

MINUTES of a meeting of the CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Forest Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on THURSDAY, 13 MARCH 2025

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

Portfolio Holders: Councillor A Woodman

Officers: Mrs A Crouch, Mrs R Wallace, Mr P Stone, Ms J McGarry, Ms M Hodgett and Mr M Murphy

### **35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Horn, A Morley and R Morris.

### **36. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **37. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

### **38. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2025.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2025 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

### **39. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The Chair thanked Mike Murphy, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development for his 35 years of service prior to his retirement at the end of March. The Committee wished him well in his retirement.

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

A discussion was had on the areas that were not delivering as planned, particularly customer complaints. Requests were made for further information, and questions were asked as to whether anything more could be done to support the service, such as more staff and the provision of training for existing staff. The Strategic Director of Resources explained that the service was well supported with a very dedicated team manager who was working closely with teams throughout the Council to resolve complaints. It was noted that customer standards and contact was currently being reviewed as the Corporate Leadership Team recognised that improvements were required. Members were reminded that the Annual Customer Services Report would be considered at the next meeting which would include the detail Members requested during discussion. The Strategic Director of Communities explained that there had been a 72 percent increase in complaints in

Chair's initials

comparison to quarter three in 2023/24 and it was acknowledged that housing repairs was the main subject of complaints. Members were assured that work was being undertaken in the housing service to tackle the issue which the Members on the Housing Improvement Board were being kept updated on.

A discussion was had on the complaints process and the stage that the Ombudsman Service became involved. The Strategic Director of Communities agreed to provide more specific Ombudsman timescales outside of the meeting. It was confirmed that a formal complaint needed to be made by an individual rather than through a Councillor.

Councillors congratulated the Head of Planning and Infrastructure for the improvements made to the planning service since the last performance report.

It was suggested that the method of reporting the key performance indicators under 'a well-run Council' priority needed to be revisited as it could be perceived that the Council was failing due to its contradictory nature. The Strategic Director of Resources explained how the performance in this area was measured in more detail. Comments were noted and it was agreed to present a fairer picture for this council priority moving forward.

A further comment was made on details not included relating to food safety standards for food businesses. It was suggested that a breakdown of the 20 percent of food businesses not achieving a five-star rating be included to provide a full picture.

The report was noted. The Chair thanked Members for their comments which would be reported to Cabinet as part of the performance monitoring process.

#### **40. HOUSING REPAIRS PERFORMANCE ANNUAL UPDATE**

The Strategic Director of Communities presented the report to Members.

A discussion was had on the progress made to date to the Housing Repairs Service and in response to a question relating to the amount of time expected to address all the areas needing improvement, it was reported that a likely timescale was 12 to 18 months.

In relation to recruitment issues, a Member suggested that fixed term seasonal contracts be used for certain jobs rather than permanent in-house team, it was felt this may be more successful in a competitive market. The Strategic Director of Communities acknowledged the comments made and confirmed some seasonal work was already carried out in this way.

In relation to the stock survey recently undertaken assessing the condition of all council homes, a Member questioned when a decent standard for 100 percent of stock was expected to be achieved. The Strategic Director of Communities assured members that all work currently required to reach 100 percent was programmed in for the next financial year. Assurances were also given on compliance, particularly gas, electric and asbestos, and Members were assured that all areas below 100 percent had action plans in place.

A discussion was had on trends over a period of time for newly undertaken work, it was agreed for the information reported to the Housing Improvement Board on the subject be shared with the Committee.

The update was noted. The Chair thanked the Members for their comments which would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 22 April 2025.

## **41. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

The Strategic Director of Resources presented the report to Members.

In response to a question about 'buying local', the Strategic Director of Resources stated that it was an ambition of the Council to buy local wherever possible but there was still lots of work required on contract analysis to be clear on the areas of spend.

At the request of a Member, the Strategic Director of Resources gave an explanation about 'social value considerations' in relation to the procurement strategy moving forward as it was a key element. It was agreed for officers to provide a current example for North West Leicestershire to Members outside of the meeting.

A Member asked for assurances that contractors working with customers and residents with specific needs were compliant with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and received the relevant training. The Strategic Director of Communities explained that there was a suite of policies that contractors had to comply with, and reports were regularly received from them, as well as from the in-house repairs staff. The Strategic Director of Communities agreed to look at what EDI training was provided and report back to Members outside of the meeting.

It was suggested that a quarterly update be provided detailing how the services procured were performing against the Council's specification, in relation to achieving key performance indicators. It was felt that this would be an indication as to the suitability and competency of the contractors. The Strategic Director of Resources noted the comments.

The report was noted. The Chair thanked the Members for their comments which would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 25 March 2025.

## **42. 2024/25 QUARTER 2 GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT UPDATE**

The Strategic Director of Resources presented the report to Members.

A Member referenced the staff pay award in that it exceeded the amount accounted for in the 2024/25 budget. It was noted that the Committee had recommended that the amount be increased. It was suggested that more consideration be given to the recommendations of the committee. Officers noted the comment.

It was also noted that in relation to the Housing Revenue Account lower operating expenditure, a request was made for more detail in future reports.

It was acknowledged that recruitment and retention was an issue for the Council and Members requested assurances that officers were engaging on the matter nationally, with information coming back to the authority. Members were assured that the new Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development would be addressing the matter and would attend the Committee in due course.

In relation to the Council's reserves, a Member questioned if there was a plan for higher level of spending following a suggestion at the recent Council meeting that it should be used for the benefit of the residents of the District due to the Local Government Reorganisation discussions currently underway. The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that it would be a consideration as part of the review of the medium-term financial plan during which reserve balances will be looked at and conversations with the relevant stakeholders would be had.

Chair's initials

The update was noted. The Chair thanked the Members for their comments which would be presented to Cabinet in due course.

**43. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the future work programme and no comments were made.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.10 pm