

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 14 MAY 2025

Present:

Councillor Michael Durrant (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Graham Baxter MBE (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Richard Beech
Councillor Tony Lacey

Councillor Stephen Clough
Councillor Pam Windley

Also Present:

L Pepper	Assistant Director of Communities
K Drury	Information & Improvement Manager
F Green	Community Safety Manager
J Hayden	Senior Scrutiny Officer
T Burdett	Programmes Manager
G Smithurst	Housing Strategy & Homeless Manager
H Summers	Ryknelde Homes Ltd
L Taylor	Partnership Strategy Support Officer
T Fuller	Governance Officer

CSC/ Apologies for Absence

50/2

4-25 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Jones, C Lacey and K Tait.

CSC/ Declarations of Interest

51/2

4-25 Councillor G Baxter declared an interest in Item 5 – Voluntary Sector Organisations as a Board Member of Derbyshire Unemployed Centre, which worked closely with Derbyshire Law Centre. He declared that he would remain in the meeting for the Item as it was just a case of noting the presentations.

CSC/ Minutes of Last Meeting

52/2

4-25 RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 26 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CSC/ Performance Management

53/2

4-25 The Information & Improvement 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 31 March 2025.

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.

Committee considered the report. Members received an update on the vacancies within the Environmental Health team.

RESOLVED -

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

CSC/ 54/2 4-25 Voluntary Sector Organisations (NED Citizens Advice / Derbyshire Law Centre / Volunteer Centre)

Committee received presentations from three voluntary sector organisations that detailed how their funding from NEDDC is spent. Committee also received a cover report that gave an overview of total spend on the voluntary sector and some key figures in regards to outcomes.

NED Citizens Advice delivered a presentation that detailed the charities core service, how they operate in North East Derbyshire, ongoing projects, the key statistics from the last year and the social impact as a result. The presentation also included detailed case studies that highlighted exactly how the charity helps residents.

Committee considered the presentation and thanked NED Citizens Advice for their positive work in the district. Some Members requested clarification as to what was meant by public value. Committee heard that public value was in regard to the gains made by customers of Citizens advice, for instance benefits gained and debts managed.

Derbyshire Law Centre (DLC) delivered a presentation that included its strategic aims, funding streams, the services it offered, the projects it was involved in and statistics detailing how many people it had helped in the last year. The presentation also included detailed case studies that highlighted exactly how the charity can have a positive impact on individuals, as well as the positive feedback received from residents.

Committee considered the presentation and thanked DLC for the work they do particularly in terms of improving the accessibility of train stations. In this context committee discussed the events that DLC had held to improve rail accessibility and the impacts as a result. Some Members had questions surrounding how DLC’s Step Into Work project operated. Committee received an overview of the support offered by the project and the process for applying to the project was shared.

The Volunteer Centre delivered a presentation that gave an overview of its main activities, detailed the key figures for the latest financial year and highlighted the

awards that the organisation had won. The presentation also delivered an insight into some of the innovative projects that the Volunteer Centre had been involved in, including twinning with a similar organisation in Chicago.

Committee considered the presentation and thanked the Volunteer Centre for the positive work they do in North East Derbyshire. In this context, Members expressed gratitude to the volunteers and highlighted that investment in volunteering represents an investment in the local area.

At the end of the presentations and discussion, the committee thanked the 3 organisations for their presentations and the positive impact they have in North East Derbyshire.

Committee discussed inviting organisations in annually, rotating attendance depending upon level of grant.

RESOLVED –

1. That Committee noted the presentations.
2. That Voluntary Sector Organisations be added as an annual item on the 2025/26 Work Programme.

CSC/ Community Safety Partnership

55/2

4-25

Committee received a presentation that provided an overview of the work of the Community Safety Partnership in the latest year. The presentation included an overview of the Community Safety Team, their areas of work, the progress they have made, what has been working well and the issues to overcome. The presentation highlighted that the overall crime rate had reduced by 10% in the latest year and detailed the areas that have contributed to the reduction.

Committee considered the presentation. Members discussed the disparity in what the Police define as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the view of the Council, Officers and residents. In this context, Members heard the types of ASB being reported that are not considered by the Police. The new approach for addressing ASB at the community level was shared.

RESOLVED –

That Committee noted the presentation.

CSC/ Policy Development

56/2

4-25

With the agreement of the Chair, Item 8 – Policy Development was taken next.

Committee received a report that detailed the key proposed amendments to the Council/Rykneld Homes Allocations Policy. The report included a breakdown of the reasons for changing the current procedure as well as the proposed amendments. Committee heard that this was the first stage of a wider consultation process and Members were updated on the process for getting the amendments approved.

Committee considered the report. Some Members had questions around the proposed new banding system for non-emergency homeless. Committee heard that those with other vulnerabilities would still have higher priority and those in the lower bands had access to alternative options such as supported housing. In this context, Members heard that knock on impacts of the new banding system would be monitored and acted on accordingly.

Some Members asked for clarification around the reasons for reducing the numbers of refusals permitted. Committee heard that it would make the process of matching a prospective tenant to a house more efficient. In this context, it was shared that if a refusal was found to be reasonable then it would not count towards that person's limit. It was shared that the proposed refusal limit was in line with that of other housing authorities.

Some Members had questions surrounding the data that would be used for assessing prospective tenant's medical situations. The process for this was clarified and it was shared that the proposed amendment would not result in an administrative burden.

The Chair asked for clarification on where Asylum Seekers/Refugees fit into the policy. It was advised that these are already included within the policy, and when presented with these cases they are assessed per case.

RESOLVED –

1. That Committee noted the report.
2. That Committee agreed with the proposed amendments.

CSC/ Cabinet Business

57/2

4-25

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a digest of Cabinet decisions taken since 27 February 2025. 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 April 2025 – 15 May 2025.

RESOLVED –

That the update was noted.

CSC/ 'Horizon Scanning'

58/2

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 a watching brief would be kept on the impacts of the changes arising the County Council elections.

CSC/ Work Programme

59/2

4-25

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Work Programme 2024/25 for the Committee to consider. Members heard that the 2025/26 Work Programme was being formed and suggestions were welcomed. In this context, committee discussed items for the 2025/26 Work Programme.

RESOLVED –

That Committee signed off the Work Programme 2024/25.

CSC/

Additional Urgent Items

60/2

4-25

None.

CSC/

Date of Next Meeting

61/2

4-25

The next meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place in the new municipal year.