

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor J Houtt (Chairman)

Councillors R L Morris, C C Benfield, A J Bridgen, T Eynon, J Geary, M D Hay, G Houtt and J G Simmons

In Attendance: Councillors

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R Blunt and A C Woodman

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mr C Colvin, Knight, Mr J Knight, Ms C Preston, Ms C Proudfoot, Mr P Sanders, Mrs M Scott, Walford, Mrs R Wallace, Miss E Warhurst and Mr P Wheatley

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M B Wyatt.

17. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor C Benfield declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 – North West Leicestershire Cycling and Walking Draft Strategy as the Vice Chair of the Campaign to Re-Open the Ivanhoe Line.

18. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

None.

19. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minute of the meeting held on 26 October 2021.

In reference to minute number 15 – Draft Housing Strategy, it was noted that the action to circulate the questionnaires used during consultation had not been completed. The Democratic Service Officer would make the arrangements following the meeting.

It was moved by Councillor C Benfield, seconded by Councillor J Geary and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

20. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair referred to the Committee's work programme and invited Members to make requests for any additional items.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director confirmed that it was necessary for the Tourism Strategy to be considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee rather than the Community Scrutiny Committee due to reporting and decision timeframes.

Chairman's initials

A suggestion was put forward on behalf of Councillor M B Wyatt for an item regarding the social deprivation within the district. It was agreed to scope the item and consider going forward.

Reference was made to the 'Flood Management in North West Leicestershire' item scheduled for 9 February and the Strategic Director confirmed that suggestions made at the last committee had been put forward to officers. It was also agreed for the item duration to be amended from 15 minutes to 30 minutes, due to the nature of the discussion.

21. SHOP FRONT SCHEME UPDATE

The Economic Development and Regeneration Team Manager presented the report to Members. The Leader of the Council also addressed the Committee and spoke in support.

Members spoke positively in relation to the scheme and felt that it had made a good impact on the town. However, a comment was made on the condition of the upstairs windows of some of the units and it was hoped that action could be taken to encourage all businesses to take pride in the whole unit, not just the initial shop front.

During discussion several questions were raised, and the following answers were provided:

- It was confirmed that all tenants who would benefit from the scheme were approached and there were some that declined the offer. All the tenants that applied to the scheme were successful.
- It was confirmed that there was a £50,000 cap on the grants available and none went above this.
- It was reported that there were several tenants and landlords with multiple units, and therefore benefited from multiple grants.
- It was confirmed that there was a clawback mechanism within the programme to reclaim the money granted in the event the business was sold and this had been used.

Following a request for further information, it was agreed for details of any repurposed funds from the scheme to be provided outside of the meeting.

In reference to the withdrawn grants listed within the report, the Economic Development and Regeneration Team Manager explained that the clawback mechanism did act as a deterrent for some as there was a risk for business owners if they needed to sell. He added that officers were looking at the flexibility of this mechanism going forward if the programme was to run again.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor C Benfield and

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The progress of the Coalville Frontage Improvement Scheme to date be acknowledged.
- 2) Comments made by the Committee be considered as part of the final evaluation of the scheme and lessons to be incorporated into any similar programme.

22. ZERO LITTER STRATEGY

Chairman's initials

The Head of Community Services presented the report to Members and the Community Services Portfolio Holder spoke in support. A presentation was also given by the Environmental Protection Team Manager and the Waste Services Team Manager.

The Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee and spoke in support of the proposals.

In reference to the trade waste fly tipping detailed within the report, a Member asked if officers had looked at recycling options for traders to assist with the problem. The Waste Services Team Manager confirmed that traders were currently offered collections for cardboard and glass recycling only, but officers were looking into other options for the future.

The level of fly tipping of trade waste was acknowledged, and it was suggested that the reason for this could be down to cheaper waste carriers who collected waste without a licence and then fly tipped to dispose of the waste whilst benefiting from the money received. It was felt that the fine was not high enough as the people who were running these illegal businesses made a lot of money and did not mind paying a fine when caught, therefore it was not a good enough deterrent.

Some concern was expressed in relation to the number of incidents of littering/fly tipping compared to the very few numbers of prosecutions. The Environmental Protection Team Manager explained that due to the more random and sporadic instances of fly tipping, it had become more difficult to establish an offender, however officers were working hard to go through each fly tip to enable prosecutions. It was noted that it was much more difficult to catch people for dog fouling as it relied on people coming forward with information, but prosecutions of this nature were possible if the evidence was available. In response to a request, it was agreed to look through historical records to ascertain if there had been any prosecutions for dog fouling in the past. It was suggested that officers use the Proceeds of Crimes Act, as other local authorities did, to reclaim the money collected rather than issuing a fine. The Environmental Protection Team Manager explained that it was a standard fine and therefore could not be changed, however, if evidence of organised crime was available then officers would prosecute. Members were informed that the Proceeds of Crime Act had been used successfully in the past for planning enforcement, so it would be used if the case allowed. It was requested that this additional information be included within the strategy. The Head of Community Services agreed to include the information within the action plan.

A discussion was had on the use of cameras as a deterrent for fly tipping and officers confirmed that funding had been received for more cameras around the district. Although success had already been achieved, officers were looking at more high-end options to assist, including rapid deployment cameras, to be purchased before the end of this financial year.

A discussion was had in relation to litter picking incentives and the deposit scheme promised by central government. A suggestion was made to lobby central government on the matter. The Head of Community Services confirmed that it was being monitored and officers were waiting for the scheme to be rolled out by central government. The Portfolio Holder reported that he had made inquiries on the matter to central government, and it had been predicted that implementation would be in 2024.

In response to a question from a Member, it was confirmed that any evidence presented by Councillors or the public could be used for prosecution purposes, so he urged all to report incidents if they were able to.

It was moved by Councillor C Benfield, seconded by Councillor J Geary and

Chairman's initials

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The update on dog fouling, littering and fly tipping work be noted.
- 2) Comments made by the committee be presented to Cabinet when it considers the strategy in January.

23. NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE CYCLING AND WALKING DRAFT STRATEGY

The Head of Community Services addressed the Committee and introduced Paul Barret and Chris McFarlane from KKP Consultants who had been working with the authority to develop the strategy.

The Portfolio Holder addressed the Committee and spoke in support of the proposals. The report was then presented by the Leisure Services Team Manager and a presentation was given by the consultants outlining the draft strategy.

Members were very much in support of outdoor activity and what the strategy was trying to achieve, however the general opinion was that it was a very lengthy document full of lots of technical terms which they found difficult to read. There were also several inaccuracies throughout the document, and it was suggested that an officer meet with Councillor D Bigby to help identify these as he had noted them. The other general comment made was that the timeframe of 10 years was too long, Members wanted to see more ambition and action sooner.

Members were pleased to see the reference to the reopening of the Ivanhoe line and the link to the LMS line. Members were also pleased to see the proposed walking route through Scotlands Yard Playing Fields, as the current route was no longer accessible due to fencing installed by Network Rail.

In relation to the proposed traffic calming measures through the centre of Ashby, a Member questioned the needs as traffic was already slow due to the amount travelling through. Concerns were also raised about the added air pollution for people on foot if traffic was slowed down further. It was confirmed that this suggestion had come from the Town Council to make walkers and cyclist feel safer.

The Leisure Services Team Manager reported that the Members had in front of them an overarching strategy document to set the scene which would be refined and clarified as it developed. Members were informed that more information would become available once the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan was developed, the draft strategy was the first step required in the process. In relation to the next steps, it was noted that the strategy was asking for a significant cultural and behavioural change across the district and was also dependant on funding, all of which out of officers control. However, once areas were prioritised then improvements would be made as quickly as possible.

Officers agreed to look at clarifying several details within the strategy including population and housing numbers, confidence levels, HS2, PCT assumptions and other ambitious figures presented.

Following further discussion on the technical nature of the document, the concerns were noted by officers, and it was agreed that a more user-friendly version be produced similar to what was produced for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Members were thanked for their contributions as part of the consultation on the draft strategy.

Chairman's initials

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.13 pm