

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2024

Present: Councillor S Lambeth (Chair)

Councillors M Burke, A Morley, S Sheahan, J Windram, J Legrys (Substitute for Councillor D Bigby), C A Sewell (Substitute for Councillor M Blair-Park) and L Windram (Substitute for Councillor M Ball)

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mr T Devonshire, Mr P Stone, Mr P Sanders, Mr C Elston, Mr P Wheatley and Mr M Murphy

#### **43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor M Ball, K Horn, R Morris, D Bigby and M Blair-Park.

#### **44. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

#### **45. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

#### **46. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2024.

It was moved by Councillor A Morley, seconded by Councillor M Burke, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2024 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

#### **47. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development presented the report.

A Member asked for an explanation for the delays in the Waste Services Review. The Strategic Director of Communities advised that the delay could be attributed to the extensive residential survey work currently being undertaken; and also to difficulties in procuring a consultant, which had now been resolved. The Head of Community Services added that the revised timetable envisaged an all-Member Workshop in July, Community Scrutiny in September, and for a final report to be put before Cabinet in October in time to feed into budget preparation for 2025/6.

A couple of Members expressed concern about the delays in auditing the accounts for 2021/22, and asked whether these delays left the Council vulnerable, in the national context of S114 notices being issued on a regular basis.

The Strategic Director of Resources agreed that delays to auditing the accounts did raise questions of how valuable the audit would be. He concurred with Members that the national backlog of auditing accounts possibly contributed somewhat to the steady proliferation of S114 notices across the country. Nevertheless, he advised Members that

Chairman's initials

the audited accounts for 2021/2022 would still provide a 'value for money' opinion and the medium-term financial plan would be assessed by the auditors. These issues would also be discussed in greater detail by the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Chair expressed concern in the performance of Mazars, the Council's external auditors. In response, the Strategic Director of Resources advised that the capacity of auditors was only one issue, alongside new complexities in the accounting system introduced in recent years, and the impacts of the Coronavirus across local government.

A Member suggested that it was worth Scrutiny considering the whole audit system, nationally, and how it was functioning. In response, the Strategic Director of Resources advised that there was a consultation taking place with national Government and local authorities about how to deal with the backlog. His response had been shared with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee and he was open to discussing a further representation to the sector or to national Government with the Chair of Audit & Governance too.

A discussion was had about a report being put onto the Corporate Scrutiny work programme to examine the Audit issues. Officers advised that it may be more appropriate for this to be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee, and that the national audit system was not in the control of the organisation.

A Member asked if in the future could value for money picked up in internal audits be more concretely and tangibly expressed for residents. The Strategic Director of Resources concurred and would discuss the matter with the Audit Manager.

A Member asked about the impact of vacancy levels on the areas where KPIs had not been met. The Strategic Director of Communities advised that it was not evident to him at that stage that there was a notable impact, but whatever the impact was it would become more apparent as targets matured.

A discussion was then had about the calculations used in the report and how they might be more accessibly expressed and formulated in the future. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development set out the technical details behind the calculations, and advised this was a new style of report, which had reflected criticism of older Performance Reports, and he was happy to consider how its presentation could be made more accessible to the public.

The Chair set out a few of his thoughts. Resource and staffing levels had, he felt, effected service delivery; he wanted to see the calculation behind the numbers within the report; he felt that it would be useful to see the interaction between KPIs and the RAG rating; and he suggested that the document could be more coherently formatted, though he accepted that it was nevertheless an improvement on previous Performance Monitoring reports. He also hoped to see a response to queries and information requests raised in the discussion, and noted that there were some outstanding requests from previous meetings which were awaiting timetabling for papers.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 23 April 2024.

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

Consideration was given to any items on the Work Programme.

The Strategic Director of Communities advised that as the schedule of meetings had to be approved at Annual Council it meant that items for the Work Programme after May could

Chairman's initials

not be published yet. Nevertheless, consideration was certainly being given by Officers to the business of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee for the civic year 2024/25.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.16 pm