

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2024

Present:

Councillor Michael Durrant (Chair) (in the Chair)

Councillor Graham Baxter MBE (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Richard Beech

Councillor Pam Jones

Also Present:

L Pepper

Assistant Director Communities

K Drury

Information Engagement & Performance Manager

J Hayden

Senior Scrutiny Officer

T Fuller

Governance Officer

CSC/ Apologies for Absence

25/2

4-25 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tait and Clough.

CSC/ Declarations of Interest

26/2

4-25 None.

CSC/ Minutes of Last Meeting

27/2

4-25 RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CSC/ Performance Management

28/2

4-25 The Information, Engagement and Performance Manager presented a report setting out progress on the strategies underpinning the Council Plan objective 'A great place to live well' for the period ending 30 September 2024.

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

- 1) A community with lifelong good health.
- 2) A place to live that people value.
- 3) A place where people enjoy spending time.

In the context of community safety, questions were raised over how certain areas were picked for one-to-one engagement. Members heard that a process was in place to pick the best places for engagement based on intelligence from a number of sources.

Some members inquired as to why the team in charge of proactive dog fouling patrols was not meeting its targets. Committee heard that it was a combination of understaffing and other commitments taking priority. Further inquiries were made into the details surrounding the understaffing, Members were made aware that the information wasn't currently available but would be shared once obtained.

RESOLVED -

That progress against the Council Plan "A great place to live well" objective was noted.

CSC/ Policy Development

29/2

4-25

With the agreement of the Chair, Agenda item 9 was taken next.

Committee received a report and presentation outlining the Housing Strategy, Private Sector Housing Strategy and consultation campaign from the Assistant Director of Communities. Members heard that the implementation of a Private Sector Housing Strategy was a first for the Council. The objectives of the Councils strategies on housing were shared as well as the actions necessary to achieve them. Several statistics relevant to the District's housing market were also shared. It was suggested that the strategies align well with the new Council Plan and good feedback from the consultation process was expected.

Committee discussed the report, it was felt that the strategies represented good work on sustainability and cost efficiency. In this context, it was suggested that liaison with Parish Councils could be utilised to further address furniture poverty. The Assistant Director of Communities noted this suggestion.

Some Member's had questions about the statistics provided in the presentation and whether it would be possible to provide details on the number of Right to Buy homes ending up on the rental market. Members questions were clarified, it was felt that researching details on Right to Buy homes would be a good idea should there be enough resources for the task. In this context, Committee discussed concerns surrounding the impact of the Right to Buy scheme on the Private rental market.

Some Members shared concerns regarding mismatches in household income and rent paid in affordable homes, and house size and number of occupants. It was felt that the Council need to incentivise and encourage tenants to occupy affordable homes sufficient to their needs, in order for the social housing service to operate at maximum efficiency. It was explained that rightsizing was in the Strategy, but the Council did not have the power to relocate people. It was agreed that the Action Plan would be brought back to a future meeting once it was available.

Some Members requested further statistics on the rates of homelessness across the district, as well as the progress being made on the issue. The available details were shared and homelessness as a topic was discussed more generally. It was agreed that homelessness form part of the 2025/26 work programme.

RESOLVED –

That the report was noted and that the Action Plans come back to Committee at a future meeting.

It was agreed that the topic of homelessness be added to the work programme for 2025/26.

CSC/ Leisure Activities for Children Review

30/2

4-25

Following a spotlight review on Leisure Activities for Children, that had been taken at the meeting held on 24 July 2024, the Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a briefing paper to the Committee outlining the findings and proposing four recommendations to Cabinet. The four recommendations read as follows:

- (1) Review fees and charges around young person activities to ensure activities are inclusive and accessible for all young people, reporting the outcome to committee.
- (2) Increase the offering to open up the membership to allow access to more activities such as Tag Active, soft play or access to other fitness classes.
- (3) Increase engagement with older children/teenagers, this includes targeting non-users as well as current users, by way of questionnaire/survey out to schools within the District and using social media channels. Reporting the outcome back to committee.
- (4) Targeted promotion of the activities we have on offer to children, specifically older children/teenagers.

Committee considered the recommendations, some Members felt that there should be a slight amendment to encourage young people to engage in sports and activities all across the District, not just in leisure centres. Apart from that, Committee felt that the recommendations accurately captured the spotlight review and agreed to submit them to Cabinet.

RESOLVED –

That the report and recommendations be put to Cabinet, subject to the amendments discussed being implemented by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

CSC/ To Discuss Questions to be put forward to PCC

31/2

4-25

The Chair led a discussion around the topics and questions to be put forward to the Police and Crime Commissioner in advance of their attendance at the next meeting. Committee were informed that the purpose of this discussion was to identify the key topics and specifics that Members have questions about. The next step would be the Chair, Vice-Chair and Senior Scrutiny Officer formulating the discussion into a list of questions to be submitted.

Committee identified 4 key areas that their questions fitted in to. These were rural policing, presence and visibility, domestic violence, and road safety.

Members questions in regard to rural policing centred around concerns over vehicle and livestock theft affecting the safety and livelihood of rural communities. It was felt that clarification was needed on the resources and funding available for rural policing.

Presence and visibility encompassed a multitude of Member questions. Some Members requested clarification as to the availability of named police officers within communities. It was felt that details surrounding police numbers generally, as well as the status of the Districts police stations, should be provided. In the same context, Members sought information on the improvements being made to the non-emergency contact service, 101.

Committee identified domestic violence as a key issue affecting the district, as such it was felt that clarification was needed on the measures being employed to tackle the issue. Members requested an update on what is being done to specifically tackle crimes against women and girls.

Committee discussed concerns surrounding road safety in the district. It was felt that an update was needed on the measures taken to protect school areas from speeding and reckless driving. The use of Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) in school zones was specifically requested for clarification. Committee shared concerns around the damage, antisocial behaviour and danger caused by e-bikes, motorcross bikes and e-scooters. As such, Members felt that information should be provided on the measures being taken to combat this.

RESOLVED –

That the Senior Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, will compile a list of questions, relevant to the topic areas discussed, to be put forward to the PCC.

CSC/ Cabinet Business

32/2

4-25

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a digest of Cabinet decisions taken since 19 September 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 October 2024 – 15 November 2024.

RESOLVED –

That the update was noted.

CSC/ Initial Reflections on the Government Budget

33/2

4-25

The Senior Scrutiny Officer updated Members on the highlights of the Government Budget. Committee heard that the Council was expecting the financial settlement late December. Members were reassured that the implications of the budget would be reported back to Members in due course.

Member's sought clarification as to whether District Councils would be included in

the Public Sector exemption for employers national Insurance. The Senior Scrutiny Officer informed Members that any concerns raised following these initial reflections would be submitted to Senior Management Team.

CSC/ 'Horizon Scanning'

34/2

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.

RESOLVED –

That the update was noted.

CSC/ Work Programme

35/2

4-25

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

RESOLVED –

That the Work Programme for 2024/25 be approved.

CSC/ Additional Urgent Items

36/2

4-25

None.

CSC/ Date of Next Meeting

37/2

4-25

The next meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on 26 February 2025 at 10:00 am.