

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor N Smith (Chairman)

Councillors V Richichi, J G Simmons, D Bigby, A J Bridgen, G Hoult, S Sheahan and M B Wyatt

In Attendance: Councillors

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R D Bayliss

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mr C Elston, Mr G Hammons, K Hiller, Ms N Oliver, Mr M Murphy, Mr P Sanders, Mrs R Wallace and Mr P Wheatley

**60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Allman and A C Saffell.

**61. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor M B Wyatt declared a registerable interest in item 6, 2022/23 Quarter 1 and 2 Performance Report as a business owner in Coalville Town Centre.

**62. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

None.

**63. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2022.

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor G Hoult and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June be approved as a correct record.

**64. 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 and the current work programme were set out in the agenda for information.

A Member raised a point about the performance of routine housing repairs and a concern that the drop in performance was related to the progression rate of planned maintenance. Another Member concurred and felt that the new system was also affecting performance as well as the customer service team within housing maintenance that dealt with everyday enquiries. After further discussion it was agreed that the Strategic Director would assist members to scope a report with Members and subsequently for it to be added to the Work Programme for a future meeting.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

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- a) The current work programme be noted.
- b) A report be scoped and brought forward for the Scrutiny Work Programming Group to consider adding it to the work programme for a future meeting.

## **65. 2022/23 QUARTER 1 AND 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development presented the report to Members.

As the report covered two performance quarters, Members agreed to group the discussion into the following areas:

Economic Regeneration: -

A Member queried the statement that footfall had increased in Coalville Town Centre as he felt that was not the opinion of local businesses. It was felt that a more accurate picture could be drawn if local businesses were consulted. The Head of Economic Regeneration explained the process of collecting footfall data and confirmed that conversations were had with retailers but the information that could be gained was limited. Members requested that a small survey be undertaken on all businesses to ascertain whether spending had increased or decreased in the last two quarters, officers agreed.

A Member questioned the performance rating in relation to the occupancy rates in Coalville's Newmarket as the target had not been met but the rating was green. Members were informed that officers were expecting to miss this target as it was set with the outdoor market in mind and the delay in this part of the project had affected the targets. In relation to the rating in the report, the error was noted, which would be updated prior to consideration by Cabinet.

During a discussion on the withdrawal of the Hex loyalty card in Ashby, a Member asked how the Council planned to support business in the area going forward. The Head of Regeneration explained that the Ashby BID team were taking the lead with the regeneration in Ashby and officers were supporting wherever possible. Members were reminded that funding for regeneration came from national government schemes when available and was channelled by the Council, there was not a local funding scheme directly from the Council.

In relation to the creation of local jobs at the Jaguar Land Rover operations at Mercia Park, a Member questioned how many of the jobs were actually filled with local people rather than people outside of the District. The Head of Economic Regeneration explained that information from businesses was limited and although officers had requested this from Unipart, the information within the report was all that had been received.

In relation to the East Midlands Dev Co and Freeport, a Member asked if the Council's representatives that attended the Board Meetings had formally objected to the use of the site south of Diseworth. The Head of Planning and Regeneration explained that the agreed approach was to stay neutral on the subject as to not jeopardise the planning process for the site.

Customer Satisfaction: -

In response to concerns from a Member on the lengthy waiting times for the housing side of customer services, the Strategic Director noted the concerns and agreed to incorporate this into the future housing report requested earlier in the meeting.

In response to a comment from a Member, the Strategic Director explained that not all calls were recorded for training purposes but as the ability to do so was part of the

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system, customers making contact by telephone had to be informed that the calls 'may' be recorded to comply with GDPR rules.

Housing: -

The Interim Head of Finance gave an explanation on accounting practices in relation to the reduction of capital spends to reduce the spend of reserves. The Strategic Director reassured Members that did not mean the Council were consciously delaying schemes and would not impact the service provided to tenants.

During discussions on the HIP Programme, the delay in achieving targets was raised. The Strategic Director acknowledged the significant slippage for this target and explained he was undertaking an internal process to ascertain the reasons for this.

A Member queried the high performance of housing repairs completed within target as feedback from tenants indicated that it was not the case. Concerns were raised that there could be an issue with how jobs were reported. The Strategic Director clarified that the target was for jobs completed on time not the number of repairs completed.

Concerns were raised that housing repairs were not being completed correctly the first time and therefore meant that numerous repeat visits were necessary. A Member felt that this was due to inadequate inspections, and this was something in need of review.

The Strategic Director noted all comments made in relation to housing repairs and agreed to address them with the Head of Housing.

Health and Leisure: -

At the request of a Member, the Strategic Director agreed to provide the NWL Health and Wellbeing Strategy as referred to in the Support Safer Communities performance outside of the meeting.

Financial Forecast: -

A discussion was had on the forecasted overspend and the impact it would have on the Council if spending continued in that way. The Interim Head of Finance explained that the staff pay award was significantly more than what was planned and that there were a number of pressures on non-staffing budgets which were set out in the report. It was noted that cost pressures were expected into next year's budget and unless some in-year savings were found then it would be necessary to draw down on reserves more than planned. Members were reminded of the Member briefing scheduled to provide more information on proposed budgets and were encouraged to attend.

The revenue from green bin charges being less than expected was acknowledged and the Head of Community Services confirmed that although uptake had been below target, he was confident it would improve in the spring.

It was moved by Councillor A Bridgen, seconded by Councillor G Hoult and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted and comments made by the Committee be presented to Cabinet when it considers the report at its meeting on 10 January 2023.

## **66. CUSTOMER SERVICES - PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE APPROACH**

The Chair left the meeting at 7.38pm, at the commencement of the item and returned at 7.49pm. The Deputy Chair took the Chair at this point for the remainder of the meeting.

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Councillor M B Wyatt left the meeting at 7.38pm, at the commencement of the item.

The Strategic Director introduced the item before handing over to the Customer Services Team Manager who gave a presentation to Members, highlighting performance and next steps for the team.

During discussion Members commented on the positive ethos and future direction of the Customer Services Team. At the request of a Member, more information was provided on staff training and support available on the floor during calls. In response to a question, the Customer Services Team Manager commented that resources within the team were currently adequate but was being monitored as this could change depending on the future numbers of face-to-face contact at the Customer Services Centre.

In response to a question in relation to the use of online forms, it was noted that they were well used, and statistics had shown that there had been a reduction in the number of transactional calls. The Strategic Director reported that work was still being undertaken to achieve the best blend of human and digital processes.

In relation to a comment about the process of handing over more complex calls to the appropriate services, it was confirmed that the Customer Service Team did follow up with officers to ensure the enquiry had been dealt with.

It was moved by Councillor D Bigby, seconded by Councillor S Sheahan and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The direction of travel for Customer Services and the route for refinement of performance monitoring in the new Council's Delivery Plan be noted.
- b) The proposed introduction of Customer Service into the Induction Programme for Members be supported.
- c) The inclusion of an annual report to this committee on the progress and developments in customer service be supported and it be added to the committee work programme.

**Councillor N Smith left the meeting at 7.38pm and returned at 7.49pm**

**Councillor M B Wyatt left the meeting at 7.38pm**

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00 pm