

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: Councillor T Eynon (Chair)

Councillors M Blair-Park, M Ball, D Bigby (Substitute for Councillor A Morley), K Horn, S Lambeth, P Lees, E Parle, L Windram and J Windram (Substitute for Councillor M French)

In Attendance: Councillors A Barker and J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors A C Woodman and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs R Wallace, Mr T Devonshire, Miss E Warhurst, Mr J Knight, Ms C Proudfoot, Mr P Sanders and Mr D Scruton

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M French and A Morley.

11. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor K Horn declared a registrable interest in Item 5 – The Effectiveness of our Leisure Centres in delivering Health and Wellbeing – as a member of Ashby Sport. He advised that he would leave the meeting and take no part in the consideration of the item.

12. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

13. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023.

It was moved by Councillor M Blair-Park seconded by Councillor S Lambeth and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

14. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR LEISURE CENTRES IN DELIVERING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Having declared an interest in the item, Councillor K Horn removed himself from the Committee for the duration of the discussion.

The Head of Community Services presented the report.

The Everyone Active Contract Manager presented a PowerPoint to supplement the report.

The Chair asked for evidence that the Leisure Centre served all constituents. In response, the Everyone Active Contract Manager advised that the contract had specifically crafted community wellbeing targets done in collaboration with the Council to measure precisely how successful the contract was in this regard.

Chairman's initials

A Member noted a couple of concerns about a low rate of children in her ward utilising Activ8 credits: could people book online and were they limited to how they could use their Activ8 points? In response, the Everyone Active Contract Manager advised that people should be able to book online but noted that the data also did not always fully reflect the take up rate through associated partners.

The Leisure Services Team Manager accepted concerns around giving free activities to those already likely to be inclined to be active or be able to afford them; should they instead target less sport inclined or socio-economically privileged constituents was something to consider.

In response to a question about whether the data included school visits, the Everyone Active Contract Manager advised that it was mostly measured through card sign ins and then school trips added to this.

The Member then expressed concern that it might slightly overinflate how successful the usage figures looked. The Everyone Active Contract Manager advised that the nationally impressive 19% increase in memberships at the Hermitage could not be explained by this.

The Leisure Services Team Manager added that children forced to go by their school are likely the sort of people who should be targeted, and their attendance will stimulate better, healthier habits.

In response to a question about lapsed memberships, the Everyone Active Contract Manager advised that they could measure usage of any member and efforts are made to contact members who begin to lapse, in the interests of both parties. Quit rates are below Everyone Active averages over the last 12 months though they are growing at Whitwick and Coalville, which is likely down to the fact it is too busy in the evenings.

A Member inquired about the viability of a bursary scheme. The Everyone Active Contract Manager advised that the Leisure Link scheme is a means tested 25% discount which has been running for a while; complimentary memberships are also given to targeted groups; furthermore, the organisation are well above the national average performance in this area. He added that Everyone Active are even now examining the possibility of replicating the organisation's successes.

In response to a question about opening hours, the Everyone Active Contract Manager said there was no desire to change hours any further. Furthermore, the current hours parallel industry standard and the demand levels. He also stated that the centres now also opened earlier and this had been particularly well received by users.

In response to a question about seasonal changes to membership, the Everyone Active Contract Manager advised that the Lido facility at Ashby logically explains the spikes in membership in the summer months as it is the only public Lido in the East Midlands.

The chair noted that 68% of North West Leicestershire residents have a membership but only 22% of members have used their membership in the last 12 months. She requested postcode data on attendance to assess, demographically, the composition of who actually regularly attends the Leisure Centres and where they are from. The Everyone Active Team Manager was happy to attempt to attain and collate this data, and would then return to Members with it.

The Leisure Services Team Manager welcomed the idea of postcode analysis and was happy to consider any other data that Members felt could evidence the impact the leisure centres were having on improving the health and wellbeing of residents.

It was moved by Councillor T Eynon, seconded by Councillor D Bigby and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted and it be requested that future reports include data profiles, including postcode and socio-economic data, to demonstrate the effectiveness of schemes such as Activ8, Leisure Link and Community Outreach.

At the conclusion of the item Councillor K Horn returned to the Committee.

15. AN UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WORK ON ENFORCING STANDARDS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR AND AN UPDATE ON TACKLING FUEL POVERTY IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

The head of Community Services presented the report.

In response to a question about timescales, The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that there was no current timetable set out. The first step was a publicity campaign. He was hoping to have something in place by the new year.

The Chair felt that overemphasising a 98% compliancy rate with a legal regulation was indicative, perhaps, of complacency. 2% non-compliance meant 118 family's living in substandard housing. Officers should recalibrate what they were aiming to achieve and target accordingly.

The Environmental Protection Team Manager concurred that a better target would be to set a time frame to get this 2% compliant. She added that the Council Delivery Plan process must be considered when setting targets.

In response to a question about the latest changes to national government policy in this area, the Environmental Protection Team Manager advised Members on the new legal framework in which the Council were operating within.

The Chair asked that future quantitative data regarding housing service requests be more contextualised, and the Environmental Protection Team Manager was happy to provide this.

It was moved by Councillor T Eynon, seconded by Councillor M Blair-Park and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted, and Officers be recommended to benchmark their targets against the speed of non-compliance resolution, rather than against the 100% figure, as this is a legal requirement and not a target.

16. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY TO APPROVE THE COUNCIL'S NEW FIVE YEAR HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager presented the report.

In response to a question about plans to bring in a charging policy for emergency accommodation, the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that the policy was focused on recouping some costs towards bed and breakfast housing schemes, whilst remaining fair and equitable.

Chairman's initials

In response to a question about the data for the last 12 months, the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that commentary and indicative data can be found in each relevant category. Mental Health issues were the largest single category.

A Member asked if the drop between 2019 and 2021 could be explained by Covid and national Government policy. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that this was the case, particularly the moratorium on evictions. The five year time span for data was hoped to somewhat negate the effect of such anomalies on the usefulness of the data.

The Chair asked how much the organisation would save on temporary accommodation if we moved away from using bed and breakfast schemes. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that government policy was designed to make bed and breakfast schemes for homeless people financially punitive for Local Authorities so to discourage their usage. In most models the organisation would have to pay for some support which could not be recouped. He proceeded to detail some of the issues with bed and breakfast schemes.

The Chair then asked if this was part of a wider strategy and the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that yes, the organisation was trying to be more proactive, though accepting some people would always require emergency help.

The Portfolio Holder commended the workshop which had been organised. He added that five year trends were undesirable though national factors had to be considered.

It was moved by Councillor T Eynon, seconded by Councillor S Lambeth and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted and the focus on improving the quality of and reducing the need for temporary accommodation be welcomed.

17. REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY TO ACCEPT ANY PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY AS A RESULT OF A REVIEW AND CONSULTATION

The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager presented the report.

In response to a question about the rate of people migrating to the area seeking housing, the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised Members on the qualifying categories which include residence, length thereof, and employment in the district.

A Member noted concerns constituents had with the choice based letting system. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that the authority could not take new applications for a period due to software change and the new system had also seen some teething problems; but an improvement could now be seen.

In response to the Chair's concern that some people may be unable to register online, the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that in this case officers were able to help, but it was a question of balancing needs and officers time. Where appropriate people were encouraged to help themselves so officers could spend more time processing cases.

The Chair asked if local charities and partners could help and the Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager advised that yes, people are directed to them.

Chairman's initials

The Chair asked when a good time for a review of this would be. The Housing Strategy and Systems Team Manager suggested at least six months of letting data was realistically needed to track any changes and suggested a return to the Community Scrutiny Committee in a year.

The Portfolio Holder noted that this is a tricky issue as demand was high and the situation was complex. He hoped the policy produced was felt to be fair and equitable and he thanked Members for their contributions to that process.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments which would be presented to Cabinet when they considered the report on 12 December.

18. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the inclusion of any items on the work programme.

The Chair explained the newly suggested pink paper process to Members.

The Chair emphasised the value of discussion between Members of the Scrutiny Committee regarding the shaping of the Work Programme.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.14 pm