressing the decarbonisation of existing homes against building new green homes. Councillor Brazier replied that it was important to note that the majority of people on the waiting list were adequately housed in Band 4. With respect to decarbonisation, Councillor Brazier stated that to-date, all work had been carried out through grant funding and they continued to look for suitable grant funding to support properties when possible. Work was ongoing to ensure the best lifestyle for current and future tenants. Building new properties was challenging due to limited land supply and limited finances and it was not known when funding would become available, it was not possible to know when new properties would be built. Should funding become available for decarbonisation in certain properties, then this would be utilised accordingly, but obtaining funding for a few properties would not take priority over getting the basics right for all properties and tenants. The current Stock Condition Survey was incomplete and must be completed, as per the legislation. Once completed it would give the most accurate data and would be in a position to look at new builds from that point.

In noting the presentation, a Member commented on the new Hub at Boughton and queried if there were plans for more hubs during 2024/25 and 2025/26 in areas across the district that were considered to be socially challenging. Councillor Brazier advised that most areas have a community facility. Boughton was considered unique within an area of social deprivation because it did not have a community centre. The Boughton Hub was modelled on Chatham Court and was working well so far. After the first year they would consider what the benefits had been for the residents, what the social and economic impact had been and would hold training courses with Citizens Advice and other services. Once past this point and should the Tenancy teams feel there was a recognised need for further Hubs, then it would be considered.

A Member commented that following a walk-about in the district recently, noting the environment as opposed to the properties, it was their belief that properties which were previously owned by Newark and Sherwood Homes were maintained by the Street Scene Team under a Level Agreement. They queried to what extent was that service less than other Service Level Agreements in the district and if so, are there any plans to address it. In addition, the Member stated that they were impressed with the Street Scene Team and how quickly they addressed issues using a miscellaneous budget. This seemed more preferable compared to other service level agreements which created lists of issues, often outsourcing to contractors which was more labour intensive and expensive. The Member queried if the miscellaneous Street Scene budget could be used more and could the budget be increased. Councillor Brazier responded that there should be no difference between the Service Level Agreements and that they are all in place to provide the same level of service. The HRA Street Scene was funded by the HRA budget which was a ringfenced budget of tenant money. If there was a lack of quality within the HRA Street Scene Team, then it needed to be raised with the Business Manager - Tenancy & Estates. Councillor Brazier further advised that Street Scene teams had limited resources and may not always have the capacity to deal with problems quickly therefore some work was carried out by external contractors. Service Level Agreements were reviewed with the Director - Housing Health & Wellbeing to ensure that fees were not being over or

under charged. He noted that the General Fund was separate to the HRA and whilst services could be paid through the General Fund, budget could not be transferred from the HRA to the General Fund. If there were any concerns about spending within the HRA or issues with service quality these should be raised. The HRA budget was the responsibility of all Members to ensure it was providing the best value for tenants.

In noting the presentation, a Member queried what plans were in place for recruitment and retention of staff in terms of CPD, trainees and apprenticeships in order to fill gaps and to ensure they were not in the same position in 5 years' time. Councillor Brazier responded that apprentices were appointed and the Council would be looking to colleges with a view to getting apprentices coming forward at the end of this academic year. It was also important to upskill the local talent and show that the Council was a good place to work and that it offered job security.

In relation to HRA and green spaces, the Member stated that previously there had been estates which had a high percentage of council owned properties but with Right To Buy those communities have now changed and the parks were accessed by anyone, not just council tenants. The Member queried if there were any plans to review the assets and which spaces are paid for purely by the HRA. Councillor Brazier responded that they had looked at scatter land and how best it could be utilised. There was a project going forward across portfolios into how some land was transferred into the General Fund. It was important that tenants had access to parks and green spaces where it is available. Councillor Brazier and the Director - Housing Health & Wellbeing were continually looking at assets if proving to be good value for tenants.

A final question was asked in relation to the York Drive project as to the degree of confidence there was in the planning of it this time and given that the level of trust residents had in the Council had dropped and how this would be rebuilt. Councillor Brazier responded that at the last public consultation event no negativity was raised regarding the revised plans and the feedback had been positive. The planning officers and Statutory Authorities were happy with the plans, the concerns had been appropriately addressed and the developer was on board. Therefore, they were in a positive position for the work to be carried out and to build the relations back up with residents which was a key priority. The Tenant Engagement Team would be part of the relationship building. Councillor Brazier gave a special mention to the good work of Julie Madin, Tenancy Officer.

8 CORPORATE ESTATE - ANNUAL COMPLIANCE UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager - Corporate Property which sought to update Members on Compliance Management across the Estate, focusing on the Corporate Estate and Tenanted Properties.

In noting the report, a Member referred to the Fire Risk Assessment and queried why 16 assessments remained outstanding. The Business Manager advised that the Assurance Template Report included figures that were captured as a snapshot in time and that the figures had since been updated. The report had been presented to the Senior Leadership Team and the Directorate with an updated version available if required.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note the content of the report.

9 REVISED CUSTOMER COMPLAINT & FEEDBACK POLICY AND HOUSING OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE SELF-ASSESSMENT UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Customer Services which sought to update Members on the changes required to the Customer Complaints & Feedback Policy to ensure the Council met the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

In noting the report, a Member queried why this Committee were making recommendations to the Audit & Governance Committee. In response, the Director Customer Services & Organisational Development advised that the responsibility for complaints sat with the Audit & Governance Committee but that as the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee was the scrutiny committee, any strategy or policy change should be considered by this committee to provide an opportunity to comment.

The Chair thanked the Business Manager and her team for her work on this topic.

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

- a) endorse both the revised Customer Complaints & Feedback Policy and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment; and
- b) recommend to the Audit & Governance Committee approval of the revised Customer Complaints & Feedback Policy and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment.

10 DELIVERY UPDATE ON UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy and the Programme Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy which provided Members with an update on the local delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund, including initial outcomes achieved through investment and planned programme activity up until scheme completion in March 2025.

The Business Manager introduced the report explaining that the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural Prosperity Fund was a Locality Fund which had replaced the previous European Fund put in place by the Government in 2022 running through to 2025. Each locality was given a proportion of funding that was to be delivered in each community. The Programme Manager talked through the implementation of that funding within the community.

In noting the report, a Member queried if part of the report would be looking at what other districts were doing as a comparison to our district. In response, the Programme Manager advised that it was something that could be included in the end of programme evaluation report. A number of working groups had been established in each of the neighbouring authorities to share ideas and best practice and to identify opportunities for collaboration. Therefore, there was a good understanding of what others were doing but this could be formalised in the evaluation report.

The Business Manager commented that they were aware of a number of areas in the country that had significant underspends this year and some of the neighbouring authorities had not used their expenditure therefore, there was a risk that their funding would be returned to Government. However, the Nottinghamshire and East Midlands was showing as slightly better.

A further question was asked as to how the Shared Prosperity funding compared with ESF and IDEF funding. The Business Manager responded that from experience the Shared Prosperity Fund had been easier to administer than the ESF and IDEF project. Whilst not easy to compare, it was something that could be looked into when the project finished in March 2025.

The delivery of UKSPF and REPF was a specific activity outlined within the Community Plan, linking back to several key economic and regeneration related objectives.

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

- a) note the high-level outputs and outcomes achieved through funding to date, as detailed within the report; and
- b) note the finalised list of funding allocations/interventions, as detailed within Appendix A of the report.

11 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE Q4

The Committee considered the report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which presented the Quarter 4 Community Plan Performance Report (January – March 2024).

In noting the report, a Member commented that in relation to the Buttermarket, they had been contacted in June 2023 by a customer who wished to rent out some space at the top of the building as a music area and queried if the customer had been consulted about this. It was also suggested that the reason for the reduction in footfall could be related to the number of shops closing recently and therefore more active regeneration was needed. In response the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer stated that the team were consistently attempting to fill the space and had had discussions with interested parties and would pursue all opportunities. With respect to the footfall this would be raised with the Corporate Property team.

In noting the report, a Member commented that they had been contacted by a customer enquiring about hiring the Buttermarket for an event. The customer had been given a number of reasons why the event could not take place and queried why the Council had been obstructive and not proactive in trying to help. The Director - Customer Services & Organisational Development stated that this would be a question for Corporate Property to answer and would raise this with them.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note the Community Plan Performance Report attached as Appendix 1 and the Compliance report attached as Appendix 2.

12 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO:

AGREED that the following Members be appointed to:

a) The Tenant Engagement Board

Councillors: Alice Brazier, Penny Rainbow and Neil Ross

b) The Planning Policy Board

Councillors: Linda Dales, Mike Pringle and Karen Roberts

13 INFORMATION SHARING WITH ELECTED MEMBERS WORKING GROUP - RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Transformation & Improvement Officer which sought to update Members on the work of the member working group on Information Sharing with Elected Councillors.

The Chair of the Working Group, Councillor Kellas, thanked the Members and staff for their good work, with a special mention to Alexander Gamage Data & Digital Innovation Team Leader. The Committee Chair agreed that this had been a very useful Working Group.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee endorse and forward to Cabinet, for consideration and approval, the recommendations of the Working Group as follows:

- a) that the amendment was made to the website, including a postcode search for 'find your ward member'.(NB postcode search had now been implemented);
- b) that all elected councillors are automatically signed up to the Council's Official Newsletters;
- c) the Communications & Marketing Team to set up a further drop-in session for elected councillors to help with social media and Google Alerts;

- d) the posters at **Appendix C** be made available for all elected councillors to use;
- e) that the Democratic Services Team re advertise the allocated Democratic Services Officer (DSO) list and actively promote the support they can offer to elected councillors; and
- f) that the Power BI system be developed and provided to all councillors and that the system be further developed over time to include other service requests and reports.

14 CABINET FORWARD PLAN - MAY TO AUGUST 2024

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period May to August 2024.

15 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS

NOTED the Minutes of the Cabinet held on:

20 February 2024

5 March 2024

26 March 2024

14 April 2024

16 DIGITAL STRATEGY REFRESH 2024/2028

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form to undertake a Digital Strategy Refresh 2024/2025.

AGREED that a Digital Request Working Group be established with the following Policy & Performance Committee Members expressing an interest in participating in the Group and that Councillor N. Ross be appointed as the Working Group's Chair:

Councillor N Ross – Chair

Councillor M Shakeshaft

Councillor A Freeman.

17 REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: KIDDEY STONES

The Committee considered the Topic Request Form to review the public consultation document in relation to the Cabinet approval, in principle, on the design and location of the Kiddey Stones being installed at Castle House.

AGREED that a Review of the Public Consultation Document – Kiddey Stones Working Group be established with the following Policy & Performance Committee Members expressing an interest in participating in the Group and that Councillor A Freeman be appointed as the Working Group's Chair:

Councillor A Freeman (Chair)
Councillor P Rainbow
Councillor M Shakeshaft
Councillor K Roberts
Councillor D Moore
Councillor S Forde
Councillor N Allen
Councillor J Kellas
Councillor J Hall

Meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

Chairman