

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2024

Present:

Councillor Neil Baker (Vice-Chair) (in the Chair)

Councillor Michelle Emmens
Councillor Derrick Skinner

Councillor Carol Lacey
Councillor Christine Smith

Also Present:

L Hickin	Managing Director - Head of Paid Service
M Broughton	Director of Growth and Assets
S Sternberg	Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring 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

13/2

4-25 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kathy Clegg, Mark Foster, Ross Shipman and Mick Smith.

SSC/ Declarations of Interest

14/2

4-25 No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

SSC/ Minutes of Last Meeting

15/2

4-25 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Services Scrutiny Committee held on 23 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

SSC/ Performance Management

16/2

4-25 The Committee agreed to swap the order of the agenda and have the People Strategy Action Plan item after the Performance Management item.

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 30 June 2024.

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 enquired as to how many open and closed cemeteries were owned and/or managed by the Council. The Managing Director stated that he would ask the relevant officers for the exact number.

RESOLVED – That the report was noted.

SSC/ **People Strategy Action Plan**

17/2

4-25

The Managing Director presented the People Strategy Action Plan to the Committee.

The Managing Director explained that the Action Plan set out actions under the four cornerstones of the People Strategy:

- 1) Nurturing a great culture
- 2) Ensuring wellbeing
- 3) Always improving
- 4) Effectively communicating and engaging

Members referred to the action titled 'Undertake long service awards review' and asked exactly what this meant. The Managing Director explained that long service celebrations were already in place, but a review could help the Council to do more to recognise long serving staff.

The Managing Director informed Members that he would update the Committee on the progress of the People Strategy in six months.

RESOLVED – That the action plan was noted.

SSC/ **4-Day Working Week Update**

18/2

4-25

The Assistant Director of Governance presented a report with an update on the four-day working week model, which had previously been raised and discussed by the Committee.

The Committee were reminded that a previous report presented to them on 19 September 2023 included information on the four-day pilot at South Cambridgeshire Council. This latest update included further details on the Government's guidance on the model, and independent evaluations on the pilot.

The Assistant Director of Governance stated that this Council had never actively explored the possibility of a four-day working week.

The Chair requested for the Assistant Director of Governance to provide future updates to the Committee whenever the situation developed.

RESOLVED – That the report was noted.

SSC/ Medium Term Financial Plan Budget Monitoring Q1 2024/25

19/2

4-25

The Corporate Finance Manager presented a report on the budget position of Quarter 1 2024/25, which would be presented to Cabinet on 19 September 2024.

RESOLVED – That the report was noted.

SSC/ Pre-Planning Application Fees

20/2

4-25

The Assistant Director of Planning presented a report updating Members on the rationale for implementing a chargeable pre-application advice service, which came into effect on 2 September 2024. This included a review of the benefits of giving customers a clear set of expectations, and a cultural shift within the service towards frontloading the process by spending more time advising on schemes before a formal application was submitted.

The Committee were pointed to the breakdown of charges that had been put in place.

Councillor Derrick Skinner wished for it to be recorded in the minutes that he did not support charging for the service.

The Committee requested for this item to return at a later date with some quantifying data that could be reviewed following the implementation.

RESOLVED – That the report was noted.

SSC/ Productivity Plan

21/2

4-25

The Director of Growth & Assets presented the Council's Productivity Plan and a presentation explaining why the Plan was required, how the Plan was put together, where it was published, and its next steps.

The Committee were informed that the Plan was a public-facing document. Also, the Plan had been submitted to the former Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, but it was unclear what they will do with the Plans from all Local Authorities going forward.

RESOLVED – That the Plan was noted.

SSC/ Cabinet Business

22/2

4-25

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a digest of Cabinet decisions taken since the last Committee meeting on 23 July 2024. The digest set out key information for each decision.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer also presented Members with the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions for the period 15 August 2024 – 15 September 2024.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ Policy Development

23/2

4-25 The Senior Scrutiny Officer informed Members that there were no additional emerging policies for the Committee to consider at this moment.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ 'Horizon Scanning'

24/2

4-25 The Senior Scrutiny Officer updated Members on potential significant changes in the Council's operating environment, including changes to national legislation and regulation. Members were informed that there was nothing to bring to their attention.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ Work Programme

25/2

4-25 The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Work Programme 2024/25 for the Committee to consider.

The Committee noted the Programme for the remainder of the year and the topics being covered.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme 2024/25 be approved.

SSC/ Additional Urgent Items

26/2

4-25 None.

SSC/ Date of Next Meeting

27/2

4-25 The next meeting of the Services Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on 19 November 2024 at 10am.