

**HOUSING, PLANNING AND REGENERATION, AND REGULATORY SERVICES  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3RD SEPTEMBER 2019**

PRESENT:     The Chair (Councillor Grimley)  
                  The Vice Chair (Councillor Ranson)  
                  Councillors S. Bradshaw, Brennan, Capleton,  
                  Needham and Rattray

Councillor Mercer (Cabinet Lead Member for  
Housing) and Rollings (Cabinet Lead Member for  
Transformation)

Strategic Director of Housing, Planning,  
Regeneration and Regulatory Services  
Head of Landlord Services  
Head of Planning and Regeneration  
Sustainability Officer  
Democratic Services Officer (NC)

APOLOGIES: none

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He 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.

7.     MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2019 were confirmed as a true record.

8.     DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Councillor Grimley declared a personal interest in item 10 as in his professional life he had used building control services at Charnwood Borough Council in the past.

9.     DECLARATIONS - THE PARTY WHIP

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

10.    QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

11.    WORK PROGRAMME

Two reports including a supplementary report of the Head of Strategic Support were submitted to enable the Committee review and agree its work programme (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Strategic Director of Housing, Planning, Regeneration and Regulatory Services, the Head of Planning and Regeneration, the Head of Landlord Services and the Democratic Services Officer assisted the Committee with its consideration of the two reports.

The following points were raised:

- the Housing Capital Programme figures would be finalised at the same time as the draft budget in January/February so for the Committee to review this topic at its December meeting the figures would be unconfirmed and of limited detail. If the Committee waited until its March meeting to scrutinise the Programme it would be too late to shape the report before it was submitted to Cabinet at its meeting later in March 2020.
- the Local Development Scheme was published once a year setting out the key milestones for the preparation of the Local Plan. The Scheme's milestones would be reviewed by the Project Board and were usually confirmed in January / February and then proposed for agreement by the Cabinet at its meeting held in March 2020. It would therefore be difficult for the Committee to schedule any meaningful scrutiny of this topic before its submission to the Cabinet.
- there was an expectation upon Scrutiny Councillors to be proactive in researching topics to determine if they would benefit from scrutiny. Informal meetings could be scheduled to scrutinise topics in between formal committee meetings, and additional formal meetings could also be scheduled to enable the Committee to fulfil the role asked of it by the Scrutiny Commission. Concerns were raised about how to document any recommendations made at these types of meetings.
- if the Committee wished to receive a briefing about topics, before proposals were submitted to Cabinet, there was a potential for information to be provided that was not fully developed and which could change during the period after the briefing and before the report was submitted to the Cabinet.

## **RESOLVED**

1. that a report detailing high level figures of the Housing Capital Programme be scheduled to the Committee's meeting to be held on 10th December 2019;
2. that the Scrutiny Commission be asked to consider scrutinising the Local Development Scheme as part of its pre-decision scrutiny before the Cabinet meeting in March 2020;
3. that Committee requests that the Scrutiny Commission provides clarity and further guidance with respect to how it can fulfil its role of pre-decision scrutiny at an earlier stage;
4. that an update is provided to the Committee at each of its meetings regarding the quarterly figures for the 5 year Housing Land Supply;
5. that the information provided by the Head of Planning and Regeneration to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee after its meeting on 25th June 2019

with respect to its concerns about the new planning service structure be also circulated to members of the Housing Planning Regeneration and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee;

6. that the current position with the Committee's Work Programme be noted

#### Reasons

1. To enable the Committee to fulfil the request by Scrutiny Commission to complete pre-decision scrutiny on topics at an earlier stage.
2. The Committee considered that it would be difficult for it to meaningfully scrutinise this topic prior to its submission to the Cabinet but was of the opinion that the importance of the subject matter indicated that it would be advantageous for the topic to be scrutinised.
3. The Committee were concerned that its current meeting schedule, the report schedule of the Cabinet and its current remit did not fit with the request of the Scrutiny Commission to complete pre-decision scrutiny at an earlier stage and sought further guidance.
4. The Committee wished to closely monitor if the Council's Housing Land Supply falls below 5.5 years.
5. The Committee wished to receive the information previously circulated to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee.
6. To enable the Council's new scrutiny arrangements to operate efficiently and effectively.

#### 12. 2019-20 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT AND 2018-19 ANNUAL REPORT

A report of the Strategic Director providing performance information for the first quarter of 2019 -20 in respect of the Corporate Plan Objectives and Key Performance Indicators and the Annual Report for 2018-19 was submitted (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

At the invitation of the Committee the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing and Head of Landlord Services attended to assist the Committee with the consideration of the Key Performance Indicator KI6 - % rent collected (including arrears brought forward) and explained that the target had been missed by 0.01%.

In response to questions the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing and the Head of Landlord Services stated that:

- the Council was experiencing an increase in rent arrears after the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in line with other local authorities and this had been built into the team plan. Whilst tenants were changing over to UC rent arrears

- was expected to continue to rise, but once the majority of tenants had moved to UC, it was expected that the increase in rent arrears would stabilise.
- if a tenant accrued 8 weeks rent arrears the Council could apply to the Department of Work and Pensions to have the rent paid direct to the Council as the landlord.
  - the Clockwise Credit Union provided tenants with ways in which to manage rent arrears. The Council had significant success in the region for setting up Clockwise accounts with its tenants. A new scheme was also in progress where direct debits could be set up on any date; currently the Council could only set direct debits up on set dates.
  - The number of staff in the team had been increased to manage the workload and the installation of new software was planned to identify high priority cases. This had been proven to increase efficiency in other local authorities and was likely to deliver savings for the Council.

There were no questions regarding the Annual Report 2018-19.

## **RESOLVED**

1. that the performance results, associated commentary and the explanations provided by noted;
2. that the Annual Report 2018-19 be noted.

### Reasons

1&2 the Committee was satisfied with the information in the report.

## 13. DELIVERY OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration updating the Committee on the progress in implementing the Council's Climate Change Strategy was submitted (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Cabinet Lead Member for Transformation, the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Sustainability Officer attended to assist the Committee with its consideration of the item and stated that in response to the approval of a notice of motion at full Council on 24th June 2019 the Climate Change strategy was undergoing a review.

In response to questions from the Committee it was noted that:

- the action not met related to engaging with schools to promote environmental programmes. As the County Council and Government provided guidance to schools as part of the national curriculum a decision had been made to not include this action in the future Climate Change Strategy Action Plan although it was noted that some schools were not part of the County Council's education system.
- it was believed that schools had not chosen to participate in the Council's 'Enviro Detective' programme during the monitoring year, due to changes in the

national curriculum making it difficult to fit the programme in, and that schools were also already looking at a number of climate change issues themselves.

Members discussed ways in which the Council could promote environmental programmes to schools within the Borough.

## **RESOLVED**

1. that the Council seeks feedback from local schools as to why they had not signed up to be part of the Council's 'Enviro-Detective' programme;
2. that the contents of the report be noted;
3. that scrutiny of the Climate Change Strategy is added to its work programme and scheduled for the Committee's meeting in September 2020.

## Reasons

1. The Committee wished to confirm with schools the reasons why they were not signing up to the Council's environmental programmes, and as it considered educating the next generation was important, the Council should ensure it supported this aim as much as practicable.
2. The Committee were satisfied with contents of the report.
3. To accord with the Committee's request that this matter is scrutinised in a year's time.

## 14. EXEMPT INFORMATION

**RESOLVED** that members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and it was considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Democratic Services Officer stopped the sound recording of the meeting.

## 15. BUILDING CONTROL ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY PROJECT

Considered an exempt report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration regarding the status of the Building Control Alternative Service Delivery Project (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Cabinet Lead Member for Planning, Reinvestment and Tourism Strategy and the Head of Planning and Regeneration attended to assist the Committee with its consideration of the report.

**RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Commission be informed that the Committee supported the approach taken to explore alternative service delivery models.

## Reason

The Committee were satisfied with the contents of the report.

## NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 4th November 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 Housing, Planning and Regeneration, and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee.