

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Policy & Performance Improvement Committee** held sat the Lifespring Centre, Sherwood Avenue, Ollerton, NG22 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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Brazier

ATTENDANCE:

APOLOGIES FOR Councillor R Jackson

ABSENCE:

The Chair thanked Liz Phillips for agreeing to host the committee at the Lifespring Centre.

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

3. 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.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 4 March 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. 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 are 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 does the Council ensure their accuracy as in the past the Council has put a lot of time and effort into campaigning for reporting, but that hasn't been the case recently.

The Business Manager Public Protection responded that both the Council and Police highlight the importance of reporting but that is an ongoing issue. Those areas that have seen a drop in anti-social behaviour were specifically targeted for reporting, a lot of actions have been taken and as a result an improvement has been seen. The Council and the Police are actively trying to increase reporting in a number of ways including within press releases. They have increased patrols by the Community Protection Officers who have been making connections with local groups and businesses so that reporting is more real life rather than being seen in news articles. The Council and Police want 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. The figures show that anti-social behaviour has reduced, in comparison to the Nottinghamshire Police statistics, which shows that crime has gone up. This would suggest that although the number of reported cases of anti-social behaviour may have reduced, if crime has 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 is broad subject matter and within the figures there will be a link to anti-social behaviour, but the vast majority are linked to other forms of criminality.

Reductions may refer to specific issues that have been targeted and which fall 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 has issues with homelessness and street drinking. The partnership needs to work together to find ways of tackling this. Anti-social behaviour covers a broad spectrum, and we 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.

- a) The performance data presented and the activities undertaken in 2023/24; and
- b) The priorities for 2024/2025 review of the Community Safety Partnership performance and priorities.

6. 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 show 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.

7. 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. These 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.

8 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 stipulates that the council engages with tenants and that the Council has a newsletter, The Tenant Times, which should have paper copies in all community rooms, however, this isn't the case in Southwell and asked if this could be addressed. Having access to paper copies is especially important for those tenants who do not have access to online copies.

Councillor Brazier responded noting that it was important to know where the newsletter isn't accessible and will ensure it is addressed by the Tenant Engagement Team. Councillor Brazier will also raise it with the Business Manager Tenancy and 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 asked when work would start on this and also in relation to the 3-5 year program what would be included when was it likely to start.

Councillor Brazier responded confirming that in relation to the 50 unit program a

report outlining the details of how it will look going forward will be brought to the committee by the Business Manager Regeneration and Housing Strategy in the next few weeks.

In relation to the 3-5 year development program, the priority is to ensure the current stock is at the highest possible standard before going forward with the development program.

The Chair raised that the forthcoming report from the Business Manager Regeneration and Housing Strategy is 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 reduces 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 are adequately housed in Band 4.

With respect to decarbonisation, Councillor Brazier stated that all work so far has been done through grant funding and they continue to look for suitable grant funding to support properties when possible. Work is ongoing to ensure the best lifestyle for current and future tenants. Building new properties is challenging due to limited land supply and limited finances and it is not known when funding will become available, it is not possible to know when new properties will be built. If funding becomes 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 is incomplete and must be completed, as per the legislation. Once completed it will give the most accurate data and will 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 are considered to be socially challenging.

Councillor Brazier responded 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 is modelled on Chatham Court and is working well so far. After the first year they will look at what the benefits have been for the residents, what the social and economic impact has been and will hold training courses with Citizens Advice and other services. Once past this point and if the Tenancy teams feel that there is a recognised need for further Hubs, then it will 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 are maintained by the Street Scene Team under a Level Agreement and asked to what extent is 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 and were using a miscellaneous budget. This seemed more preferable compared to other service level agreements which were

creating lists of issues and 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 is funded by the HRA budget which is a ringfenced budget of tenant money. If there is a lack of quality within the HRA Street Scene Team, then this needs to be raised with the Business Manager Tenancy and Estates.

Councillor Brazier went on to explain that Street Scene teams have limited resources and may not always have the capacity to deal with problems quickly therefore some work is done by external contractors. Service level Agreements are reviewed with the Director Housing Health and Wellbeing to ensure that fees are not being over or under charged. It should be noted that the General Fund is separate to the HRA, and whilst services can be paid through the General Fund, budget cannot be transferred from the HRA to the General Fund. If there are any concerns about spending within the HRA or issues with service quality these should be raised with Councillor Brazier. The HRA budget is the responsibility of all Members to ensure it is 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 are not in the same position in 5 years' time.

Councillor Brazier responded that apprentices are taken on and they will be looking to colleges with the view to getting apprentices coming forward at end of this academic year. It is also important to upskill the local talent and show that the council is a good place to work and that it is a secure job.

In relation to HRA and green spaces, the Member stated that previously there were estates which previously had a high percentage of council owned properties but with Right To Buy those communities have now changed, and the parks are 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 have looked at scatter land and how best it can be utilised. There is a project going forward across portfolios into how some land is transferred into the General Fund. It is important that tenants have access to parks and green spaces where it is available. Councillor Brazier and the Director Housing Health and Wellbeing are continually looking at assets if proving to be good value for tenants.

A final question was asked in relation to the York Drive project, how much confidence is there in the planning this time and given that the level of trust residents have in the Council has dropped, how will that be rebuilt.

Councillor Brazier responded that at the last public consultation event no negativity was raised regarding the revised plans and the feedback was positive. The planning officers and Statutory Authorities are happy with the plans, the concerns have been appropriately addressed and the developer is on board. Therefore, they are in a positive position for the work to be done and to build the relations back up with residents which is a key priority. The Tenant Engagement Team will be part of the relationship building. Councillor Brazier gave a special mention to the good work of

Julie Madin Tenancy Officer.

9. ANNUAL REPORT ON PROPERTY COMPLIANCE ACROSS THE CORPORATE ESTATE.

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 there were 16 still outstanding. The Business Manager advised that the Assurance Template Report includes figures that were captured as a snapshot in time and that the figures have been updated since then. The report is presented to the Senior Leadership Team and the Directorate. An updated version can be sent if required.

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

That the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note the content of the report and acknowledge the work being done across the Corporate Estate.

10. 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 and Feedback Policy to ensure the Council meets the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

In noting the report, a Member asked why this committee would be recommending to Audit & Governance. The Director Customer Services & Organisational Development explained that the responsibility for complaints sits with Audit & Governance but that as this is the scrutiny committee, and any strategy or policy change should be seen by this committee and given the opportunity to comment.

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.

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

11. PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF 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 is a Locality Fund which replaces 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 our community.

In noting the report, a Member asked if part of the report would be looking at what other districts are doing as a comparison to our district.

The Programme Manager responded that it is something that can be included in the end of programme evaluation report. A number of working groups have been set up in each of the neighbouring Authorities to share ideas and best practice and to identify opportunities for collaboration. Therefore, there is a good understanding of what others are doing but this can be formalised in the evaluation report.

The Business Manager commented that they are aware of a number of areas in the Country that have significant underspends this year and some of the neighbouring Authorities have not used their expenditure therefore, there is a risk that their funding will be returned to Government. However, the Nottinghamshire and East Midlands is showing as slightly better.

A further question was asked as to how the Shared Prosperity funding compares with ESF and IDEF funding.

The Business Manager responded that from experience the Shared Prosperity Fund has been easier to administer than the ESF and IDEF project. Whilst not easy to compare it is something that could be looked into when the project finishes in March 2025.

The delivery of UKSPF and REPF is 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) The high-level outputs and outcomes achieved through funding to date, as detailed within this report; and
- b) The finalised list of funding allocations/interventions, as detailed within **APPENDIX A** of this report.

12 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER 4

The Committee considered the report of the Transformation and 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 were 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 asked 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 is needed.

In response the Transformation and Service Improvement Officer stated that the team are consistently trying to fill the space and have had discussions with interested parties and will pursue all opportunities. With respect to the footfall this will 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 and Organisational Development stated that this would be a question for Corporate Property to answer and will take this up with them.

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

13 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, Karen Roberts

14 OUTCOMES OF INFORMATION SHARING WITH ELECTED COUNCILLORS WORKING GROUP.

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.

Councillor Kellas thanked the Members and staff of the Working Group for their good

work, with a special mention to Alexander Gamage Data & Digital Innovation Team Leader.

The 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 is made to the website, including a postcode search for 'find your ward member'.(NB postcode search has 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** will be made available for all elected councillors to use;
- e) that the Democratic Services Team will re advertise the allocated Democratic Services Officer (DSO) list and actively promote the support they can offer to elected councillors; and

that the Power BI system is developed and provided to all councillors and that the system is further developed over time to include other service requests and reports

15 CABINET FORWARD PLAN MAY TO AUGUST 2024

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

16 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS

NOTED

17 TOPIC SUGGESTION – DIGITAL STRATEGY REFRESH 2024/2028

The Committee considered and agreed to the suggestion for the Digital Strategy Refresh 2024/2025.

The following Members were voted on the Working Group: -

Councillor N Ross – Chair
Councillor M Shakeshaft
Councillor A Freeman.

A Topic Request Form will be submitted in due course.

18 TOPIC SUGGESTION – REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: KIDDEY STONES

The Committee considered and agreed to the suggestion for the Review of the Public Consultation Document – Kiddey Stones.

The following Members were voted on the Working Group: -

Councillor A Freeman – Chair

Councillor P Rainbow

Councillor M Shakeshaft

Councillor K Roberts

Councillor D Moore

Councillor S Forde

Councillor N Allen

Councillor J Hall

A Topic Request Form will be submitted in due course

Meeting closed at 8.10pm.