

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors R Ashman, N Clarke, T Eynon, P Purver, V Richichi, A C Saffell, S Sheahan and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors J Geary, R Johnson, J Legrys, Ms K Smith and A V Smith MBE

Portfolio Holders: Councillors A V Smith MBE

Officers: Mr J Bright, Mr M Fiander, Mr G Jones, Mr M Murphy, Mr P Sanders, Mr T Shardlow and Mrs R Wallace

**11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G Hoult.

**12. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor S Sheahan declared a pecuniary interest in item 9 – HS2 Update, as a resident of Measham directly impacted by the proposed route.

Councillor R Ashman declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 – Sports and Leisure Project Update due to his acquaintance with an employee of one of the organisations involved in the bidding process.

**13. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

None.

**14. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2018.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor M Specht and

RESOLVED THAT

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**15. 2018/19 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Director of Housing and Customer Services presented the report to Members, and drew attention to the Intervention Plans in the appendix which contained remedial actions to address objectives or priorities where performance was below target.

Councillor S Sheahan felt that the information regarding the Customer Services Call Centre statistics was a little confusing and was concerned that the percentage of calls not being answered had risen from Quarter four. The Director of Housing and Customer Services explained that a Head of Service had been appointed to address the issues within the service and raise its corporate profile, and assured Members that improvements would be seen soon. He introduced Tom Shardlow, Head of Customer Services who would be presenting a report later in the meeting on the new Customer Services Strategy.

Chairman's initials

Councillor S Sheahan felt that it would be difficult to measure overall customer satisfaction across all services.

Councillor S Sheahan asked the following questions regarding the performance indicators at page 20 of the report:

- He felt it was unclear what the first three indicators related to and it seemed that one of these targets had not been met yet had a green status. The Director of Housing and Customer Services explained that the indicators questioned related to the performance of the Revenue and Benefits Service in days taken to process new claims / change of circumstances notification, he agreed it could be explained more clearly. He also confirmed that the green status was a typographical error and would be corrected.
- Regarding the 'Housing Benefit overpayment collection rate' indicator, Councillor Sheahan felt that there was not enough information to explain the target, as 11 percent was a low figure. The Director of Housing and Customer Services explained that the arrangements made to collect the overpayments were normally a small amount each week and would therefore often take around 12 months to two years to claim the full amount back. He assured Members that it did not seem like much within this quarter but would rise throughout the year.

In response to a question from Councillor S Sheahan, the Director of Housing and Customer Services agreed to provide further information outside of the meeting regarding the 100 percent satisfaction rates of the housing repairs service. He was aware that customers were called after having a repair completed at their property and this was how the figures had been obtained.

Regarding the performance of the Leisure Centres, Councillor T Eynon asked for further information on lower income levels and why they were suffering in competition with other nearby gyms. The Head of Community Services explained that the main issue was the difference in gym size and the age / amount of the equipment available. The Leisure Centres had good but slightly ageing equipment which was very well used and there was simply not enough capacity available to compete with other new gyms in the area. Councillor T Eynon also felt that the current branding was not quite right as it did not represent the community accurately as there were few images of older people or those that did not have a perfect physique. She pointed out the difficulty in locating the health referrals page and she felt it was not designed well with no visuals. She believed strongly in the benefits of health referrals, as well as self-referrals and believed that if people had a good experience they would continue to visit the leisure centres and purchase memberships once the referral had been completed. The Head of Community Services commented that he used the Leisure Centres regularly and had witnessed the good work being undertaken by the health referrals, and the wide range of different types of users which he felt was down to the very proactive referrals team. He agreed that the branding did need to be addressed and this was something he would consider in conjunction with the Communications Team.

Councillor N Clarke raised concerns regarding the level of staff absence in the Customer Services Team and asked for further information in future reports to understand the reasons behind staff absence levels. The Director of Housing and Customer Services reiterated earlier comments regarding the issues around performance management within the Customer Services Team and that improvements were expected now the Head of Service was in post.

Councillor P Purver raised concerns regarding the level of long term sickness in Waste Services and asked if team members were fit to do the job after initially receiving the

Chairman's initials

correct training. The Head of Community Services confirmed that all employees had the appropriate training with regular refresher sessions. He reported that the majority of the employees on long term sickness were absent due to their personal health and not always as a result of the nature of the job. In response to a further question, the Head of Community Services stated that the absences did put additional pressure on the team but they were generally covered by current employees undertaking overtime rather than agency staff.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor P Purver and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Committee be provided to Cabinet when considering the report on 9 October 2018.

## **16. DRAFT COMMERCIAL STRATEGY**

The Director of Housing and Customer Services presented the report to Members, drawing attention to the fact that the deficit figures within the report were continuing to change for the better and would be up dated when presented to Cabinet on 9 October.

In response to a question regarding trade waste collections, the Head of Community Services explained this related to private businesses within the District, not council owned premises. He added that this was an area that was currently being reviewed as there were many more businesses that could be targeted.

Councillor N Clarke commented that the car parking charges were not included within the list of council income. The Director of Housing and Customer Services acknowledged this and it would be included in the report to Cabinet.

Councillor N Clarke was disappointed that the commercial values did not include the accountability to the tax payer as he felt this was an important part of a local authority. The Director of Housing and Customer Services explained that the values were in line with the current Council values but these were currently being reviewed, so there could be a change in the near future.

Councillor N Clarke asked if there was a 'plan b' in the event that the commercial approach did not provide the income required. Other Councils have had to cut services and make redundancies, and he was concerned this would be the case for North West Leicestershire. The Director of Housing and Customer Services responded that the Council was currently in a strong financial position and did not need to cut services in the near future. However, taking action to raise income now would help protect services going forward.

Councillor A C Saffell commented that other Councils had gained income by selling their grounds maintenance services to local businesses and selling the products and supplies they do not use to local people. He suggested this be looked at for another income stream.

Councillor R Ashman concurred with Councillor A C Saffell and believed that was a good suggestion. He believed that the reason other Councils have had to cut services was because they had buried their heads in the sand but as North West Leicestershire were very forward thinking financially, he was hopeful that cutting services would not prove necessary..

In response to a question from Councillor V Richichi, the Director of Housing and Customer Services reported that new businesses locating to the district in the near future had been taken into account when forecasting the council's income and business rates was an area that was very successful.

Councillor S Sheahan felt that it was important to monitor the commercial income closely over the coming years as the levels being received may not be the same from year to year. He added that it was essential to keep the primary focus on providing services for the local people and not get carried away with the commercial aspect of the authority. The Director of Housing and Customer Services agreed that it was important to monitor income closely and he assured Members that the Council's ethos regarding serving the public would not change.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor R Ashman and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Committee be provided to Cabinet when considering the report on 9 October 2018.

## **17. SPORTS AND LEISURE PROJECT UPDATE**

The Head of Community Services presented the report to Members.

The Chairman reminded Members that if Members wished to discuss anything relating to the confidential appendix to the report, the meeting would need to exclude the press and public to allow these discussions to proceed.

Councillor S Sheahan stated that he may want to discuss the appendix, therefore it was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

In response to a question from Councillor S Sheahan, the Head of Community Services reported that the weighting framework used as part of the bidding process was based on the best practice used by Sport England. He explained that it was based on complex calculations and would share the detail with Councillor S Sheahan outside of the meeting if required. As Councillor S Sheahan's concerns were regarding the tier 3 weighting, the Director of Housing and Customer Services gave a brief explanation on the process, and that the elements in tier 3 were essentially a breakdown of the figures quoted in tier 2. Not all factors in tier 2 required a further breakdown of the scoring mechanism hence they were blank.

Councillor T Eynon thanked officers for the detailed work undertaken on the project to date. She found it reassuring that officers had come to the same opinion as her on a particular bidder. As Councillor T Eynon was unable to attend the recent member briefings, the Head of Community Services agreed to share the documents with her and meet up to discuss further if necessary.

Councillor R Ashman also thanked officers for the work undertaken and was pleased to see that the bidders had taken members comments on board.

Councillor N Clarke commented that the member briefings were very successful and his questions had been answered at that point. He felt that it was a good report and was happy to support it.

The Chairman concurred with comments made by Members.

It was moved by Councillor N Clarke, seconded by Councillor T Eynon and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The progress made to date in the procurement process in order to secure a leisure partner be noted.
- b) The next stage of the procurement process be noted.

At the conclusion of the item, the meeting was opened back up to the press and public.

## **18. RECYCLE: MORE FOR NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE**

The Head of Customer Services introduced the Waste Services Development Officer who gave a presentation to the Committee.

Councillor N Smith found the comments surrounding recycling food waste very interesting and asked officers to look at the use of the recycling cones from the County Council. He explained that he had a cone and would highly recommend them. The Waste Services Development Officer reported that the recycling cones were no longer on the County Council's list of recycling equipment but he would look into it further. Councillor N Smith also commented on the possible future impact in recycling income as people were being encouraged to use other materials rather than plastic.

Councillor V Richichi asked what the plans were to address people's concerns regarding recycling food waste as it had been unsuccessful in the past. He also asked how the food waste would actually be recycled. The Waste Services Development Officer explained that this was still in the early stages and was waiting for guidance from the County Council as to the direction they wanted to take.

Both Councillor R Ashman and S Sheahan questioned any possible move to combined waste collection. The Head of Community Services stated that the current collection of separated waste not only provided a higher income but also a clean working environment for the staff. He commented that he had been to a combined waste site and the working environment was very unpleasant, due to this he did not want to go down that particular route. However he would be looking at options for the waste containers and would be presenting the findings for discussion at a future meeting.

Councillor T Eynon felt that the current boxes used for recycling waste were not suitable as they were small and were often blown around the streets in windy weather. Councillor N Clarke concurred.

In response to a question from Councillor N Clarke, the Head of Community Services confirmed that recycling rates could be monitored by individual wards and therefore the poor performing areas could be targeted. He added that there would be a public campaign in the near future and he would be considering all options such as financial rewards for those wards performing best

Chairman's initials

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor A C Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

The progress and timeline to develop a new recycling strategy through the 'Recycle More...' campaign and engage in the consultation process be noted.

## **19. HS2 UPDATE**

Having declared a pecuniary interest in the item, Councillor S Sheahan left the meeting for the consideration and discussion thereon.

The Head of Economic Regeneration presented the report to Members and introduced Kym Smith, SLC Consultant. She reported that the position on electrification remained the same and there were still no plans to electrify further sections of the midlands main line although she felt the position could be reviewed at a future date. She invited Members to contact her by email if they had any questions.

A discussion was had regarding the current proposed route at Measham and the proposed 'option 4' with an explanation on the Secretary of State's pending decision on the most appropriate route for HS2.

Councillor R Ashman commented that a small number of houses within his ward was not included on the route plan. He confirmed that the owners had received written confirmation that their properties would be affected by the route. The SLC Consultant was not aware of this and would look into it further.

Councillor N Smith expressed his disappointment that there would not be a link into a station at the airport.

The Chairman was concerned that if the proposed Measham Wharf site was not developed due to HS2, then the agreed Section 106 monies would be lost. He asked if compensation would be available, as that was the advice members of Planning Committee received when approving the planning application. The Head of Economic Regeneration responded that it was currently being looked into and there was also another site in Kegworth that would be affected.

Councillor R Ashman asked if East Midlands Parkway Station would be moved to improve transport links. The SLC Consultant explained that this would be a rail services decision but the Council could ask for work to be undertaken to improve the link. She also recommended that the Council contact Highways England regarding upgrading the A42.

Councillor A C Saffell raised concerns about the traffic impact on surrounding areas, especially Castle Donington. He felt it was essential to keep as many roads open as possible during the works.

It was moved by Councillor N Smith, seconded by Councillor V Richichi and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) Comments made by the Committee be provided to Council when considering the report.

- b) The extensive engagement that has been, and continues to be undertaken, by and on behalf of the Council, with affected communities, businesses and other organisations along the North West Leicestershire Section of the route be noted.

## **20. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY**

The Head of Customer Services introduced the report and gave a presentation to Members.

Councillor S Sheahan asked what the digital service would look like as at 15p per transaction, he felt that costs were low. The Head of Customer Services explained that 15p per transaction would be the optimum cost if there was no interaction at all. He wanted to make customers want to use the service rather than contact the call centre and therefore it needed to be a good, easy to use, system. In response to a further question, the Head of Customer Services felt that it was important to change the current culture amongst all staff so that everyone understands they are part of customer service delivery, and to take ownership of an issue rather than to pass it around. He assured Members that this had started to be addressed already and he was looking into the introduction of service level agreements. He assured Members that they should start seeing a difference in the service over the next year, especially in relation to reduced numbers of abandoned calls.

Councillor T Eynon expressed her concerns regarding equalities issues with accessing services online. The Head of Customer Services explained that the digital approach would free up staff to be available to help customers who came in to the offices, including guidance on how to self-serve at stations in the building. Also he would explore the opportunity to work with partners to address training needs of residents out in the District.

From past experience, Councillor N Clarke felt that the service provided after the initial contact was made, needed to be examined as contact details were not always being taken and therefore follow up calls could not be made. The Head of Customer Services reported that this had already been identified and he was currently in the process of mapping out the customer journey to help improve the service.

In response to a question from Councillor V Richichi, the Head of Community Services assured Members that there would always be staff available to deal with telephone and face to face enquiries for as long as it was required. However, he felt it was important to do as much as possible to enable people to self-serve on-line if they were able to.

The Chairman felt it was important to investigate the use of text messaging as well as emailing as this was some people's preferred method of communication.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor V Richichi and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Committee be provided to Cabinet when considering the report in November 2018.

## **21. COUNCIL TAX CHANGES**

The Director of Housing and Customer Services presented the report to Members. He explained that due to consultation timescales and contrary to the recommendations in the report, that a future Cabinet meeting would consider the matter, and not the meeting in November 2018.

Chairman's initials

Councillor T Eynon felt that it was difficult to grasp all of the details due to the terminology used within the report, especially around how empty properties were treated. She asked that this be addressed for the consultation.

Regarding the care leavers proposals, Councillor S Sheahan asked if it was intended for the whole County to align. The Director of Housing and Customer Services reported that each authority has a slightly different timeline but it was the intention to be aligned across the County.

It was moved by Councillor S Sheahan, seconded by Councillor R Ashman and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Committee be provided to a future Cabinet when considering the report..

## **22. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Director of Housing and Customer Services presented the report to Members.

Councillor S Sheahan referred to the 'Balance of Economy in NWL' report which was discussed in January and asked if there had been any progress. The Director of Housing and Customer Services reported that some economic profiles had been produced and he was happy to share these with Councillor S Sheahan outside of the meeting.

Councillor T Eynon believed that some of the reports considered during the past year should become a yearly update, for example the expenditure against Section 106 Agreements for Health. The Director of Housing and Customer Services asked Members to be conscious of the amount of business being considered as too many regular reports could make future meetings hard to manage. However, it was ultimately a decision for the Committee.

The Chairman did not feel it was unreasonable to request an annual expenditure update on the Section 106 agreements for Health as it did not need to be elongated but include facts to allow the Committee to monitor the issue.

Councillor A C Saffell asked for a regular update on staffing numbers and an explanation in support of the figures. The Director of Housing and Customer Services agreed to provide this information as part of the quarterly performance reports.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor A C Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments made by the Committee be provided to Council when considering the report in November 2018.

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

Councillor N Clarke asked for an item to be placed on the work programme regarding the future proposals for the land at Cropston Drive, Greenhill.

Councillor T Eynon asked for an item to be placed on the work programme regarding the proposed unitary status.

RESOLVED THAT:

Chairman's initials



The following be placed on the work programme:

- a) Use of the land at Cropston Drive
- b) Proposed Unitary Status

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.23 pm