

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2022

Present: Councillor R Boam (Chairman)

Councillors D Bigby, G Hoult, V Richichi (Substitute for Councillor A J Bridgen), S Sheahan and M B Wyatt

In Attendance: Councillors

Portfolio Holders: Councillors R D Bayliss

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mr C Elston, Ms R Haynes, Mr C Lambert, Mr M Murphy, Mr P Sanders, Mr J Singh, Mrs R Wallace, Mr P Wheatley and Miss E Warhurst

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Allman, B Harrison-Rushton, A Bridgen, A C Saffell and N Smith.

46. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

47. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

None.

48. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2022.

A request was received from Councillor A C Saffell prior to the meeting, to add in his apologies as they were given at the time.

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor S Sheahan and

RESOLVED THAT:

Subject to the addition of apologies from Councillor A C Saffell, the minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

49. 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 request was made to receive the report scheduled for Cabinet decision entitled '2022/23 Council Surplus Property List'. It was noted that the report would be considered by Cabinet on 29 March, but some Members felt it would still be beneficial for the Committee to receive it. Officers agreed to circulate the report outside of the meeting.

By affirmation of the meeting the work programme was noted.

Chairman's initials

50. 2021/22 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisation Development introduced his report which provided an update on the Council's key objectives and performance indicators for the period October to December 2021.

During the full discussion, several questions of clarity were sought and answered by officers from the relevant service area.

In response to concerns in relation to the customer satisfaction levels in quarter three, the Strategic Director explained that similar levels had been as reported for approximately a year, in particular with call delays and that measures had been introduced to address it. Members were assured that currently quarter four was seeing an improvement. Reference was made by a Member to the recent budget reduction for Customer Services and whether this was justified when customer satisfaction was not on target.

A request was made for a further breakdown of figures for the local economic value as presented within the 'support for businesses and helping people into local jobs' performance indicators within the report. It was explained that this information was available and would be included in the end of year report.

During discussion on Coalville's Newmarket, it was noted that targets had not been met because of the delay in opening due to the covid pandemic. Members were assured that the Newmarket was now going from strength to strength with several permanent tenancies in place along with casual tenancies. An explanation was also given on the different ways the Newmarket was advertised and following a request, it was agreed to circulate a breakdown of costs in relation to marketing to the Committee outside of the meeting.

During discussion on empty properties within the housing stock, it was agreed that a list of empty properties detailing location and reason for being empty, be circulated to the Committee outside of the meeting once available from the new housing system.

In relation to the new homes performance indicators, a Member queried the impact the number of new council houses and affordable homes within the district had on waiting lists. It was acknowledged that the impact was monitored and that once the new housing system received the module specifically for this area, more data would be available, and targets would be refined. Following further discussion, it was agreed that once the data was available, Members would receive regular updates.

Reference was made to the improvements delivered to make council tenants' homes more energy efficient and it was noted that there were still many homes with outstanding works to reach the decent homes standards. Members were informed that approximately 2000 houses had an efficiency rating below level C and that tenant refusals were the biggest reason that improvements were not carried out – linked in part to concerns over the Covid pandemic. However, improvements would be carried out as soon as there was a change in tenancies, and/or through the recovery funding in place for next year's Housing Improvement Programme. Following a comment from a Member, the Head of Housing asked that any knowledge of tenants that needed energy efficiency improvements and were willing to receive them be passed directly to him.

At the request of a Member, it was agreed that a usage breakdown for the several electric vehicle charging sites across the district be provided to the Committee outside of the meeting.

Reference was made to the below target percentage for determining planning applications due to increased demand, and questions were raised on what action was being taken. Members were informed that improvements were being proposed-to the process so that support staff were being utilised to allow more capacity for planning officers and work loads would continue to be monitored. It was noted that the target within the report was a local one and that numbers were ahead of the targets set nationally. In response to the suggestion that officer numbers be increased, the Head of Planning and Infrastructure explained that balance had to be right due to the everchanging numbers of applications being made.

A Member commented on the language used in relation to the Hex Loyalty Card for customers of Coalville businesses, it was felt that jargon such as 'onboarding' should be avoided. The comment was taken on board and a further update on the take up of the card would be provided as part of the next performance report.

Some concern was expressed that recycling rates were not yet available as they would not be confirmed by Defra until December 2022, which made it difficult to determine how successful collections had been. The Head of Community Services acknowledged that it was a challenge, particularly as previous recycling rates were not good due to the covid pandemic. Members were assured that recycling rates were in recovery and that more information would be available as part of the Zero Carbon Update Report at a future meeting.

A discussion was had on the progress of the employee travel and allowances review and Members were updated that negotiations were still ongoing with the trade unions. An explanation was given on the avenues being investigated and it was confirmed that there would not be a national steer on the matter.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted, and all comments made be provided to Cabinet when it considers the report at its meeting on 29 March 2022.

51. HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022 - 2024

The Head of Housing presented the report to Members. Reference was made to the layout errors within some sections of the report and once rectified the new version would be recirculated.

It was suggested that the wording be reconsidered in relation to the replacement of homes lost under the Right to Buy Scheme as part of the new build and acquisition programme. It stated, 'we will be looking to replace as many of these homes as we can...' and this was not the case as the target number had been reduced over the next ten years.

In relation to the 24 percent of homes still not meeting the decent homes standard, it was questioned if this was due to the issues caused by the covid pandemic. The Head of Housing explained that it was due to several reasons including access issues and tenant refusals, as well as the issues associated with the covid pandemic. He added that a contractor was now being brought in to assist and an improvement should be seen on this target moving forward.

Reference was made to the aspiration to ensure that council homes achieved an EPC rating of C and above by 2030. Concerns were raised on the impact this would have on

the Council's net zero carbon target for 2030, as an EPC rating of C and above did not mean that the property was zero carbon. Members were assured that achieving an EPC rating of C would be a huge improvement, but it was acknowledged that it was not zero carbon. This would be explored further as part of the wider net zero carbon road map.

It was highlighted that there was no reference to the installation of electric vehicle charging points in council housing areas. The Head of Housing reported that that this was an oversight as it was part of the plans moving forward, the report would be amended to reflect that.

The Chairman thanked Members for their contributions and confirmed that comments made would be presented to Cabinet when the report was considered.

Councillor M B Wyatt left the meeting at 7.32pm.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.49 pm