

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 29 AUGUST 2024

Present: Councillor S Lambeth (Chair)

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

In Attendance: Councillors C A Sewell, L Windram, R Johnson and P Moul

Portfolio Holders: Councillors K Merrie MBE

Officers: Mr A Barton, Miss E Warhurst, Mr T Devonshire, Mr P Stone, Mr C Elston, Ms J Marshall and Mr M Murphy

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M Blair-Park and K Horn.

12. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

13. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

14. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024.

It was moved by Councillor M Burke, seconded by Councillor A Morley, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

15. ZERO CARBON UPDATE

The Climate Change Programme Manager presented the report.

A discussion was had about calculations and targets, how focus areas were separated into scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3, and why scope 1 and 2 issues were being targeted when scope 3 issues were responsible for a large majority of emissions. The Chair was concerned that data suggested progress to Zero Carbon was slow and wanted to see more clearly articulated timelines and an action plan.

The Climate Change Programme Manager advised that scope 1 and 2 reflected things within the Council's operational control. Scope 3, things which the Council could facilitate, largely consisted of housing stock and thus emissions generated by tenants were not entirely in the control of the Council. She would provide further information about the data and the timeline to Zero Carbon in the Members briefing in the autumn.

The Strategic Director of Communities added that the current priority for the housing stock was to bring all properties up to at least an EPC C rating, and the strategies to achieve

Chair's initials

this, such as asset management plans and stock condition surveys, would be communicated to Members in upcoming workshops.

A discussion was had about the Council's vehicle fleet and the fleet replacement programme. Officers set out how this was separated into different service areas and advised on the prospects of emissions reduction in each and the viability, costs and benefits of transitioning to electric vehicles, which would not be immediately prudent in some parts of the fleet.

A discussion was had about the bio-diversity net gain planning principle and its ability to influence the path to Zero Carbon. The Head of Planning and Infrastructure advised that it would be factored into the drafting process for the new Local Plan and would be discussed at upcoming meetings of that committee.

A discussion was had about the provision of electric vehicle charging sites on Council car parks across the district. The Chair expressed concern that the facilities seemed overpriced and had to slow a charging speed. The Climate Change Programme Manager advised that the charge points were 7kw, the speed limited by electric connection costs, are owned by the Council and had been supported with grant funding. Charges are priced to cover costs, and the intention was to provide overnight charging facilities to people who did not have private access to them. Nevertheless, she took on board the Chair's concern and she would feedback to the Car Park Team and confirm the decision process for EV charging costs.

The Chair said that future reports should assess progress against the 2030 plan or future plans, the performances of projects funded with the climate change reserve fund should be assessed, and a permanent staff position should be made for the Climate Change Programme Manager.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

16. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

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

In response to a Member, the Strategic Director of Resources reiterated that the 2021/22 accounts had been published in June 2024, that a value for money opinion would be issued for 2022/23 by the end of September, and that a meeting with Mazars and the Audit and Governance Committee had been scheduled for September 2024 too. The Council's financial reserves were healthy and its governance structure robust. He also advised Members as to how the auditors would assess value for money, by examining the Council's financial performance as a totality.

A discussion was had about the definition of 'a well-run Council'. Officers advised that the definition of 'a well-run council' synthesised the work of Oflog and the LGA. The Chair requested further information to clarify specifically how accepted good practice in the local government sector had been incorporated into the Council Delivery Plan which was adopted by full Council for a 4 year term last year.

A Member proposed the following definition and requested that it be placed in the minutes: 'A well run Council co-ordinates its actions around an overarching vision, underpinned by a thorough and ongoing appraisal of stakeholder needs and aspirations, and provides sound leadership on the local economy, environment and community by championing democracy, value for money, fairness and meaningful opportunity.'

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stressed that below the Council Delivery Plan sat a range of service level plans and these were reviewed annually.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments which would be presented to Cabinet on 22 October 2024.

17. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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

A discussion was had about disability policy. Members wondered whether the proportion of employees with disabilities was monitored, whether the disability characteristic could be expanded to include 'neuro-divergency', whether a policy of 'job carving' was implemented, and whether the LGA work on disability had been incorporated into the plan.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Legal and Support Services explained that it was the Leader of the Council who appointed to the Cabinet from the administration, based on skills, expertise and interest in the particular portfolio areas.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development set out for Members the policy of reasonable adjustments, said that he would discuss the concept of 'job carving' with the Member, and advised that the Council did monitor data on disabled employees and compared it to the 2021 census, which he would share with the Member. The Council also calculated and published the gender pay gap, and from next year would be voluntarily calculating the ethnic pay gap too if the plan was agreed.

A discussion was had about engagement. Members wished to see greater Member input, and increased attempts to engage marginalised communities within the district in decision making. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development acknowledged that greater engagement with certain sections of the community within the district was a key aim of the plan.

Members discussed the process of drafting the plan, which some Members felt should be central to the Council's ethic. Some concern was expressed that it seemed vague, lacking in performance monitoring indicators and targets, and that some of the latest trends in EDI policy such as a focus on equity had not been incorporated. It was also unclear when the last such plan had been formulated.

In response, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said that he could provide monitoring reports to future meetings of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, that the last plan had been published in 2019 and thus impacted by Covid, and that this proposed plan had been influenced by statutory frameworks and current good practice guidance from the LGA and similar bodies.

The Chair noted recent plans set out by the new Government and hoped the Council would be tracking changes in this sphere dynamically, and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development concurred.

A discussion was had about unconscious bias training, which the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development said had a good rate of enrolment amongst staff. A Member suggested that it should be mandatory for all staff and elected Members.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

18. CORPORATE CHARGING POLICY

The Strategic Director of Resources presented the report.

In response to a Member, the Strategic Director of Resources advised that the consequences of approving the policy would be that Cabinet, rather than full Council, would be able to amend charges in the future.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments, which would be presented to the Cabinet on 24 September 2024.

19. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to any items of the work programme.

Members requested another report on the work plan covering employee resourcing. Officers advised that there was a workforce strategy plan to be presented to Cabinet later this year and then the Corporate Scrutiny Committee; this would incorporate concerns Members had previously expressed.

Members asked about the Transformation Update report and the Strategic Director of Resources advised that updates would be incorporated into quarterly performance monitoring and financial performance monitoring reports moving forwards, and these would include detailed, benchmarked targets.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.14 pm