

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2020

Present:

Councillor Kevin Tait (Chair)
Councillor Oscar Gomez Reaney (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Nigel Barker
Councillor Lilian Deighton
Councillor Jeff Lilley

Councillor Joseph Birkin
Councillor Roger Hall
Councillor Richard Welton

Also Present:

S Bentley	Environmental Health Manager
T Rush	Environmental Enforcement Team Leader
D Stanton	Governance Officer
S Veerman	Overview and Scrutiny Manager

CSC/37/ 20-21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor D Hancock.

CSC/38/ 20-21 **Declarations of Interest**

Members are requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

CSC/39/ 20-21 **Minutes of Last Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 9 October 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CSC/40/ 20-21 **Pest Review**

The Committee welcomed the Environmental Health Manager and the Environmental Enforcement Team Leader. Members considered a briefing paper which outlined a review of the Council's Pest Control Services.

Members heard that following an Internal Audit Review in 2018, the Service had committed to a fundamental review of Pest Control. The Committee was asked for comments and to provide some direction for the Review. A number of issues needed to be considered in respect of the review, such as the Council's role in public health, costs to the Authority, and efficiencies.

Members were informed that whilst Pest Control was not a statutory service, the Authority did need to take reasonable measures to keep the District free from mice and rats. It was stated that the service centred on dealing with the pests that were a threat to public health.

The Environmental Health Manager expressed concern in regards to the rise in DIY treatments, and that those treatments were themselves a threat to public health.

Members heard that going forward, the service needed to consider the type of pests it dealt with if it was to continue focusing on public health and respond promptly according to customer demand, or if it wanted to compete in the commercial market.

The Committee discussed costs and the current charges for the Council's Pest Control Services. Members noted that there was a significant increase in demand for Authorities that had not introduced fees in comparison to those that had, and that the Council offered a reduced charge for those on income related benefits. It was stated that the overall net cost to the Authority for providing a pest control service last year was £51,000. The Committee requested that the fees North East Derbyshire charged for its Pest Control Services be compared with other neighbouring local authorities.

There was a consensus that the Council should look to decrease its overall subsidy, however, there was also concern that too high a charge may prevent residents seeking help, which could further harm public health.

The Committee also discussed agile and mobile working solutions, which could ease the administrative burden on the service, as well as the potential for pest control to be provided as part of a shared service with other Authorities. Members agreed that the future was directed towards agile working, and that an initial cost to enable the service to work remotely would be a worthwhile investment if it decreased the Council's overall subsidy.

The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that the Authority did traditionally treat commercial premises, but that this tended to be small enterprises such as small local shops on a non-contract basis. Members expressed concern in regards to competing in the commercial market, on the basis that the service would be part subsidised by the tax payer.

Members enquired about enforcement that could be taken against residents who were not taking the appropriate preventative measures to prevent pests, and who were repeat requesters of the service. The Environmental Team Leader informed the Committee that the Council could issue Fixed Penalty Notices and Community Protection Notices for a range of offences including fly tipping and accumulating waste that attracts pests.

Members thanked the officers for attending the meeting.

The officers then left the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**CSC/41/
20-21** **Scrutiny Review**

(a) **Healthy Lifestyles Team**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed Members that the lead officer was unable to attend the meeting, and as such submitted a briefing paper that outlined obesity in younger residents of primary school age for Members to consider.

Members had a number of questions including what were the capabilities of the Healthy Lifestyles Team; the costs, measured outcomes and alternative measures of different social investments; what the Council was doing to tackle obesity in residents from poorer backgrounds; and the impacts of the Pandemic on schools. The Committee also had concerns in regards to the number of actions that had been labelled as red on the progress indicator.

The Committee agreed that they would like further information, and as such would be prepared to re-schedule the next meeting so that the lead officer could attend to answer questions.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

(b) **Children’s Play Areas in North East Derbyshire, (5c) Playground Inspections, and (5d) Open Space, Sports and Recreation Sites**

The Committee considered a number of documents which outlined the District’s play areas, open spaces, and recreation sites.

The Committee requested further information, such as the types of equipment provided; whether it was regularly inspected; its age and condition; how regularly it was used; and costs of maintenance and vandalism. Members also enquired about what the Council was doing to maintain its open spaces, such as the Five Pits Trail.

Members agreed that the Pandemic had significantly increased the demand for good quality parks and open spaces, and as such it was vital they were kept in good condition to promote exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

The Committee requested that the Joint Head of Streetscene be invited to the next meeting to clarify the information provided and to answer questions from Members.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

**CSC/42/
20-21** **Forward Plan of Executive Decisions**

AGREED – That the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions be noted.

**CSC/43/
20-21** **Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Committee agreed to reschedule the next meeting in order to accommodate an officer interview.

AGREED – That the Work Programme be noted.

**CSC/44/
20-21** **Additional Urgent Items (if any)**

There were no additional items to be discussed at this meeting.

**CSC/45/
20-21** **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee would be rescheduled and confirmed in due course.