

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, 22 July 2024 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor N Allen, Councillor A Brazier, 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 J Hall

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor C Brooks and Councillor R Jackson

18 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 from Castle House.

19 DECLARATION OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Agenda Item No. 10 – Support for Active Lifestyles Working Group. Councillors Forde; Freeman and Pringle, together with Deborah Johnson, Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development, declared Other Registerable Interests as Directors of Active4Today.

20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 24 June 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK (COMPLAINTS, SUGGESTION AND PRAISE FOR OCTOBER 2023 TO MARCH 2024)

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development which presented to Members the Customer Feedback half year report. The report advised that significant efforts had been made in the past year in relation to complaints; policy; procedures; and training. Staff responsible for handling complaints had received comprehensive training covering complaint responses, Council policy and the role of the Ombudsman. Attached as an appendix to the report was a Customer Feedback Analysis which provided Members with details of the complaints received.

In considering the report a Member queried as to the outcome of the complaint made in relation to the handling of a petition submitted about Southwell Leisure Centre. The Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development advised that she would respond in writing.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Customer Feedback Report be noted.

22 UPDATE ON PROPERTY REPAIR AND LETTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNCIL OWNED HOMES

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Housing Services which provided Members with progress of each of the recommendations endorsed by the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee on 11 September 2023. These were: the provision of floor covering in all new lettings; the design of a simplified Empty Homes Standard; the introduction of a satisfaction measures for quality of temporary accommodation; and the development of a policy to pilot the Council assisting tenants with maintaining trees within their gardens funded through remaining efficiency savings.

In considering the report and noting the Officer recommendation relating to floor coverings in new lets (Option One) a Member queried whether there was any capacity for a degree of discretion to be built into the option, which might result in additional help being provided for those tenants in significant need. The Business Manager advised that if such a situation arose, Tenancy Officers would contact charitable organisations to see if they could help.

Members raised a number of queries in relation to the simplified lettings standard, specifically to gas safety checks. The Business Manager advised that until a gas meter was turned on and in the name of the tenant a full safety check was not possible. However, a certificate would be issued prior to a tenant taking possession of the property to say a visual check had been carried out. The full check would then take place, usually within 1-3 days of the tenant taking possession. Members requested that this be reviewed with a view to being able to undertake the full safety check prior to the tenant taking possession.

In response to whether there was a strategy to try to improve the Council's housing stock through the insulation of floors, Members were advised that it was usual to insulate walls and roofs which were the usual source of heating loss. The most likely improvement to energy efficiency would be from the installation of cavity wall insulation.

In relation to the Starting Well Fund only being a one-off payment, a Member queried how this was communicated to tenants. The Business Manager advised that the Tenancy Officer would assess the need of the tenant when they signed the tenancy agreement. Should they meet the necessary criteria, they would be given a choice of either the provision of carpets or a B&Q voucher and at this time it would be made clear to them that it was a strictly one-off payment. She added that there was no stipulation to how long the tenant must occupy the property for to qualify for the funding.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the Officer recommendation of Option One, relating to floor coverings in new lets as detailed in section 3 of the report, be approved, subject to a degree of flexibility being introduced to allow Tenancy Officers a degree of discretion when assessing a tenant's needs;
- b) the progress with the simplified letting standard being introduced be noted;
- c) the introduction and outturn of the satisfaction measure for temporary accommodation satisfaction of 86% be noted; and
- d) the progress of the Tree Policy which, once finalised, would be adopted through a Portfolio Holder decision be noted.

23 POLICY & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024

The Committee considered the report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to present to Members the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee's Annual Report 2023/2024 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.

In considering the report a Member suggested that it be made clear that Portfolio Holders were not permitted to be members of a Working Group.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee's Annual Report 2023/2024 be approved.

24 ANNUAL COMPLIANCE UPDATE - HOUSING STOCK

The Committee considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Housing Maintenance & Asset Management which sought to provide Members the performance position as of 31 March 2024 with regard to compliance, including actions to rectify identified issues. Full details of the performance indicators, along with associated commentary, were included at Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that, in comparison to the same quarter the previous year, overall annual performance had improved across the 30 areas.

In considering the report, Members commented that they were pleased to see that the number of properties with oil-based heating was reducing and being replaced with heat source heating systems as part of the WAVE 2.1 decarbonation project. Members queried whether it was possible to secure additional monies to continue the programme of change. The Business Manager advised that funding was part of a package which included solar panels. She added that Newark & Sherwood District

Council were ahead of other local authorities in their cohort and it was hoped to commence the programme to change the remaining properties in April 2025.

A Member queried the figures contained in the fire safety table and heating appliance servicing table at paragraph 4 of the appendix. The Business Manager confirmed that these were incorrect and that she would circulate an amended report with the revised figures.

In referring to non-housing community centres and residential leasehold/shared ownerships, a Member queried as to where responsibility lay with ensuring compliance. The Business Manager advised that if the building was situated on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land the Council took full responsibility for compliance. If the building was situated on general fund land then it was a different situation. In relation to leased buildings, it was the responsibility of the leaseholder to carry out the compliance checks. The Council would then request the certificates. If fire doors were present in the buildings, the Council would advise what works, if any, needed to be done but the leaseholder would be responsible for undertaking those works. In considering the Business Manager's response, a Member queried how this was controlled. The Business Manager advised that the law stated that the Council should use their best endeavours. If a situation arose, a decision would be taken on whether it was minor or major issue with any costs being recouped through the tenancy agreement. See added that the Council engaged a suitably qualified contractor to carry out their fire safety checks. The Business Manager was asked to provide a future report to Committee on this matter.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the exceptions to performance of the housing service compliance functions be noted;
- b) the removal of the Regulatory Notice by the Regulator of Social Housing be noted;
- c) the presentation of performance will change from Q1 2024/25 reporting cycle onwards be noted; and
- d) a report be provided to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to compliance checks carried out in leased/shared ownership and community centres.

25 NEWARK & SHERWOOD COMMUNITY LOTTERY ANNUAL UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Business Manager – Regeneration & Housing Strategy 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 £34,569.60 had been generated in the third year of operation, which compared favourably in comparison with other community lotteries across the county.

In considering the report a Member commented that it was pleasing to see the promotion of the scheme and queried whether the Council assisted the good causes to promote their own involvement. The Business Manager advised that the Council undertook their own promotions e.g. live draw, presentation of large cheque to the winners. She advised that she would review how support could be given to smaller charities.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the report be noted; and
- b) the Director – Customer Services & Organisational Development, together with the Communication & Marketing Manager, undertake to create a communications package to assist the smaller charities who benefit from the Community Lottery Fund with its promotion.

26 SUPPORT FOR ACTIVE LIFESTYLES WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the report of the Transformation & Service Improvement Officer which sought to update Members on the findings of the Support for Active Lifestyles Working Group. Councillor Alice Brazier, a member of the Working Group, introduced the report, thanking the Members and staff for their work. The Committee also received a presentation delivered by the Council's Senior Health Improvement Officer and the Communications & Marketing Manager.

In considering the report and presentation, a Member queried as to what low tech/low cost activities could be promoted, suggesting Nordic walking. The Senior Health Improvement Officer advised that the Council assisted in the establishment of new community groups. She added that there was a fledgling group called *The Strategic Walk Nottinghamshire Group*.

In noting the findings of the Working Group, a Member commented that work should continue to further improve on what was already good provision for residents of the district.

A Member also queried whether it was possible to ascertain how frequently the Council's website was used by people wishing to source information on active lifestyle provision. The Communications & Marketing Manager advised that it was possible to analyse usage of the Council's website together with that of social media.

AGREED (unanimously) that the findings of the working group be noted.

27 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (JULY TO OCTOBER 2024)

NOTED the Forward Plan of the Cabinet for the period July to October 2024.

28 PROVISIONAL ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

AGREED that the provisional items for future Agendas be noted and that the following report be brought to a future meeting of the committee:

Update on Glass Recycling.

Meeting closed at 7.25 pm.

Chairman