

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Councillor D Harrison (Chairman)

Councillors K Merrie MBE, C C Benfield, A J Bridgen, T Eynon, J Geary, B Harrison-Rushton, G Houtt, M B Wyatt and D E J Tebbutt

In Attendance: Councillors C A Sewell, R Johnson and J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R D Bayliss and A C Woodman

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mr C Brown, Mr C Lambert, Mr P Sanders, Mrs R Wallace and Mr G James

**9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**10. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**11. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

None.

**12. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor G Houtt and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**13. GAS SUPPLY IN RURAL AREAS**

The Chairman referred to the long-standing request for a representative at the Committee and thanked Mr A Craven, External Affairs Manager for Cadent Limited for attending.

Mr A Craven gave a presentation to the committee summarising what Cadent Limited did, where it was based, future investments and network connections. The Chairman then opened up the discussion.

Councillor J Geary gave a brief history as to why the topic was put onto the work programme a few years ago and thanked Mr A Craven for his attendance. In response to a question from Councillor J Geary, Mr A Craven provided information on the long-term aspiration to use hydrogen gas rather than methane.

Councillor C Benfield was excited to hear about the use of hydrogen gas in the future and the plans for localised energy production. He suggested that, as this would take in excess of 10 years to roll out, that a hydrogen gas tank be used locally in the interim. Mr A Craven stated that Cadent Limited were keen to explore options such as this and asked

Chairman's initials

Councillor C Benfield to make contact with him out of the meeting as he would be happy to explore it further.

#### **14. EMPTY HOMES - LETTABLE STANDARDS**

The Head of Housing and Property, along with the Asset Management Project Manager gave a presentation to Members in relation to the Empty Homes Lettable Standards and in particular a case raised by Councillor M B Wyatt.

The Head of Housing stated that the Lettable Standards would be brought back to the Committee in January and suggested that quarterly updates be provided throughout the year.

Councillor M B Wyatt thanked officers for the presentation and he was pleased with how improvements were being made going forward. He also expressed his gratitude that officers had admitted the mistakes made and addressed all of the issues with the particular case he had raised.

Councillor T Eynon concurred with the comments made by Councillor M B Wyatt. Regarding the quarterly updates, she suggested that the committee receive an annual update and that the quarterly updates be received by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

In response to a question from Councillor B Harrison-Rushton, the Head of Housing and Property explained that yearly inspections of the condition of properties were not currently undertaken due to staffing levels, and it had been trialled in the past unsuccessfully. He could not justify the cost of yearly inspections. He reassured Members that officers did keep in contact with tenants and inspections were carried out depending on the circumstances.

Councillor G Hoult asked for some information on the process for bidding for houses as she had received complaints that it was very lengthy and that communication was poor. The Head of Housing and Property gave details of the bidding process and the link to performance, which affected the timeline. He agreed that communication should be better and agreed to take the comments back to his team.

#### **15. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE**

The Stronger and Safer Community Team Leader gave a presentation to Members updating them on the current position with anti-social behaviour in the District. Sergeant Jon Sharpe was also in attendance to provide information from the local beat perspective.

Councillor M B Wyatt was pleased to see the item on the agenda as Coalville had suffered from anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months. He expressed concerns that the local people's view of the police was poor as they felt that issues were not being tackled by police and therefore were reluctant to report incidents. Sergeant Jon Sharpe stated that a lot of work was being undertaken in the Coalville area and urged people to report incidents. He explained that police officers were not always able to attend reported incidents but everything was logged to create a bigger picture and this assisted in tackling crime in the area. He added that an anti-social behaviour car was used for hot spots and officers regularly talked to youths, took away alcohol and spoke to parents.

Councillor M B Wyatt asked if Coalville could have an alcohol free zone to stop people drinking in public areas. The Stronger and Safer Community Team Leader explained that it was something that could be investigated but it was important for people to report incidents so that a case could be created to apply for these kind of court orders.

Councillor K Merrie raised issues with motor cycles in his ward, which seemed to be a seasonal problem.

Councillor T Eynon concurred with the importance of reporting all incidents of anti-social behaviour, but would prefer if there was something on the council web pages to refer people to. She asked if reporting through facebook was appropriate and if Public Protection Orders were effective. Sergeant Jon Sharpe asked for reports not to be made via Facebook. He explained that the police website has recently been updated to make reporting incidents easier and this was the preferred method of contact. Regarding a Public Protection Order, he stated that it was a lengthy process but was effective.

In response to a number of questions from Councillor C Benfield, Sergeant Jon Sharpe stated the following:

- Anti-social behaviour statistics were not currently broken down by age although it was predominantly younger people.
- When reports were made in relation to vehicle noise on roads, PCSO's were sent out in the first instance and contact made with owners if registration was known. If anything on the car contravened traffic regulations, then a request to change it would be made and enforced.
- Additional funds for more officers would be great but he felt it was not necessarily the answer to improve anti-social behaviour levels. He believed it was more important to prevent young people committing the offences in the first place.

Councillor J Geary made a statement on his opinion of the police force and that he did not believe it to be a deterrent any more. Sergeant Jon Sharpe provided information as to why young people were not taken to court in the first instance, and expressed the importance of providing them with education on what else was available.

It was moved by Councillor G Hout, seconded by Councillor C Benfield and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

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

Councillor T Eynon referred to a previous request to add additional information onto the Executive Decision Notice to make it clearer which committee it could be considered if requested. She asked officers to investigate.

Councillor T Eynon asked for the following items to be considered for the work programme:

- Road map to zero carbon
- Update on parking provision
- Scrutiny guidance on local government document from East Midlands Councils
- Section 106 monies in relation to health provision
- Update on the leisure project
- Planning Enforcement
- Flooding and sewers – Local Flooding Agency
- Traveller and Transit Sites – effectiveness in meeting the statutory obligation

Councillor M B Wyatt asked that Environment Enforcement be considered as he did not believe it was being tackled as it should.

Councillor J Geary asked that Public Transport be considered, as there was a lack in bus services, which was particularly effecting older people.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.40 pm