

SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 13 MAY 2025

Present:

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

Councillor Ross Shipman
Councillor Christine Smith

Councillor Derrick Skinner

Also Present:

L Hickin	Managing Director & Head of Paid Service
D Thompson	Assistant Director of Planning
K Drury	Information and Improvement Manager
J Hayden	Senior Scrutiny Officer
T Scott	Governance and Scrutiny Officer

SSC/ Apologies for Absence

57/2
4-25 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Clegg, M Emmens, M Foster and C Lacey.

SSC/ Declarations of Interest

58/2
4-25 None.

SSC/ Minutes of Last Meeting

59/2
4-25 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Services Scrutiny Committee held on 25 February 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

SSC/ People Strategy Action Plan Update (moved forward)

60/2
4-25 The Managing Director gave the Committee an update on the People Strategy Action Plan with a presentation which included details on:

- Objectives of the Strategy
- Progress in the four areas of the Strategy vision
- Measuring success
- Next steps

Members discussed the impact of the Local Government Review on recruitment. The Managing Director explained that there had not been any concerns seen as of yet but that recruitment in Local Authorities had been an issue for several years. However, as the unitisation becomes known it may become more of an issue.

Members asked if the Unions had been consulted with on the Strategy. The Managing Director confirmed this to be the case.

Members referred to a mention in the presentation of there being 13 current apprentices, and asked if this was still the case. The Managing Director agreed to investigate this.

RESOLVED – That the Action Plan be included on the 2025/26 Work Programme for a progress update.

SSC/ Performance Management

61/2

4-25

The Information and Improvement Manager 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 March 2025.

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 the report which stated "the Housing Strategy team has proactively reduced the duration homeless applicants spend in temporary accommodation" and asked how this had been achieved. The Information and Improvement Manager explained that the team had received Government funding to temporarily appoint a Move-On Officer, who had done a lot of work within this area to reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation.

Members asked if the Move-On Officer post would continue once the temporary contract ran out. The Information and Improvement Manager agreed to investigate this.

Members referred to the mention in the report of '1st responses' to phone calls, and asked if it would be possible to move the call queue to another call line. The Information and Improvement Manager explained that this would not be possible as the system does not work in that way and all calls go through the Contact Centre so that they can be recorded.

RESOLVED – That progress against the Council Plan "A great place to access good public services" objective was noted.

SSC/ Policy Development (moved forward)

62/2

4-25

The Information and Improvement Manager presented a report to inform the Committee on the refreshed Equality and Diversity Policy.

The Information and Improvement Manager explained that the updated version of the Policy included the merging of two policies into one, and also had more elements added around mental health, wider disabilities and neuro conditions.

RESOLVED – That the refreshed Equality and Diversity Policy be noted.

SSC/ 63/2 **Update on Pre-Planning Application Fees**

4-25

The Assistant Director of Planning presented a report to the Committee which updated them on the early performance, issues arising, income achieved, targets for the year and feedback received following the introduction of a chargeable pre-application advice service, which came into effect on 02 September 2024.

Members enquired if consultation had been carried out with the public. The Assistant Director of Planning explained that an Agents Forum was organised by the Council for that purpose in March.

The Committee asked if charities were exempt from the charge. The Assistant Director of Planning confirmed that they were exempt, and that the other exemption categories were made clear on the Council's website.

RESOLVED – That the report was noted.

SSC/ 64/2 **Cabinet Business**

4-25

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a digest of Cabinet decisions taken since the last Committee meeting on 25 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 to 15 May.

Members referred to the decision in the Forward Plan titled 'Release of Loan to Rykneld Homes Limited' and asked if there was an accompanying report that they could read. The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that the report was exempt, so if Members had any questions relating to it, she would pass them on to the relevant officer .

Members referred to the decision in the Cabinet Decision digest titled 'Management of Corporate Debt – Write Off of Outstanding Amounts' and asked what the purpose of the write-off was and how much it was for. The Senior Scrutiny Officer agreed to investigate this.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ 65/2 **'Horizon Scanning'**

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.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that there was nothing to bring to the

attention of Members.

RESOLVED – That the update was noted.

SSC/ Work Programme

66/2

4-25

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the final Work Programme 2024/25 for the Committee to agree as complete.

Members were informed that this was the final Work Programme of the year, so Members had to consider issues they would like to add to the 2025/2026 Work Programme.

Members requested that 'General Complaints' and 'Information Gathering on Missed Bin Collections' should be included in the next Work Programme. The Senior Scrutiny Officer agreed to add these two issues to the draft 2025/2026 Work Programme.

Members also requested that 'Maintenance of NEDDC Owned Parks' also be added to the next Work Programme.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme 2024/25 be agreed as complete.

SSC/ Additional Urgent Items

67/2

4-25

None.

SSC/ Date of Next Meeting

68/2

4-25

The next meeting of the Services Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place in the new Municipal Year.