

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Homes & Communities Committee** Broadcast from Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1BY on Monday, 14 September 2020 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor T Wendels (Chairman)  
Councillor R Holloway (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs K Arnold, Councillor M Brock, Councillor Mrs B Brooks, Councillor S Carlton, Councillor L Dales, Councillor L Goff, Councillor J Lee and Councillor Mrs S Saddington

ALSON IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs L Hurst

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Mrs I Brown and Councillor M Brown (Committee Members)

The meeting was held remotely, in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND AS TO THE PARTY WHIP

That no Member or Officer declared any interest pursuant to any statutory requirement in any matter discussed or voted upon at the meeting.

49 DECLARATION OF ANY INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

That there would be an audio recording of the meeting undertaken by the Council.

50 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2020

AGREED (unanimously) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reminded the committee that they had last met in January and provided them with a brief update on what had been happening. The Chairman firstly introduced the Director for Housing, Health and Wellbeing, Suzanne Shead who commenced her role in April.

The Chairman referred back to the flooding that took place in Egmanton as well as in other areas in November last year, advising that Government grants have been put in place. In February further flooding hit the District affecting Lowdham, Gunthorpe, Farndon, Newark, Carlton on Trent and Girton to which further grants were made available.

The Chairman spoke about the outbreak of Covid 19 and bringing the housing function back into the Council, thanking the IT team who had supported Members and staff across the Council to keep the services going and connected for residents during this time.

The Chairman thanked staff for their hard work and commitment over this challenging period, having provided support to the District's most vulnerable residents through the work of the Humanitarian Assistance Response Team (HART).

The Chairman noted key achievements that had taken place including securing funding in partnership with the Police around hardening target areas of Newark susceptible to crime, maintaining strong performance across the housing teams, progressing the regeneration of Yorke Drive and using alternative ways of engaging with tenants and residents.

The Chairman reminded Members that there will be learning as well as opportunities with many challenges for the committee to deliver on key projects and in working closely with tenants and residents around developing council services, in delivering high levels of satisfaction for the users of the services.

52 FORWARD PLAN - AUGUST 2020 TO JULY 2021

The Committee considered the Forward Plan for August 2020 to July 2021 with the Chairman inviting Members to put forward any items they would wish to be considered by Committee at a future meeting.

The Chairman advised the Committee of the following future item to be added to the plan in order to review CCTV as well as the Policy.

53 HOUSING ADVISORY GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee considered the report from the Director of Housing, Health and Wellbeing which sought approval of the Terms of Reference for the Housing Advisory Group.

The report explained that the Terms of Reference would enable the Housing Advisory Group to contribute to the Committee's oversight of housing services whilst the review of tenant involvement and engagement takes place.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Terms of Reference for the Housing Advisory Group be approved.

54 COUNCIL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME - ANNUAL UPDATE

The Committee considered the report from the Tenancy and Estates Manager providing the Committee with its annual update on the application of the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme. The report also provided an update on the amendments made to the Scheme following Committee approval in November 2019.

The report outlined the impact of the Allocations Policy against the applicants on the

housing register, giving transparency to allocations and has been updated to reflect housing coming back into the Council as well as clarity around bedroom eligibility and pregnancy.

The Tenancy and Estates Manager explained to the Committee that consultation had taken place with other local authorities and could confirm they were working in the same way.

The Chairman made one amendment to recommendation (b), that the Director of Housing, Health and Wellbeing would consult with the Chairman before approving any further minor amendments.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) Members noted the contents of the report which provided an annual update to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.
- (b) delegated authority be given to the Director of Housing, Health and Wellbeing to approve any further minor amendments required that do not require formal consultation, in consultation with the Chairman of the Homes & Communities Committee to ensure the Scheme continues to adhere to statutory requirements.

## 55 THE DIGITAL DECLARATION

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for ICT to endorse Newark and Sherwood District Council signing the 'Local Digital Declaration' which would commit Newark and Sherwood District Council to work towards becoming a Digital Council.

The Council want to launch a Declaration commitment with a community focused project that works towards digital inclusivity. Despite the transformative impact of technology on society, many people in the UK remain digitally excluded. This is important as residents who are excluded digitally are also more likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged and the digital divide exacerbates this inequality.

The aim is for the first digital declaration project to work to combat this inequality. The IT and Digital Services and Transformation Business Units would be working with Members and residents to develop this project.

The Business Manager for ICT also informed the Committee that other neighbouring authorities had signed up including Ashfield District Council, Mansfield District Council and Nottingham City Council.

The Chairman thanked all of ICT for keeping everyone connected and continuing to provide a fantastic service.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) Members endorsed the Local Digital Declaration for approval at Policy &

Finance Committee; and

- (b) Members approved the introduction of a digital implications Committee report header.

56 NEWARK AND SHERWOOD COMMUNITY LOTTERY

The Committee considered the joint report from the Health Improvement and Community Relations Manager and the Business Manager for Housing, Health and Community Relations to secure Member approval to launch an on-line Newark and Sherwood Community Lottery (“the Lottery”) to help fund discretionary support for the local voluntary and community sector, and to enable such organisations to raise funds which will directly benefit local people and communities.

The report explained that the introduction of a Community Lottery is currently listed as a year 2 priority in the current Community Plan 2019 - 2023 and will also feature in the Refreshed Community Plan which will be considered by Policy and Finance at its September Committee meeting on 24 September 2020.

The Members were informed that gambling would not be promoted and sufficient safeguards were in place for this and the system used to purchase tickets does not allow the use of credit cards.

A Member queried if local charities could be chosen and this was confirmed that local charities could be nominated.

The Chairman made one amendment to recommendation (d), that both the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of Homes and Communities Committee are consulted rather than only consulting with one or the other.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the establishment of the Newark and Sherwood Community Lottery for the purpose of raising funds to support good causes that benefit residents of the District was agreed.
- (b) the procurement of Gatherwell as an External Lottery Manager to run the operational side of the lottery was approved.
- (c) a project budget of £7,500 to establish and implement the lottery was approved.
- (d) authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Homes and Communities Committee, to establish criteria for determining which good causes can participate in the Lottery, and apply those criteria.
- (e) Authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources to apply for any necessary licences from the Gambling

Commission to enable the Lottery to operate.

- (f) the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources be appointed as the personal licence holder for the Lottery and authorises him to apply for the personal licence and identify a deputy for business continuity purposes and to avoid lottery suspension.
- (g) to delegate the management and oversight of the Lottery and the authority to approve appropriate policies and procedures associated with the Lottery to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources.

57 BASSETLAW & NEWARK AND SHERWOOD COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2019/20 AND REVIEW OF PRIORITIES FOR 2020/21

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Public Protection as to the progress and performance of the Community Safety Partnership priorities for 2019/20 and to review and refresh the priorities for 2020/21.

The report referred to the in depth review of the CSP priorities that was undertaken in early 2019 and it was agreed that the following priorities be adopted for 2019/20.

The priorities were:

Domestic Violence  
Burglary  
Rural Crime  
Area based work/Town Centre Issues  
Gypsy and Travellers (Newark)  
Community Cohesion  
Knife Crime  
Exclusions (Bassetlaw)

The Members were informed that there had been a general fall in crime although an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour therefore the priorities for 2020/21 to continue as for the previous year with the addition of Anti-Social Behaviour as a specific priority.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Members noted the performance of the Bassetlaw & Newark and Sherwood Community Safety Partnership.
- (b) the following priorities for 2020/21 were approved:
  - Domestic Violence
  - Burglary
  - Rural Crime
  - Area based work/Town Centre Issues
  - Gypsy and Travellers (Newark)

Community Cohesion  
Knife Crime  
Exclusions (Bassetlaw)  
Anti-Social Behaviour

- (c) the Neighbourhood Policing Inspector be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to give an update on the policing of Newark and Sherwood.

58 SAFER STREETS FUND

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Public Protection to update Members on the success of a bid to the Safer Streets Fund and to agree a set of local actions to deliver the bid. This was good news for Newark and the District.

The Members were informed that the project has to be completed by 31 March 2021 and that work had already started. One of the key deliverables set out in the bid was the reinstatement of a Community Hub based within one of the NSDC flat units at Chatham Court. It is envisaged that this will create a multi-agency single point of contact to allow for community engagement across the range of housing tenures.

The report highlighted how the Safer Streets Initiative will align with the Community plan theme to 'Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and increase feelings of safety in our communities'.

AGREED (unanimously) that the success of the Safer Streets Bid be noted.

59 HOUSING SERVICES COMPLIANCE PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered the report from the Strategic Lead for Asset and Development, providing an overview of compliance performance of the housing service at the end of July 2020.

The report provided the Committee with its first opportunity to consider the performance of the housing service since it was transferred back into the Council from Newark and Sherwood Homes. A previous report due to be considered in March 2020, was deferred due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

The report contained information on compliance performance to provide Members with an oversight and input into these essential services. The report included, amongst other matters information on the Landlord responsibilities for a range of building safety measures including fire protection, gas, asbestos, electrical and water. It also summarised details of the Council's housing stock.

The Members found the report easy to read and liked the format of the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Committee noted the performance of the Housing Service

compliance functions.

- (b) Members feedback their observations about the content and presentation of the performance information.

#### 60 TENANCY POLICY REVIEW

The Committee considered the report from the Tenancy and Estates Manager providing a revised Tenancy Policy following the reintegration of the Housing Services and new legislation.

The report ensured compliance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and gave clear guidance regarding how the Council manages their homes from inception to termination.

A revision of the Tenancy Policy Review was required following the reintegration of the Housing Services back into the Council, where all references to Newark and Sherwood Homes had been removed, other policies will also be reviewed in the coming year.

AGREED (unanimously) that the revised Policy be noted.

#### 61 HOUSING SERVICES QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered the report from the Performance Officer, providing an overview of performance and satisfaction within Housing Services for Quarter 1 of 2020/21.

The report provided the Committee with its first opportunity to consider the performance of the housing service since it was transferred back into the Council from Newark and Sherwood Homes.

The report provided assurance to Members that standards and performance were high and if not, actions were in place to address this with respect to any associated risks.

The Members found the traffic light system easy to work with, although concerned that those set with a 100% target were set up to fail and would not be a realistic outcome. It was therefore agreed to adjust the targets from 100% to 95% for those with a high number of returns and 90% for those with low returns, noting that 100% although was the aim would render satisfaction as failing should one return be unhappy with the service.

The Members highlighted that it was a really good report with the openness and a clear desire to improve and would continue to monitor in the future.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Committee noted the performance of the Housing Service.

- (b) Members feedback their observations about the content and presentation of the performance information.

62 YORKE DRIVE REGENERATION UPDATE

The Committee considered the report from the Growth and Regeneration Lead Officer providing an update on progress within the Yorke Drive Regeneration Project.

The report set out the progress of the regeneration project, in particular reaching the enabling stage and amending resident consultation to account for current circumstances, noting it is a significant project for the Council and the District.

The Chairman referred to the management of vacant properties in the report and to the feasibility of holding voids for use by the homeless. The Committee were informed this could be considered possibly in the winter months.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress on the delivery of the Yorke Drive Regeneration Project be noted.

63 PROJECTS UPDATE FOR THE SEVEN HILLS MODULAR DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Committee considered the report from the Capital Projects Manager who was introduced to the Committee as having taken up a position with Arkwood providing an update on progress on the project to replace the existing facility at Seven Hills.

The report explained how the project will enable the Council to provide a modern, efficient facility for people when they are in most need. The opportunity to use modern methods of construction will deliver an innovative scheme, which will be interlinked with wrap around support for residents to help promote a strong start to their housing journey.

The Committee were informed that an operational team of officers were currently exploring options available for an interim solution to accommodate homeless individuals and families whilst the new scheme is built.

AGREED (unanimously) that the progress on the project to date be noted.

64 HOMES & COMMUNITIES REVENUE AND CAPITAL FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2021 AS AT 31 JULY 2020

The Committee considered the report from the Business Manager for Financial Services comparing the Revised Budgets for the period ending 31 March 2021 with the Projected Outturn forecast for the period, based on meetings with Financial Services staff and the appropriate Business Manager. These are based on four months' performance information on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, including:-

- General Fund (GF) Revenue
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- Capital Programme

The report explained that it was requested by Members at the Policy & Finance Committee during February 2020 that reports were presented to individual Committees, for noting, for them to understand the financial position of their Committee.

The Committee were presented with the report for noting and to be taken to the next Policy & Finance Committee on 24 September 2020.

AGREED (unanimously) that the contents of the report be noted.

65 URGENCY ITEM TAKEN DURING COVID-19

The report provided the Committee with the urgency decision that had been taken in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic with respect to the Parish & Town Council Initiative Fund and Community, Sports & Arts Grants Scheme.

NOTED the Urgency Item – Minute of Decision taken during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

66 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That, under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

67 TELEPHONY & CALL CENTRE SOLUTION

The Committee considered the exempt report regarding the Telephony and Call Centre Solution.

(Summary provided in accordance with Section 100C(2) of the Local Government Act 1972).

Meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Chairman