

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor R Boam (Chairman)

Councillors B Harrison-Rushton, D Bigby, A J Bridgen, G Hault, A C Saffell, S Sheahan, N Smith and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mr D Bates, M D'Oyly-Watkins, Mr C Elston, Mrs C Hammond, Ms R Haynes, K Hiller, Mr C Lambert, Mr M Murphy, Mr P Sanders, Mrs R Wallace and Mr P Wheatley

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E Allman.

23. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

24. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

None.

25. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2021.

It was moved by Councillor A C Saffell, seconded by Councillor A Bridgen and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

26. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

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

Questions were asked in relation to the content of the forthcoming Customer Services Strategy, particularly if it would include a discussion on the new location of the service. It was explained that the strategy would be focused on the policies and procedures required to run the service moving forward rather than the location. Therefore, a request was made by Councillor Wyatt for the addition of an item specifically to discuss the proposed new location of the Customer Services Team, due to the impact it would have on an already established business on the premises. A discussion was had on the process for including an item on the workplan and the scoping work required. The Strategic Director would provide the scoping form to Councillor Wyatt following the meeting.

Following a question in relation to the reporting timescales for the North West Leicestershire Visitor Economy report, it was agreed for further information to be provided to Councillor D Bigby outside of the meeting.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

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RESOLVED THAT:

The Committee Work Programme be noted.

27. 2021/22 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced his report which provided an update on the Councils key objectives and performance indicators for the period July to September 2021.

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

In relation to the new market, a Member expressed disappointment as he felt it did not live up to expectations made prior to the opening. Comments were also received that this was an opinion supported by local residents on social media. The Head of Community Services explained that the new market formed part of a bigger scheme for Marlborough Square and Members would see further improvements as the project moved forward. Members were assured that dedicated staff were supporting stall holders and dealing with all comments or complaints received.

In response to a question on the context for customer satisfaction figures, the Strategic Director agreed to obtain more detail on the matter and provide it to Councillor Sheahan outside of the meeting.

A question was raised on the unmet target for the time taken to re-let properties. The Head of Housing responded that the unmet target was due to several issues including the greater number of properties in the system, the restrictions in place due to the Covid Pandemic and better partnership working with housing associations which had led to the transferral of tenants. He was confident that targets would get back on track.

A discussion was had on the number of new council homes delivered and reference was made to the recent decision of Cabinet, setting a target for affordable homes over a five-year period. Officers confirmed that they were confident that the affordable homes target could be reached and at the request of a Member, it was agreed to circulate the breakdown of affordable housing numbers across the district outside of the meeting.

A comment was made on the action plan to tackle health inequalities and an enquiry was made into when this would be completed. Members were informed that as the work was being led by Leicestershire County Council officers could not influence the timescales, however more information should be available as part of the next performance report.

As requested during discussion, it was agreed to provide Councillor S Sheahan with further information on the number of customers that had difficulty in the repayment of business rates.

A discussion was held on the green homes grant and interest was shown in the workings of air source pump heating systems. The Head of Housing offered to arrange a viewing of the system in an empty property as soon as practicable, at which all Members of the Committee would be invited.

A concern was raised in relation to the heating of the new leisure centre with gas and the review of the system being undertaken 12 months after the opening of the centre. The Head of Community Services explained that due to the complicated heating management system for the leisure centre, monthly monitoring would be undertaken with a full review at

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12 months. Members were assured that work was already underway on a possible retrofittable system for the future. Members would be kept informed of the progress.

Some concerns were raised about the way Coalville pavements were recently deep cleaned due to debris left behind on the shop fronts. Comments were also made about the condition of information points in Coalville that had been vandalised or weather damaged which made the area look untidy, particularly the point installed by the clock tower. Officers acknowledged the issue occurred during the deep cleanse of pavements and confirmed that this was rectified by the company with lessons learnt when cleansing other areas in the district. Members were encouraged to report any untidy information points so that they could be addressed.

Suggestions were made for the use of cameras that detect speed and sound to deter unacceptable driving on the highways around the district. The Head of Community Services acknowledged that cameras were planned in Castle Donnington and would ensure that this would be looked into as the options were developed in partnership with local stakeholders.

It was moved by Councillor B Harrison-Rushton, seconded by Councillor A Bridgen and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The report be noted.
- b) Comments made by the Committee be provided to Cabinet when it considers the report at its meeting on 7 December 2021.

28. REVIEW OF MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Head of Finance presented the report to Members acknowledging the slightly later reporting timescales due to the still awaited new homes bonus figures, along with the outcome of the spending review. Although this information was still not available officers were confident that financial planning could still progress.

A discussion was had on the relevance of recommendation two within the report to put forward budget proposals, as some Members felt it was difficult to do this without the full budget commentary, which was usually received at this point in the budget process. A suggestion was made to delay this recommendation to the next meeting where more information would be available. The Head of Finance assured Members that when the full budget proposals were considered at the next meeting in December, there would still be an opportunity to put forward suggestions. The recommendation within the report was to allow Members to put forward any initial thoughts if they wished to.

The Head of Finance also offered to meet with any Member to discuss the budget proposals in more detail and to work through any alternative budget proposals.

As a result of discussions about the differing budget scenarios within the report, a comment was made highlighting the additional £0.3million income from the pessimistic projections and it was questioned how this would be possible without a raise in council tax. The Head of Finance agreed to share the budget projection breakdown with all Members of the Committee outside of the meeting to allow further understanding.

In response to a question about the effects of inflation on the general fund, the Head of Finance confirmed that there was a forecast for inflation and allowances would be made for this. As the majority of expenditure was for salaries, provisions would also be made

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for the ongoing pay negotiations and then savings would be calculated for both long and short term.

A comment was made on the year on year growing gap between the optimistic reserve balance projections in comparison to the other detailed scenarios, and it was questioned if this was an accumulative result of not raising council tax. The Head of Finance reported that it was due to several factors including council tax rates.

Councillor D Bigby asked officers to address the environment and climate change target in the forthcoming budget, as well as the consideration of adequate funds to keep Ashby Tourist Centre open.

It was moved by Councillor B Harrison-Rushton, seconded by Councillor G Hoult and

RESOLVED THAT:

Comments of the Committee be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.40 pm