

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 23 MAY 2024

Present: Councillor S Lambeth (Chair)

Councillors C Beck, M Blair-Park, M Burke, A Morley, R L Morris, S Sheahan, J Windram and R Boam (Substitute for Councillor M Ball)

In Attendance: Councillors J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors A C Woodman

Officers: Mr A Barton, Mrs A Crouch, Ms K Hiller, Mr T Devonshire, Mr P Stone, Mr C Elston, Mr M Murphy, Ms N Oliver and Mr P Wheatley

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M Ball and K Horn.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

4. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2024.

It was moved by Councillor M Blair Park, seconded by Councillor S Sheahan, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2024 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

5. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Strategic Director of Communities presented the report.

A Member asked how many recommendations to the Cabinet had been accepted, out of the five which the Committee had made over the civic year 2023/24, and the Strategic Director of Communities said that this information would be provided in the final report.

A brief discussion was had about how the role of the Scrutiny Committee might itself be scrutinised. Officers advised that effective scrutiny necessitated regular meetings and rigorous work planning, and it would be the role of full Council in September to assess the success of the Scrutiny Committees when they considered the annual report.

It was moved by Councillor M Blair-Park, seconded by Councillor R Boam, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The report be noted ahead of its submission to Council

Chair's initials

2. Authority be delegated to the Scrutiny Committee Chairs to make any final amendments to this report following consideration by both Scrutiny committees prior to consideration of the report by Council.

6. CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

The Customer Services Team Manager presented the report.

A Member suggested that due to the prevalence of housing complaints, they could be broken down to a more concrete level of detail. Officers confirmed that this was available and provided internally.

A Member asked several questions of the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Customer Services. The Portfolio Holder said that he felt it was important to analyse trends in complaints for signs of where things might be failing, and felt that the process for handling complaints had improved in recent years; he had recently requested stronger democratic oversight of complaints and more Portfolio Holder awareness of stage 2 complaints; and in terms of staff conduct he was kept informed, as appropriate within the HR process.

Committee Members and the Portfolio Holder discussed the data around complaints against staff. They concluded that the data did not show a meaningful decrease and wondered what might be done to improve this in the future.

A discussion was had about the use of satisfaction surveys. The Customer Services Team Manager advised that they were working on centralising and integrating their feedback mechanisms between services, as part of the Ombudsman's Code. They were working to get satisfaction across the board.

The Chair requested that in the future the data tracking complaints month-by-month, where it was suggested that seasonal factors impacted this, there be a comparison with previous years to evidence this claim. The Customer Services Team Manager said that she would provide this in future iterations of the report.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 25 June.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development presented the report.

A Member asked about the District Regeneration Framework. The Head of Property and Regeneration said that a report on the policy would be going to Community Scrutiny in June and Cabinet in August, and he would be happy to provide a further briefing for Members if required. Clarity was also provided on use of the links within the document to gain access to further KPI information.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 23 July.

8. 2023/24 QUARTER 3 GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) UPDATE

The Strategic Director of Resources presented the report.

The Chair said that the budget projections masked a larger net overspend in some areas due to the underspend on staffing, and the associated issues with staffing problems were

Chair's initials

a perennial subject of discussion for the Committee. The Strategic Director of Resources said that staffing was a key concern of the Corporate Leadership Team and noted that a report on the issue was next on the agenda.

Financial performance monitoring was then discussed. The Strategic Director had written to the Audit & Governance Committee recently to detail the reasons for delays in completing Statement of Accounts including but not limited to the capacity of the Finance Team, and he would share the letter with the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. He then set out the plan in place to resolve this and noted that a report would be going to the August Corporate Scrutiny meeting to set this out in greater detail. He was committed to resolving the problems.

The Chair expressed concern about the backlog and noted the critical need to address this problem. The continued failure to provide audited accounts could have grave reputational impacts.

Members discussed the roll-out of the new Finance system and what lessons could be learned from that process. The Strategic Director of Resources broadly concurred with their suggestions.

The Chair said that the report identified a proliferation of overspends and felt that these might these be better tracked in future reports. The Strategic Director of Resources said he would detail this in future iterations of the report.

It was moved by Councillor S Sheahan, seconded by Councillor S Lambeth, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The forecasted overspend on the General Fund for 2023/24 be noted.
2. The forecasted on the Housing Revenue Account for 2023/24 be noted.
3. It be requested that the Committee's comments be taken into account.

9. EMPLOYEE RESOURCING

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development presented the report.

A Member asked a range of questions. The response of the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development was as follows. Areas of concern, such as Planning and Environmental Health, were detailed in the report. Surveys were carried out as part of the Investors in People scheme which the Council were currently a Silver awarded organisation, with the aim of reaching Gold in 2025. The associated survey was anonymised, external and benchmarked against other public and private sector bodies. He would share the results of the last one carried out with the Committee. The Council also carried out market assessments where vacancies within the Council proved challenging to fill, in line with equal pay legislation.

A Member asked about the 6% increase in the headcount, how it could be explained and what future trends projected, and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that he would provide further information outside of the meeting.

A Member asked about what he felt was low number of applications on average for each vacancy. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that the Council had nevertheless managed to fill a large proportion of jobs and the figure reflected national trends.

It was moved by Councillor R Morris, seconded by Councillor M Blair-Park, and

Chair's initials

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

10. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to any items on the Work Programme.

A Member asked about the Transformation Update and whether it could be brought forward, and whether a report on Equality Diversity and Inclusion could be put on the Work Programme too. In consultation with Officers and the Chair, it was agreed that the these would both be brought to the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 29 August 2024.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.44 pm