

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 8 MAY 2018

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors N Clarke, T Eynon, J Geary, D Harrison, G Hault, P Purver, V Richichi and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors J Legrys and S Sheahan

Officers: Mr G Jones, Mrs R Wallace and Miss E Warhurst

**45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A C Saffell.

**46. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor J Geary declared a no-pecuniary interest in item 5 – End of Year Performance Report as a founder member of Mantle Lane Arts.

**47. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

None

**48. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2018.

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor D Harrison and

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**49. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Head of Legal and Commercial Services presented the report. She advised that previous feedback from PDG had been taken into account and drew attention to the progress achieved against the Council Delivery Plan 2017/18 including three commitments made by the Council which were behind plan. It was also explained that the figures in a different colour indicated they were yet to be finalised.

Councillor T Eynon thanked officers for making the report an attractive and interesting document. She made the following comments:

- For the total plan of commitments made by the council, the figures were incorrect. The Head of Legal and Commercial Services acknowledged the error and would provide an update.
- Some of the percentages included throughout the report needed further information to support them as it was difficult to get an understanding when there was no denominator.

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Councillor J Geary made the following comments:

- Part of the overview of North West Leicestershire highlighted Triumph motorcycles which was not based within the District, he believed it should refer to Norton Motorcycles. The Head of Legal and Commercial Services explained that the businesses listed were the top ten businesses with regard to turnover and she would check with officers if Norton Motorcycles should be included. The Chairman commented that Triumph Motorcycles was a subsidiary of Bloor Investments which was based in the District.
- He questioned the commitment to improve Coalville Market to attract new traders and customers as he was aware of a trader who was refused permission to use a particular stall as it was deemed too expensive to remove the refrigeration units already installed. He did not believe that encouraged new traders. The Chairman responded that it was difficult to make a judgement as the circumstances were not known, it may depend on what other stalls were available and the cost of installing the refrigeration may not justify its removal as it could be used again in the future. He asked officers to investigate.
- Regarding the identification of gypsy and traveller sites, he felt that it was only necessary to provide a transit site because in accordance with the definition of a gypsy, once they are settled in an area they are no longer a gypsy and are a permanent member of the community. He reported that other local authorities had permitted sites which after a certain amount of time were left empty due to the gypsies and travellers moving on, therefore the question needed to be asked if such sites were necessary. The Chairman commented that the identification of these sites was included within the Local Plan and the local authority had a duty of care to meet the requirements that had been set nationally.
- Regarding the replacement of solid fuel heating systems with air source heat pumps in council homes, he expressed concerns because according to his own research they required a lot of maintenance. He also felt the council should not be spending as much as they were on responsive repairs in light of the Decent Homes programme having been completed.
- The homes and communities section referred to 'harnessing our excellent transport links' which Councillor J Geary thought was inaccurate. He explained that there were no rail links, bus services were reducing on a monthly basis with no service at all after 6.30pm, plus the highways were very busy. The Chairman commented he did not believe the transport system was integrated and was disappointed that the opportunity had been missed for a train station at East Midlands Airport as part of the HS2 proposals. He added that traffic was growing but as it was a plan up to 2050 it would be interesting to see what the future brought.
- He was pleased to see the receipt of £3,000 of European grant funding but expressed concerns regarding where the funding would come from once the UK had left the European Union.

In response to a question from Councillor J Geary, the Director of Housing and Customer Services explained that the term 'long term empty homes' referred to those council homes that were not going to be relet as rented properties and included some sheltered properties that were no longer fit for purpose. He agreed that the wording could be clearer and would address it. In response to a further question, the Director of Housing and Customer Services explained that tenants perhaps now had higher expectations, they were happy to report repairs and the cost of maintaining our council homes was in line

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with other authorities and worked out as an average of three repairs per household each year.

Councillor N Smith commented that fly tipping was a major problem in his Ward and it was good to see the number of reported fly tips that officers were responding to. He added that he was aware of new technology available to assist with catching the people who were fly tipping and asked if he could have an update from officers on what was being done. The Head of Legal and Commercial Services agreed to provide the information.

Councillor P Purver liked the report but felt that the topics jumped around a little. Regarding the overview of North West Leicestershire on page 3 of the report, she asked if there was some information missing from the housing repairs facts as it did not read well. The Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Services confirmed that the urgent repairs category was missing and would update it accordingly.

Councillor N Clarke made the following comments:

- Regarding the number of customer interactions by phone, he commented that residents complained to him about the difficulty to make contact due to waiting times. He asked if answering times could be included to make it clearer as well as waiting times for customers who come into the offices.
- Regarding the overview of North West Leicestershire on page 3 of the report, he asked if the figures relating to housing repairs could include more information such as how long it took for a repair to be carried out and if the operative kept the agreed appointment.
- Regarding the overview of North West Leicestershire on page 3 of the report, he asked if the number of mechanical inspections of taxis could include the total number of taxis in the District for context and clarity.
- He asked for a break down to be included regarding the amount spent on shop frontages as it was a large amount of money and local people would not necessarily know how the money had been spent.
- Regarding the repairs to the Memorial Clock Tower, he asked that a summary of works be included in the report.

The Head of Legal and Commercial Services commented that it was important to have the right balance of information within the report as it was intended to be a summary document. The information requested by Councillor N Clarke was publically available within other reports.

- Regarding the average number of days stated for re-letting a council home, he believed it would be beneficial to include a target number, if there was one.
- He believed it would be good to see an estimated cost of the development of the new leisure centre.
- He reported a typographical error on page 13 of the report as the word 'built' was repeated in relation to the number of new council homes.
- In relation to the Planning Enforcement facts on page 15 of the report, he questioned whether information regarding the recent employment of additional officers should be included.

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- He felt that residents should be given some credit for how they recycle in relation to the successful bid to process and keep the income from kerbside collections. The Chairman disagreed as the District currently recycled only 46% of waste which he felt was low, he believed that there should be further education rather than thanks. Councillor N Clarke agree that recycling rates could be improved but he was constantly being questioned about the number of waste boxes and he believed that residents should be told why there was a need to separate the waste.
- He asked that information be inserted into the report in relation to staff, for example, performance, training and apprenticeship schemes.

Councillor V Richichi felt it was a good report and showed a positive way forward. In reference to the shop frontage grants in Coalville, he commented that he was not a great believer in it as he felt a reduction in business rates would benefit the town centre as a whole rather than supporting a small number of individual businesses. He asked for information on the 12 businesses that had been awarded a grant as he was not sure if the money spent was worthwhile. The Chairman felt that the scheme had made an obvious difference and this could be seen when walking through Coalville.

Councillor D Harrison welcomed the report as it was fun to read, he understood the request for more detail but he emphasised the fact that it was intended as a snapshot of information. He pointed out that the shop frontage scheme was part of a larger plan for Coalville and therefore only a starting point. He felt it was a good idea and made the area much more attractive for shoppers. He was very pleased with the reduction in days to re-let a council home and felt the Director should be complimented on the improvement.

Councillor G Hoult agreed with many of the comments made but was cautious on recommending more detail as it could deter people from reading it. Overall she welcomed the report.

Councillor P Purver agreed that staff should be mentioned in the report, especially in relation to litter picking on and around the roads as they were very clean compared to other areas. It would be useful to see information regarding man hours spent on litter picking.

## **50. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

In relation to the 'Gas Supply in Rural Areas' item which had once again been deferred to the next meeting, the Chairman asked if Councillor J Geary could undertake a canvass of the area so that it was clearer who would be interested in a gas supply. Councillor J Geary responded that this had already been undertaken and 97 percent of residents would like a gas supply. He also expressed his disappointment in the amount of time this item had been on the work programme. The Director of Housing and Customer Services explained that with regard to infrastructure providers such as Cadent Gas Ltd (formerly Transco), the information he had received was that they would charge an individual household a considerable amount of money to run a gas supply to the property. He also reminded Members that Cadent Gas Ltd were a commercial business and he believed their response would be that they were under no obligation to extend the gas supply but would charge for the service. He agreed to approach them and confirm a date for a representative to attend and discuss the matter further with the Committee.

Councillor T Eynon expressed her disappointment that the Committee was still meeting after Cabinet and therefore were unable to scrutinise particular reports. She requested that the List of Local Heritage Assets report on the Executive Decision Notice for July 2018 be placed on the work programme.

The Head of Legal and Commercial Services explained that the Policy Development Group meetings had now been aligned with Cabinet meetings to ensure the quarterly performance reports could be scrutinised. Unfortunately, due to the number of Policy Development Group meetings it might not be possible for all reports to be considered before every Cabinet.

RESOLVED THAT:

The List of Local Heritage Assets report be placed on the work programme.

**Councillor N Smith left the meeting at 7.05pm**

**Councillor V Richichi left the meeting at 7.15pm**

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.40 pm