

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2024

Present:

Councillor Mick Smith (Chair) (in the Chair)

Councillor Heather Liggett (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Kathy Clegg
Councillor Mark Foster
Councillor Ross Shipman
Councillor Christine Smith

Councillor Michelle Emmens
Councillor Carol Lacey
Councillor Derrick Skinner

Also Present:

J Dethick	Director of Finance and Resources & (Section 151 Officer)
D Thompson	Assistant Director of Planning
J Wells	Corporate Finance Manager / Deputy S151 Officer
A Bashir	Improvement Officer
J Hayden	Senior Scrutiny Officer
T Scott	Governance and Scrutiny Officer

SSC/ Apologies for Absence

33/2

3-24 No apologies for absence were received.

SSC/ Declarations of Interest

34/2

3-24 No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

SSC/ Minutes of Last Meeting

35/2

3-24 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Services Scrutiny Committee held on 21 November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

SSC/ Draft Notes of the Local Plan Review Working Group

36/2

3-24 The Assistant Director of Planning presented the draft notes of the Local Plan Review Working Group meeting on 1 November 2023 in accordance with the decision when the Local Plan Working Group was established at Full Council that the notes of the meetings would be shared with Scrutiny Committees for their information.

Members were concerned that the current Local Plan target for housing delivery was based upon old census data. housing figures from 2014 to arrive at numbers for housing needs. The Assistant Director of Planning explained the figures in the next iteration of the Local Plan would be based on the standard method for calculating housing need as a starting point. The standard method was a nationally set equation for calculating need in each Council area.

Members asked about the how flood risk information would be updated as part of the evidence base review. The Assistant Director of Planning explained that after Storm Babet, the Managing Director started the process for establishing an organisation involving Councils across north eastern Derbyshire and other partner organisations to ensure the impacts of flooding and climate change in the area are better understood and that the evidence that will feed into future strategies is as robust as possible.

Members discussed the Housing Needs Assessment. Reference was made to a planning application in Unstone, where a local housing need survey had been carried out within the locality and the results of that survey had been referred to in support of a planning application. The question was raised as to how the Housing Needs Assessment would affect such surveys. The Assistant Director of Planning explained that the Housing Needs Assessment would assess need across the District as a whole in terms of housing tenure, size and ability to meet specific needs. The results of the Assessment would include Parish level data and would be informed by the Housing Needs Survey that was issued to all residents in February.

Members referred to the Housing Needs survey that had been issued to residents, and felt that some of the questions were intrusive. The Assistant Director of Planning explained that it did include some sensitive questions, but these questions were necessary to give the Council the full picture in terms of income levels which was needed to establish an appropriate cost for renting some types of affordable housing. The surveys themselves were anonymous.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ 37/2

Q3 Budget Monitoring Report

3-24 The Corporate Finance Manager presented a report with a summary of the budget position for the third quarter of 2023/24, which would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 29 February 2024.

Members were informed that at quarter three, the overall forecast was for the General Fund to underspend by £0.580m, the level of General Fund Balances had been maintained at £2.000m, the HRA had an overall income position of £0.158m, and the HRA capital investment programme was currently under budget by £8.881m largely due to the North Wingfield New Build (£3.606m).

RESOLVED – That the Services Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

SSC/ 38/2

Performance Management

3-24 The Improvement Officer presented a report setting out progress on the strategies underpinning the Council Plan objective 'A great place to access good public services' for the period ending 31 December 2023.

Members were updated on progress under the following objective sub-categories in Appendix 1 of the report:

- 1) Assist and influence other public partners to improve their services in the District.
- 2) Continually improve Council services to deliver excellence and value for money.

Members referred to the paragraph in Appendix 1 explaining the Rykneld Homes staff relocating into Mill Lane (“Contact Centre calls answered at first point of contact 81% (target 90%). 772 in person visits which is a significant increase on previous quarter, due to RHL moving into Mill Lane”) and asked if the relocation had directly contributed to the answered call target being missed. The Improvement Officer stated that he would investigate this with the officers concerned.

The Committee discussed the recycling bin calendar no longer being separately posted to residents and now being included as part of the residents’ magazine ‘the NEWS’, which had confused some residents. The Chair stated that the decision to no longer issue the separate recycling calendar was made at a Council meeting.

Members were concerned with the paragraph which stated “customer satisfaction survey analysis showed just under 60% of clients were satisfied with the Environmental Health service overall” and felt the Committee should investigate the reasons for this result. The Chair advised the Committee that this could be added to the Committee’s 2023/24 Work Programme in the upcoming Work Programme agenda item.

Members enquired what action the Council was taking to prevent cyber and phishing attacks. The Improvement Officer stated that he would ask this question to the Assistant Director of ICT.

Members referred to the paragraph which stated “further development of the integration between online webforms to the Licensing back-office system has taken place” and asked why taxi renewal applications appeared to have been made online exclusive, and if full DBS checks were carried out for every online application. The Improvement Officer stated that he would pass these queries on to the Assistant Director of Environmental Health.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ **Residents Survey**

39/2

3-24

The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained how the Council undertook a Residents Survey in November 2023 to help further understand resident perceptions of the local area and local services. A total of 3,269 responses were received and the results were being reported to each Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair felt that based on the results of the survey, two areas of interest for this Committee would be:

- Access to health services (with NHS dental services and GP services/family doctor being high on the list)

- Public transport provision

Members discussed the two suggested areas of interest. The Committee agreed that both subjects would be difficult to scrutinise because neither came within the responsibilities of the Council.

Councillor Mark Foster informed the Committee of his membership of the Derbyshire County Council Improvement and Scrutiny Committee for Health, so he would relay the concerns of the Services Scrutiny Committee regarding access to health services.

Members enquired which department at the Council had been responsible for producing the survey questions. The Senior Scrutiny Officer informed Members she would investigate who had produced the questions.

Members stated that more information on a children's play area survey had been requested by the Committee previously and not received. The Senior Scrutiny Officer informed Members she would investigate further information on this survey.

Members made reference to the area around 'activities for older teenagers' as results indicated it had performed negatively in the residents survey. The Senior Scrutiny Officer advised Members that this element of the survey would be picked up by the Communities Scrutiny. The Chair acknowledged.

Members discussed the issue of drains and gullies on Council properties as a potential area to scrutinise, because some appeared to not have been cleaned. Members agreed to discuss this further during the Work Programme agenda item.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ Cabinet Business

40/2

3-24

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a digest of Cabinet decisions taken since 29 June 2023. The digest set out key information for each decision.

The Committee agreed that the Cabinet Digest started too far back, and only those decisions taken since the last round of Scrutiny meetings need to be shown.

Members were concerned that there were decisions in the Digest that Members did not get the opportunity to call-in. The Governance and Scrutiny Officer informed Members that the Council published Cabinet decisions on the website with full notice given for decisions eligible for call-in.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

SSC/ Work Programme

41/2

3-24

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Work Programme 2023/24 for the Committee to consider.

Members asked what 'horizon scanning' in the draft Work Programme involved. The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that it was a standing item agreed by the Committee to be briefed on potential legislative changes, regulations or key projects.

Members agreed that drains and gullies on Council properties should be an area given further consideration. The Senior Scrutiny Officer advised that she would seek more information on the procedures followed for cleaning drains and gullies (and which of drains or gullies was a Council responsibility) from Steetscene and report back at a future Committee meeting.

Members discussed the recent increase to residents for the green recycling bin charge. Members felt that it was partly within the remit of the Committee because it was a financial decision, so agreed to consider it further.

The Chair felt that the Council's work being undertaken on the 'talent pipeline' should be an item on the next Committee agenda.

Members asked when missed bin collections was last reviewed by a Scrutiny Committee. The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that this would be investigated.

Members revisited the discussion in the Performance Management agenda item regarding the paragraph which stated "customer satisfaction survey analysis showed just under 60% of clients were satisfied with the Environmental Health service overall" and agreed that the Committee should add investigation of the reasons for this result to the draft Work Programme.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Council's work being undertaken on the 'talent pipeline' be added to the Work Programme 2023/24 for the next scheduled meeting on 7 May 2024.
- (2) That investigation of the reasons for customer satisfaction survey analysis showing just under 60% of clients satisfied with the Environmental Health service overall be added to the Work Programme 2024/25

That the Work Programme 2023/24 be approved with the agreed additions.

SSC/ Additional Urgent Items

42/2

3-24 None.

SSC/ Date of Next Meeting

43/2

3-24 The next meeting of the Services Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 10.00 am.