

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor T Eynon (Chair)

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

In Attendance: Councillors J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors A C Saffell and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Ms K Hiller, Mr T Devonshire, Mr D Jones, Ms C Proudfoot, Mrs M Scott, Mr T Stanyard, Mr P Wheatley and Mr P Sanders

**48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor M Blair-Park and M French.

**49. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

**50. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

**51. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024.

It was moved by Councillor S Lambeth, seconded by Councillor E Parle and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

**52. LOCAL ENFORCEMENT PLAN**

The Planning and Development Team Manager presented the report.

Members broadly commended the simplified prioritisation presented in the new Enforcement Plan. Nevertheless, they expressed some concern about resourcing within the Planning Enforcement Team, and asked whether there was clear, formulaic guidelines for Officer delegated decisions and appropriate checks and balances in place for instances where Members felt that an incorrect enforcement decision had been made.

Officers advised that the report in front of them was concerned with prioritisation only, not resourcing, which was currently being assessed by the Planning Advisory Service. As for appropriate safeguards, Officers advised that in the first instance Members should approach the Planning and Development Team Manager or Head of Planning and Infrastructure to register any enforcement concerns; if they remained unsatisfied they should consult the Monitoring Officer. More generally, in the future, the Planning Committee would assess performance in this area, and the Community Scrutiny Committee could assess the efficacy of procedures when this was felt necessary.

Chair's initials

The Chair proposed some suggestions as to how Officers could qualitatively review their performance, and report this to the Portfolio Holder.

Some Members suggested that resolution, rather than initial action, should be the key target and deterrence against non-compliance was the key metric of success. Officer determination to gather evidence was particularly important and performance in that area should certainly be monitored. It was suggested that the public were currently dissatisfied with the Planning Enforcement Performance and that a complainant feedback score may contribute to the effective performance monitoring of the new Enforcement Plan.

The Planning and Development Team Manager noted these comments, but advised that case resolution was not a practical target, due to the unique nature of each enforcement case. He also set out for Members how the Enforcement Register operated, and agreed to make this clearer in the report to Cabinet on 22 October.

The Chair invited the Portfolio Holder to speak.

The Portfolio Holder commended the simplified and clarified processes set out in the document, and thanked Officers for the work they had undertaken. He understood some of the concerns the Committee had expressed and noted that this document was still a work in progress.

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

### **53. LEISURE CENTRES ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Head of Community Services presented the report, with support from representatives from Everyone Active.

Members commended the thoroughness of the report, and the successful performance detailed within it.

An extensive discussion was had about the Activate scheme and the principles behind it. Members were very supportive of the scheme but did raise some issues: improvements had been made to the Activate app, but could its functionality be further improved; and could the scheme be applied to children who lived in the district but were educated outside of it.

The Head of Community Services, with support from Everyone Active, highlighted the successful impacts of the scheme, how the leisure centres had attempted to increase participation and especially amongst the most disadvantaged children, noted that as this was a sector-leading scheme this did mean it's fairly unique nature hampered efforts to further improve the functionality of the app, and said they would examine the idea of extending the scheme.

A discussion was had about the source of energy at the leisure centres. A Member suggested it should be a priority to move away from gas powered energy as soon as was practicable. The Head of Community Services advised that a request for funding for solar panel procurement for the Coalville and Whitwick Leisure Centre was being presented to Cabinet on 24 September 2024, and there was funding allocated in the Capital Programme for the financial year 2025/26 to install solar panels at Ashby Leisure Centre.

It was moved by Councillor D Bigby seconded by Councillor S Sheahan, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report and the Committee's comments on it be noted.

#### **54. UPDATE ON AIR QUALITY**

The Head of Community Services presented the report, with support from the Environmental Protection Team Manager and the Public Protection Team Leader.

A discussion was had about the study which had been commissioned. Members expressed concern that it had been inconclusive, and thus they asked about the prospect of undertaking further studies.

Officers advised that the Council had gone beyond its statutory requirement in monitoring PM 2.5, set out some of the technical details behind the study which had engaged with relevant experts and was undertaken in conjunction with Harborough District Council. They also advised that DEFRA would be unlikely to fund further studies of the same area.

Some Members suggested that officers should approach the issue more proactively and with greater zeal in the future. In response, Officers advised that the aspects of air quality which the Council did have a statutory responsibility to monitor were improving, and they said they would be taking a more educational approach with residents in the future in relation to what contributed to deterioration in air quality in rural areas of the district. Nevertheless air quality was a nationally salient issue and attempts to improve it would need to be led by central Government.

Summarising the discussion, the Chair suggested that scoping work on engaging with residents on the link between the use of gas to heat homes, air quality, and its links to the Zero Carbon agenda, could be presented to the Scrutiny Work Programming Group. She also noted that the Committee specifically asked that the Cabinet consider applying for further rounds of DEFRA funding for air quality studies, as and when opportunities to do so arise.

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

#### **55. DISTRICT WIDE REGENERATION FRAMEWORK**

The Strategic Director of Place introduced the report, read out a supportive statement from the Portfolio Holder, and passed over to the Senior Economic Development Officer. The Head of Property and Regeneration was also present.

A discussion was had about how frequently the Framework document would be updated and how performance would be monitored. Members felt the Framework document needed a clearer pipeline and greater clarity around the governance structure.

Officers acknowledged these concerns and advised that the intention was to bring updates on individual projects quarterly, to review and analyse successes and challenges, and to consider when it would be appropriate to commence new projects. It was hoped that Members would refer to, feed into and where necessary challenge what was set out in the Framework document. The published document would be updated annually, so to give time for projects to come to completion, and it was agreed that there would also be annual performance monitoring in the form of a standing report on the Community Scrutiny Work Programme.

A discussion was had about the links between the document and the provision of infrastructure, generally within the district and with specific reference to the Ivanhoe Line project. Officers advised that some of these issues raised were addressed elsewhere by the Council or were not within the purview of the organisation. As for the Ivanhoe Line, putting that project as an important priority within the regeneration framework should serve to demonstrate to the new Government of the project's importance to the district and the Council. In light of recent developments it was now a question of how to influence the new Government, and the Strategic Director of Place was keen to solicit suggestions from Members.

Officers clarified the separation between the districtwide regeneration framework and the subset Coalville Regeneration Framework, which included plans to renovate Council owned buildings across the town.

The Chair summarised the discussion. She noted the queries raised, but recognised this was only the first iteration of the document, and so she hoped that the next iteration would have a more strategic orientation.

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

## **56. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to any items on the Work Programme.

The Chair advised the Committee of the cancellation of the extraordinary meeting scheduled for Monday, 30 September. Clarity from the new government on what household recycling collection arrangements will be acceptable was needed, to inform the waste services review. Before proposing any changes to the current recycling collection service, the Council needed to assure itself that it would be compliant. No timetable for the release of any further guidance or legislation had, as yet, been provided. Officers would update Members in due course.

Members requested performance monitoring reports focused on the Community Lottery Scheme, and Love Your Neighbourhood, to be placed onto the Community Scrutiny Work Programme.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.57 pm