COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2021

Present:

Councillor Kevin Tait (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Barry Lewis (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Joseph Birkin
Councillor Tony Lacey
Councillor Philip Wheelhouse
Councillor Lilian Deighton
Councillor Jeff Lilley
Councillor Pam Windley

Also Present:

C Cupit	Deputy Leader of the Council
S Brunt	Joint Head Of Service - Streetscene
M Finn	Environmental Health Manager
D Stanton	Governance Officer
A Bond	Governance Officer

CSC/39/21-22 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received at this meeting.

CSC/40/21-22 Declarations of Interest

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and/or other interest, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

CSC/41/21-22 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 November 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

CSC/42/21-22 Consideration of documentation

Members considered the responses that had been received from their questions regarding domestic bonfires and domestic smoke incidents.

Committee requested a full update on these figures, including clarification on what items could and could not be burned, as well as an update on restrictions that had been put in place as a result of the Pandemic.

RESOLVED – The documentation was noted.

CSC/ Interviews

43/2
1-22 Members conducted a series of interviews with Heads of Service to ascertain if there was a need for an out of hour's service and how this might work throughout the District.

Interview One with the Joint Head of Streetscene

(1) Is there a need for an out of hour's service?

The Joint Head of Streetscene informed Members that there was currently not a high level deal of demand for an out of hours service, and that there was a low frequency of calls to resolve.

The Committee heard that arrangements were already in place for emergencies such as flooding and drug paraphernalia where staff would be paid overtime on an ad-hoc basis.

(2) How might an out of hours service work?

The Officer informed Members that how an out of hours service might function would depend on what the service was designed to achieve and the subject matter of the complaints.

(3) How would a service at NED compare with the CAN Rangers BDC?

Committee heard that this would depend on the demand placed on the service and the availability of resources. The possibility of a north/south split across the District was raised.

(4) What would be the costs of implementation?

The Officer informed Committee that this would depend on the volume of work carried out by the service, the level of demand and the resources necessary to complete the work.

(5) How would staffing provisions work?

The Officer stressed that this would depend on the required resource for the potential service. Currently at Streetscene the service relied on the goodwill of staff to be available for emergency callouts, and that there was a flexibility clause in their contracts.

Members heard that there were no standby payment mechanisms in place as this had been removed from the staff pay agreements in 2009.

(6) What would be the barriers to success?

The need for a local pay agreement due to the lack of a standby or callout payment arrangement being in place. Also the costs and remits of the service.

(7) If you was considering an out of hours service, what criteria would you look at? How would you benchmark this with other authorities?

The Officer stated that this could be done by comparing with other Derbyshire authorities such as Bolsover District Council.

Members noted that the Association of Public Excellence could be used to aid with benchmarking.

(8) Have you any other opinions on a potential out of hours service?

The Officer questioned whether the District would want their own service, or to work in partnership with another authority, or to utilise a service already in place from an external provider.

Members discussed the interview at length and questioned what out of hours service requests had been dealt with in the past and who decides how urgently a situation would be dealt with.

The Officer informed Members that fallen trees that presented a risk to person and property, drug paraphernalia and flooding had been urgently dealt with in the past. He stated that either himself or the Joint Streetscence and Waste Services Manager were contactable at all times and would make a decision about whether to intervene at that time or the next day.

Members enquired as to how many call outs for the service had been out of hours and heard that in the previous three months there had not been any. Members also heard that although the service operated largely on an informal basis, they were able to manage the number of issues well.

Interview Two with the Service Manager for Environmental Health

(1) Is there a need for an out of hour's service?

Committee heard that the need for an out of hours service would depend on what the Council wanted to achieve and the nature of the service itself. There was not a great need for an out of hours service to deal with issues such as noise nuisance or fly tipping as there was generally a low frequency of calls and that this was working well within the current system.

Members heard that an out of hours service to handle anti-social behaviour across towns within the District that had a community focus may be of some benefit.

(2) How might an out of hours service work?

The Officer suggested that a neighbourhood warden approach focussed on major towns within the District could work. This service could deal with anti-social behaviour and would work well under a 10 hour shift bases of four days working and four days non-working.

He also suggested that Environmental Health could be a successful out of hours service used to observe and witness at the time of complaint.

(3) How would a service at NED compare with the CAN Rangers BDC?

It was suggested that a potential service offered by NED would differ from the CAN Rangers at BDC as it would have a much more limited and targeted focus.

(4) What would be the costs of implementation?

The Officer estimated that an out of hours service based around anti-social behaviour would have a minimum cost of £250,000 per annum.

An Environmental Health out of hours service would have an estimated cost of £50,000 to £60,000 per annum. This estimate was based on the basic level of overtime on a basic officer grade.

(5) How would staffing provisions work?

The Officer suggested that staffing provision could work with a shift basis or with a focused approach on peak times such as weekends and bank holidays. Consideration could also be given to a shared service.

(6) What would be the barriers to success?

Members heard that it would potentially be difficult to encourage staff to undertake these later shifts.

Out of Hours work within Environmental Health was included in contractual arrangements with employees but the need for out of hours work was limited.

It would be important to ensure that the remuneration was appropriate for the work in order to ensure staff uptake.

(7) If you was considering an out of hours service, what criteria would you look at? How would you benchmark this with other authorities?

The Officer informed Members that other local authorities such as Rotherham had cut back their out of hours service due to a lack of work for them to complete. This would suggest that the Council wouldn't require a large service but instead a smaller and more focussed service would be preferable.

(8) Have you any other opinions on a potential out of hours service?

Members discussed the interview at length and questioned if appropriate provision was in place to decide whether immediate action should be taken in relation to a complaint.

The Officer informed Members that due to the nature of the work and legal processes, immediate action was rarely necessary or appropriate but provision was in place should it be necessary.

Members also heard that there was only a small number of out of hours call outs. These included programmed work such as food inspections conducted

by environmental health officers.

Interview Three with the Portfolio holder for Environmental Services

(1) Is there a need for an out of hour's service?

The Portfolio Holder informed Committee that they had been pushing for this service as issues were often raised with them out of hours and constituents had requested this service.

(2) How might an out of hours service work?

Members heard that the service could deal with low level anti-social behaviour such as fly tipping and community safety issues.

(3) How would a service at NED compare with the CAN Rangers BDC?

NEDDC would not need a service as all-encompassing or detailed as the CAN Rangers at BDC. Instead a more clear and focussed service would be required.

(4) What would be the costs of implementation?

Members heard that part of the service could be funded through the HRA if the service had a responsibility for anti-social behaviour. However, the Deputy Leader commented that she would rather it focused on community safety issues such as fly tipping, parking and planning enforcement. The source of funding would be up for debate.

(5) How would staffing provisions work?

The Portfolio Holder suggested that a specific full time employed position was not required. Instead existing resources could be diverted or the Council could make use of an external provider.

(6) What would be the barriers to success?

Committee heard that a barrier to success would be setting a clear remit for the service. A clear remit would enable appropriate training to be put in place and prevent employees from being put at risk.

(7) If you was considering an out of hours service, what criteria would you look at? How would you benchmark this with other authorities?

The Portfolio Holder suggested that research they had undertaken had shown that not many other authorities currently had an out of hours service. As such it would be prudent to start with a small trial service.

(8) Have you any other opinions on a potential out of hours service?

The Portfolio Holder told Members that it was important for this to be fully

analysed.

Members discussed the interview at length. In particular, Committee questioned what an out of hours service could achieve in areas such as parking, and whether the creation of an additional role was necessary in order for the Council to offer this service.

The Portfolio Holder suggested that the service would sit within a current team and would undertake a more proactive role in areas such as education, evidence gathering and community safety.

CSC/44/21-22 **Forward Plan of Executive Decisions**

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions be noted.

CSC/45/21-22 **Scrutiny Work Programme**

Committee agreed that they would like to interview officers from Rykneld Homes and Planning Enforcement at the next meeting as part of their Scrutiny Review.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be noted.

CSC/46/21-22 **Additional Urgent Items (if any)**

There were no additional urgent items.

CSC/47/21-22 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee will take place on Friday 11 February at 1:30pm.

CSC/48/21-22 **Venue for Next Meeting**

Committee agreed that they would meet in person if possible but would wait until a later date to make a final decision so as to keep in line with the current situation and Government regulations and advice.