

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 14 JULY 2023

Present:

Councillor Stuart Fawcett (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Michael Durrant (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Graham Baxter MBE
Councillor Pam Jones
Councillor Carolyn Renwick

Councillor Richard Beech
Councillor Nicki Morley
Councillor Pam Windley

Also Present:

L Hickin	Managing Director - Head of Paid Service
J Dethick	Director of Finance and Resources & (Section 151 Officer)
S Sternberg	Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
D Stanton	Senior Scrutiny Officer
A Maher	Governance Manager
T Scott	Governance and Scrutiny Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor K Tait.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Minutes of Former Committee

The minutes of the former Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Friday 14 April 2023 were noted.

4 Remit of the Committee

Members were informed that this would be an Informal Meeting of the Committee. They would be asked to consider the Communities Scrutiny Committee's proposed responsibilities and the specific ways in which it should carry them out.

Following on this Informal discussion, the first formal meeting of the Committee would be held in September 2023.

Committee was reminded that the Council had established new scrutiny arrangements at its Annual Meeting on Monday 22 May 2023. Briefly, there would be four new Committees, each aligned to the relevant aspects of the new Council Plan.

Committee received a presentation from the Managing Director on the new Plan, and how it was based on the goals identified by the new Administration, prior to

the local elections. Although further work would be required to develop the suite of performance information that would be required, the proposed Council Plan itself had now been drawn up and would be submitted to Council for approval at the end of July.

As part of the suggested approach, the Communities Scrutiny Committee would specifically be asked to focus on the Council Plan goals to promote (i) A Community with lifelong good health, (ii) A place to live that people value, (iii) A place where people enjoy spending time.

The Committee could use a range of specific powers to help assess progress against the Plan goals and objectives. It could: (i) Use its meetings to consider and question the decisions taken by the Council's Cabinet at its meetings (ii) Scrutinise proposed new policies and (iii) Identify new legislation or forthcoming projects, which might have an important impact on the Council and how it operates.

Members discussed the role of the new Committee and their hope that it should work in an Open, Transparent and Collaborative way. Members felt it important that the Committee make use of the wide range of financial and service performance information that would be made available, when assessing the Council Plan. They noted that an example of the sort of information that could be used would be presented later in the meeting.

Members then discussed how the Committee could make a valuable contribution by acting as a 'Sounding Board' for future policy development. And especially, the opportunity for Committee Members to help shape these policies by assessing the implications of proposed policy changes, identifying those aspects that might cause difficulties and suggesting ways in which they could be improved.

Members reflected on the challenges which all the scrutiny committees would face in undertaking their more performance-orientated roles. To help manage these challenges and to give Members the time to develop and to understand the performance data and its meaning, none of the Committees would be asked to carry out Service Reviews during the year. This would be a temporary change and that further Service Reviews would be carried out by the Committees later, in the next Municipal Year. Members agreed with this approach but asked that it be kept under review.

5 EXAMPLE - Medium Term Financial Plan

Committee then discussed the ways in which Members could use financial and service information to determine whether key goals and objectives had been achieved or are on target to be concerned. As part of this, Committee received a presentation the Medium Term Financial and how it, and similar information, might be used to help understand a range of services and specific issues, such as the incidence of damp and mould in housing. Committee agreed to consider the use of this performance information further at its next meeting.

6 Draft Work Programme

Committee considered an initial draft Work Programme for the year. Members

recognised that this would need to be developed further and that some further proposals would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee. Members were encouraged to make suggestions for this programme via the Chair of the Committee.

7 Additional Urgent Items

None

8 Date of Next Meeting

Members of the Committee asked that the suggested date for future meetings be moved to help prevent unavoidable diary clashes. Officers suggested that future meetings be held on Wednesday mornings – and that the first of these be Wednesday 20 September 2023, at 10am. Committee agreed to this.