

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor J Houtt (Chairman)

Councillors T Eynon, J Geary, M D Hay, J G Simmons and M B Wyatt

In Attendance: Councillors R Johnson, J Legrys and S Sheahan

Portfolio Holders: Councillors

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mr C Elston, Mr J Knight, Mr P Sanders, Mrs R Wallace and Miss E Warhurst

**55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bridgen, C Benfield, G Houtt and R Morris.

**56. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**57. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

No questions were received.

**58. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

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

By affirmation of the meeting the work programme was noted.

**59. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2022.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor J Simmons and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

**60. LEISURE CENTRES ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Head of Community Services spoke to the report and handed over to the Contract Manager for Everyone Active to give a presentation providing an overview of the performance of the leisure partnership between May 2021 to April 2022.

In response to a question in relation to the free activity provision, it was confirmed that this was included in the Activ8 programme and provided a range of activities for children which included swimming.

A Member raised several concerns that had been received from residents including the entrance system which seemed poor, the tired squash courts and the unfinished sauna.

Chairman's initials

Officers confirmed that there were some teething problems when the new leisure centre was opened, and these had now been rectified. In relation to the entrance system, it was a card swiping system which was being abused by some of those with membership cards, therefore work has been carried out to tackle the problem and improvements should be seen in the coming months. In relation to the squash courts, officers reported that this was a multi-use space which was used for clubs during school holidays, which initially was not being covered correctly and resulted in some markings, and this has now also been rectified. In relation to the sauna, it was reported that it was opened slightly later than the full centre opening but had been operational for some time.

A Member questioned the need for the public to pay to fund a facility such as the new leisure centre, especially as there was no data available to indicate how far it reached. It was proposed that in future, information such as: what was being done to reach people that needed to use the facility, whether GP referrals worked and do those referred attend sessions. It was also noted that there were no longer dedicated swimming sessions for those with disabilities or children on the spectrum as there were at Hermitage Leisure Centre. Officers responded that the facilities offered across the district were essential to achieve the Council's health and wellbeing priorities, and that the leisure offer available was one of the best in the region. Members were informed that following the recovery from lockdown, the service was now moving onto the next stages of the plan which was to measure the impact on the community and the shaping of the service moving forward to include specific sessions for those groups of people that needed them. More measurable information would be available in future updates. Members were also reminded that the new leisure centre was only one part of the health and wellbeing offer to residents and the role of the NWLDC Health and Wellbeing team was to help the residents that needed access to sport and physical activity opportunities the most to be able to access them, either within the community or the leisure centre, with the support of Everyone Active where appropriate.

A comment was made in relation to the temperature of the new leisure centre pool as some feedback received from residents to Members was that it was too cold. A Member felt that it was important to have a hot pool for those with medical needs. Officers stated that the pool temperature was just under 29 degrees, which was at the higher end of the required temperature range and no complaints had been received to date. Pools with a higher temperature for medical needs, such as a hydrotherapy pool, was not a specification for this centre and therefore was not something that could be provided. It was noted that the temperature of the pool was not something that could be altered quickly to allow different temperatures for different sessions.

A Member commented on the great facility available to residents and was pleased to see that after a recent visit, users could still book and pay for sessions at the centre as well as online. It was acknowledged that there was a number of medal winning athletes from the district and it was suggested that an honours board be erected in the leisure centre to recognise them.

A request was received for another tour of the leisure centre for members to mark the year anniversary of it opening, it was felt that it would be beneficial, especially for those that did not attend the first tour before it opened. Officers agreed and confirmed that it was the intention to continue to organise annual tours for Members.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor J Legrys and

RESOLVED THAT:

The performance of the Leisure Partnership with Everyone Active for the period May 2021 to April 2022 be noted.

Chairman's initials

## 61. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

The Head of Planning and Infrastructure presented the report to Members.

After concerns being shared on the staffing of the team, clarity was given on the recruitment issues and the introduction of a Senior Team Leader post. It was confirmed that this post was not replacing three others as it seemed, the current three agency posts were not full-time posts and in some cases were only working a few hours a week. It was also reported that part of the review with the Planning Advisory Service was to look at staffing resource for the team.

The discussion considered the key open cases, and it was confirmed that the majority were in relation to gypsy/traveller sites. A Member felt that the harm scoring of cases was useful but seemed to be discretionary and bias in some instances. Several Members commented on the urgent need to manage gypsy/traveller sites, this would then help with the caseloads. The Head of Planning and Infrastructure recognised the need in this area and stressed the complex nature of the matter. However, he confirmed that work was currently being undertaken as part of the Local Plan review and would be taken through the Local Plan Committee in due course.

A Member referred to the types of breaches investigated as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and commented that the numbers were misleading as he was aware of one case that was actually a high number of instances within it. However, the Member was happy with the work being done by officers on this case and the communication that was now in place. He stressed that communication between officers and Members was key, even if no action could be taken on a matter.

During discussions Members shared their frustrations of times when stricter enforcement action could have been taken and it was a shared opinion that more prosecutions and fines would deter people from building without permission. Members were hopeful that the service would be able to move forward following the service review. The officer time required to undertake thorough investigations into breaches was acknowledged and it was suggested that this time be charged for. In response to a question, the Head of Planning and Infrastructure explained that legal advice was always sought on the right action to take on each case and it was confirmed that the current enforcement policy would also be reviewed by the Planning Advisory Service.

A question of clarity was asked in relation to the status of travellers once they were settled on a site and whether the special considerations still applied. It was confirmed that there was another case locally which was considering this matter and officers were awaiting the outcomes, however it had taken several years to get to the current position.

Officers were questioned as to the use of drones by the service to assist with obtaining evidence if access to a site could not be gained. The Head of Planning and Infrastructure stated that drones had been used in the past and that legal advice was currently being sought into further permissions of use as well as obtaining access to sites. It was agreed that an update would be provided in the next quarterly report to Planning Committee.

A Member suggested that a report be considered at a future meeting in relation to finding sites for the gypsy and traveller community, as it was felt it went beyond enforcement and there could be more to do to help. However, it was agreed that this would be a matter for the Local Plan Committee.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor T Eynon and

RESOLVED THAT:

Chairman's initials

- 1) The intention to engage the Planning Advisory Service to review the Planning Enforcement Team be noted.
- 2) The intention to take a report back to Community Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2023 to update on progress be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.50 pm