

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor R Boam (Chairman)

Councillors E G C Allman, D Bigby, A J Bridgen, G Houlton, A C Saffell and S Sheahan

Portfolio Holders: Councillors A C Woodman

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mrs C Hammond, Mr D Bates, M D'Oyly-Watkins, Mr C Elston, Mrs A Harper, K Hiller, James, Mrs M Long, Mr M Murphy, Mr P Sanders and Mr P Wheatley

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Rushton-Harrison, N Smith and M Wyatt

13. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

14. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

15. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2021. It was moved by Councillor S Sheahan and seconded by Councillor G Houlton and subsequently

RESOLVED:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

16. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the inclusion of any items to the work programme. The plan of forthcoming Cabinet decisions and the current work programme were set out in the agenda for information.

It was noted that a request had been received from Councillor Bigby for the inclusion of an item relating to the Council's failure to claim grants from the RHI Scheme. It was further noted that this matter was being addressed by the Audit and Governance Committee and it was therefore deemed inappropriate to be discussed separately by a different committee

Councillor Bigby expressed his disappointment at this decision adding that HR, IT and Finance issues were within the remit of the Committee and he urged the Chairman to reconsider so that the matter could be properly scrutinised. The Chairman advised that it remained his view that the Audit and Governance Committee was the appropriate place to deal with this matter. Councillor Bigby disagreed as he felt it did not have the right tools or powers to deal with the matter effectively but the Chairman was satisfied that he did not wish to revisit the request. Councillor Sheahan queried whether the request would be reconsidered if the Audit and Governance Committee had finished looking at it and asked the Scrutiny Committee to pick it up. The Chairman confirmed that in that case he would reconsider the request if there was outstanding work that Audit and Governance were not able to take any further

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17. FLEET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

It was reported that due to a technical issue, annexe A of the report had not been published as part of the agenda papers in relation to this item. Copies were made available to all members of the Committee ahead of the meeting and the document had since been published alongside all the meeting papers. The Chairman invited the Head of Community Services to explain the content of annexe A which effectively was an executive summary of all the other annexes which members had previously received with the agenda. Members were invited to make a decision as to whether they wished to take some time to read the document or to continue with the meeting given this explanation and the fact that a summary of the document would also be provided as part of the presentation. It was agreed that the meeting be continued without the need for an adjournment.

The Head of Community Services set out his report on the draft Fleet Management Strategy and invited comments on the proposals which included the purchase of electric vehicles to replace diesel vehicles and the options for replacement diesel. Members were also invited to comment on the future potential location of the Waste and Parks depots which would help support a growing district and enable technology infrastructure investment to support the zero carbon agenda. In order to provide more clarity and detail around these issues, the Committee received a comprehensive presentation.

Councillor Woodman, Portfolio Holder for Community Services advised that the report offered a sensible and pragmatic approach and enabled the Council to adopt the more advanced technologies as they evolve. He invited the Committee's views.

The Committee felt that it was a well-researched report and they largely agreed with the findings and gave their support to the conclusions. There was some concern about the sustainability of palm oil and the use of land for growing crops for fuel as opposed to for consumption. It was explained that the product is not grown in fields but is recycled from waste product from food manufacturing. An example of this is cooking oil, and it was reiterated that there would be no procurement of any product containing palm oil.

Questions were asked around the likely timescale for the introduction of hydrogen technology and the reported emissions of nitrogen dioxide and whether these were based on emissions from the fuel or the brakes and tyres. It was reported that the Government had released a strategy on hydrogen technology which it was hoped would increase the demand and hence bring forward its availability. The technology is growing fast and 2023/24 is an early estimate. The nitrogen dioxide emissions were based on the fuel; and new technology was awaited to enable the manufacture of improved tyres and brakes.

Further questions were asked in relation to the costs of the electric charging points for those members of staff who park the vehicles at their home, the range of an electric vehicle in a rural district, the lifecycle of the production of a battery and the benefits of purchasing against leasing the vehicles.

In response to these questions, it was noted that the cost of a home charger was in the region of £500 and the staff member would be reimbursed for the cost of any electricity used. These vehicles are not used for personal use, but enables the staff members to go straight out on a job to save on time and mileage. The journeys of the refuse vehicles are constantly reviewed to make sure that they travel around the district in the most sustainable way possible. In terms of the lifecycle of a battery, it was acknowledged that whilst there might be some environmental issues at present, all manufacturers had been given the same target to be zero carbon by 2050 so they will need to make changes; and we would also be asking pertinent questions as part of the procurement process. The financial appraisals have demonstrated that purchasing the vehicles is more financially

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viable than leasing given that a good price is achieved when selling the vehicles as they hold their value well.

The Committee agreed with the report's conclusion that this issue needed to be kept under constant review, especially with regard to new technologies.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED:- That the draft Fleet Management Strategy and action plan be supported and that the comments of the Committee be conveyed to Cabinet ahead of its decision.

18. 2021/22 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced his report which provided an update on the Councils key objectives and performance indicators for the period April to June 2021. It was noted that these were based on the Council Delivery Plan agreed by Council in November 2020, as the latest one is yet to be agreed by Council at its meeting on 7 September.

Concern was expressed on the level of fly tipping and a member felt that the Council had lost control of the situation and asked that the Committee be informed of the cause of the issue and what was being done in an attempt to address it. The Committee was advised that the figures reflected the situation in the midst of the pandemic with severe staffing issues the tips being appointment only and the public being restricted in movements. The figures are historical and the situation has already been remedied and the figures are now more in line with where they would be expected to be.

In response to a question in relation to the target of 9,000 people attending events in Coalville against the reality of 6,000 and the reason for the shortfall, it was noted that 9,000 was a target was for the year and 6,000 was what had been achieved in the first quarter and therefore it was a positive outcome.

Further details were requested on the proposal for loyalty cards and it was noted that it was not just intended for the Belvoir Shopping Centre but across the wider shopping areas. The detail was still being developed but it was agreed that these would be shared with members outside the meeting.

It was noted that the figures in the report which relate to shop vacancy rates were produced before demolition commenced at the Belvoir centre and therefore they include information relating to some units which no longer exist.

Discussion turned to the use of leisure centres as vaccination centres. There were mixed views as these were considered vital to the area, whilst accepting that it resulted in the loss of community facilities in the area.

Concern was expressed by a member who felt that we may be deliberately holding back on capital spend in order to balance the books on the Housing Revenue Account. It was made clear that the issue was around dealing with the backlog of some capital works a result of Covid and every effort was being made to address the backlogs of work and hence maximise the available funds.

The discussion turned to the levels of sickness and more specifically the levels of stress related illness. Assurances were sought that the workforce was being appropriately looked after. Members were reassured that good levels of support are provided including the use of occupational health, a counselling helpline and dedicated HR support.

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Having been moved by Councillor E Allman and seconded by Councillor G Hoult it was subsequently

RESOLVED:- That the Quarter 1 Performance Report be noted and that the comments of the Committee be conveyed to Cabinet ahead of its meeting on 21 September 2021.

19. SPECIAL EXPENSES POLICY

The Head of Finance presented his report which set out the details of a draft Special Expenses Policy which aimed to formalise the Council's current position on special expenses. It was noted that the draft Policy had already been considered by the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party at its meeting held on 15th June 2021.

Members were of the view that if the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party had already seen this and were happy with it then there were no further comments to make.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED:- That the draft Special Expenses Policy be noted and that the comments of the Committee be conveyed to Cabinet ahead of its meeting on 21 September 2021 before final approval is sought at the Council meeting on 16 November 2021.

20. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Having been moved by Councillor T Saffell and seconded by Councillor S Sheahan it was subsequently

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.

21. THE RECOVERY OF OUR LEISURE CENTRES AND THE PARTNERSHIP CONTRACT WITH EVERYONE ACTIVE (OCTOBER 2021 TO MARCH 2022)

The Head of Community Services set out his report which updated members on the recovery of the leisure centres during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee also received a detailed presentation.

Having been moved by Councillor A Bridgen and seconded by Councillor G Hoult it was subsequently

RESOLVED:- That the journey of recovery taken by the leisure centres be noted and that the comments of the Committee be conveyed to Cabinet ahead of its meeting on 21 September 2021.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50 pm

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