

**PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL
22ND JANUARY 2019**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Fryer)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Bebbington)
Councillors Campsall, Huddleston, Hunt, Paling
and Rattray

Head of Customer Experience
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Head of Strategic Support
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Forrest and Gerrard

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

37. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 20th November 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

38. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTEREST

No disclosures of pecuniary and personal interests were made.

39. DECLARATIONS - THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

40. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.6

No questions had been submitted.

41. HOMELESS STRATEGY 2018-2020 UPDATE

A report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing regarding an update on the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2020 and the continued actions to deliver the priorities was submitted (agenda item 6, filed with the minutes).

The Cabinet Lead Member for Housing and the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing attended the meeting to assist the Panel with its consideration of the item.

In response to issues raised by the Panel the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing and the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing stated that:

- rough sleeping and begging which was a criminal offence, was not to be confused with homelessness.
- the following tasks within the Homelessness Strategy would be completed by early spring: the Eviction Prevention Protocol would be progressed on a county wide basis through the Leicestershire Homeless Delivery group meeting in February, the Social Lettings service options were being developed and 44 properties had been brought back into use by the Empty Homes Officer. The Housing Acquisitions policy would be reviewed in April, 7 properties had been purchased and 3 offers had been made on properties to meet the target and increase Council stock.
- work was progressing for new shared online referral form to streamline the referral process, reduce officer time and enable all local authorities to use one form for referral of individuals to supported accommodation schemes across Leicestershire.
- Homelessness Prevention Pathways, as required by the Homelessness Reduction Act, were being developed on a county wide basis. For individuals released from prison the pathway had been drafted and was being circulated to districts and boroughs for comments. The Pathway for 16 and 17 year olds was waiting for information from the Youth Offending Team and there was almost a final draft for Care Leavers to be circulated. It was hoped to launch the Pathways together in April 2019.
- Officers and councillors had completed a rough sleepers count in November. The count was undertaken on an annual basis for the last 3 years during the winter. People identified as homeless did not always engage with the process but the number of people who didn't accept help was minimal. Currently the Council were working to help 10 rough sleepers and 2-3 were not engaging.
- reporting rough sleepers by using the Street link website would pass details onto the Council and officers would then investigate. Support was available from the Bridge, the soup kitchen and drop in sessions provided by the Falcon Centre.

The Chair wished to pass on the Panel's appreciation of the work of the team and the other partners involved with respect to homelessness.

RESOLVED that the update of the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2020 and the future actions to deliver the priorities be noted.

Reason

The Panel considered that the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2020 provided a clear framework to deliver the Council's value of 'Creating a Strong and Lasting Community' and met its obligations in respect of the strategic housing needs of the Borough.

42. GENERAL FUND AND HRA REVENUE MONITORING REPORT

A report of the Head of Finance and Property Services detailing the General Fund and HRA to the end of October 2018 was submitted (agenda item 7 filed with these minutes).

The Cabinet Lead Member for Finance and Property Services gave his apologies for the meeting. In the absence of the Head of Finance and Property Services, the Chair asked members of the Panel to submit requests for further information through the clerk to be provided after the meeting.

RESOLVED

1. that the Head of Leisure and Culture be asked to clarify the markets income shortfall of £26K and what the outstanding traders debts of £8K were and whether they were recoverable;
2. that the Head of Landlord Services be asked to clarify if, the year-end underspend forecast for planned maintenance due to late mobilisation of the contract and the compliance underspend including fire risk assessments, Asbestos Removal and electrical work testing, will be carried forward and the outstanding work be completed;
3. that the General Fund and HRA Revenue monitoring report to be submitted to the Panel at its meeting to be held on 19th February 2019, includes additional information in 'Table C – Current Tenant Arrears - Dwellings only' to highlight the age of the cumulative debt;
4. that the Head of Landlord Services be asked to include additional information regarding whether payment plans are in place to recoup the rent arrears in the Tenancy Support report to be submitted to the Panel at its meeting to be held on 19th February 2019;
5. that the information contained in the report of the Head of Finance and Property Services detailing the General Fund and HRA to the end of October 2018 be noted.

Reasons

1. Members of the Panel wished to understand the reasons behind the outstanding traders debts.
2. Members of the Panel considered the amount of underspend was significant and wished to understand if the work would be completed and any underspend carried forward into the new financial year.
3. The Panel wished to understand the age of the debt shown in Table C regarding the current tenant arrears and whether the debt had cumulated over a long period of time, particularly for those over £2000.
4. The Panel wished to understand that options were in place to recover the tenant arrears stated in Table C.

5. The Panel was satisfied with the information provided.

43. PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT ON HOUSING BENEFITS

A report of the Head of Customer Experience providing detail in relation to KI7 – time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events was submitted (agenda item 8 filed with these minutes).

The Head of Customer Experience attended the meeting to assist the Panel with its consideration of the item and noted that there was a typographical error on page 35 which should state that ‘joint meetings were held between *Capita* and Charnwood’.

In response to comments by the Panel the Head of Customer Experience stated that the number of notifications received as indicated in the table on page 34 was not a cumulative number but new notifications for each month. She explained that the Capita Manager had been unable to attend but that Capita had responded quickly to a pressurised situation, were using additional staff and were managing the workload. The roll out date for Universal Credit was uncertain and the Department of Work and Pensions had described this year as a ‘wait and see’ year as it had indicated that 10,000 test cases would be put through the process to assess the reality of the roll out plans for 2023.

RESOLVED that the information contained in the report of the Head of Customer Experience be noted.

Reason

The Panel was satisfied with the information provided.

44. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support was submitted to enable the Panel to consider its work programme and to propose to the Scrutiny Management Board any additions, deletions and amendments as appropriate (agenda item 9 filed with these minutes).

The Head of Strategic Support attended the meeting to assist the Panel with its consideration of the item.

RESOLVED

1. that the Panel’s consideration of the Charnwood Lottery be rescheduled from the Panel’s meeting on 19th February 2019 to its meeting on 18th June 2019;
2. that the current position with the Panel’s Work Programme be noted.

Reasons

1. The Panel wished to review the performance of the Charnwood Lottery six clear months after its beginning and considered the review would be more meaningful in June after nine months have passed.
2. To make the Panel aware of the current position of its Work Programme.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 25th February 2019 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel.