

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
13TH SEPTEMBER 2021**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Seaton)  
Councillors Bolton, Brookes, Hamilton, Murphy,  
Parton and Popley

Councillor Barkley (Deputy Leader of the Council  
and Cabinet Lead Member for Finance and  
Property Services) and Harper-Davies (Cabinet  
Lead Member for Community Support and  
Equalities)

Strategic Director; Commercial Development,  
Assets and Leisure  
Head of Planning and Regeneration  
Head of Landlord Services  
Group Leader Plans, Policies and Place Making  
Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager  
Democratic Services Manager and Democratic  
Services Officer (SW) and Democratic Services  
Officer (EB)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Ranson

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.

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 28th June 2021 were approved.

22. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

23. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

24. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions were submitted.

25. AUDIT UPDATE

There was no audit update for the Committee.

## 26. CHARNWOOD GRANT APPLICATIONS

A report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services to provide an overview and summary of the Charnwood Community Grants schemes and to include detail on successful applications and support given to voluntary and community sector organisations (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Community Support and Equalities and the Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion.

- i. The total sum of bids in each grant category had not been awarded. This was due to reduced budgets, discrepancies in some applications and the outcome of panel scoring.
- ii. The Council actively managed the expectations of applicants by communicating information on budgets and the number of applications for each grant.
- iii. There had been reduced budgets across the sector and the Council was working closely with applicants and supporting them with future applications, applications elsewhere and signposting.
- iv. The grants process at the Council had been praised by colleagues at other Councils. The Council distributed a follow-up survey to applicants in order to develop an understanding of the needs of applicant organisations and to ensure the process was good practice.
- v. Social media was used to publicise grant programmes and posts covered a variety of webpages. The Council also used social media to promote voluntary sector organisations. It was recognised that further publicising of grant programmes was possible and would be advantageous to the community.
- vi. An error was highlighted on page 7 of the report under '2020/21 VCS Covid-19 Recovery Grant Summary'. The report should read 'Of the 39 applications 11 of the organisations were new to applying for a grant.'
- vii. The application process for Member Grants had been approved by Cabinet and was primarily focussed on the profile of the organisation and the member recommendation. It was important that the application and approval process was robust to ensure funds awarded were appropriate for the ward. Some applicant organisations had considered the process to be extensive and any changes to the process would have to be approved by Cabinet.
- viii. It was not possible to reduce the Member Grant amount of £250 as this was the minimum amount which could be allocated to one organisation. This was due to the impact on Council resources and Officer capacity to process applications.

**RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Commission notes the contents of the report and the information provided.

Reason

To ensure effective and timely scrutiny of the information provided.

27. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF ANY SPECIFIC FINANCIAL MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY CABINET

There were no items of this nature on the Cabinet agenda for the Commission to consider.

28. CABINET ITEMS FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The following items were identified for pre-decision scrutiny from the Cabinet agenda for 16th September 2021.

29. CHARNWOOD 2030 CARBON NEUTRAL PLAN

A Cabinet report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration to seek approval for the Charnwood 2030 Carbon Neutral Plan and a short-term action plan was considered for pre-decision scrutiny (item 9a on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Finance and Property Services, the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Group Leader for Plans, Policies and Place-Making attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The existing Carbon Management Plan came to an end in 2020 and had achieved a 37% reduction in carbon emissions. That plan was now replaced, however, due to constraints caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, there had only been a 3% reduction in emissions over the past two years against the new 2018/19 baseline, illustrating the need to have a plan in place. Funding had been secured for the plan through the Capital Plan process. This new plan would consider challenges and had built-in flexibility.
- ii. All activities of the Council were to consider carbon-neutrality and a reduction in carbon emissions and external consultants had been employed to assist.
- iii. Projects to reduce carbon-emissions included tree-planting schemes and investment in solar energy as well as looking into how carbon-emissions could be reduced from the Council's buildings and fleet. A 'Green Awards' scheme was in place in the Council and all staff and councillors were able to contribute.
- iv. The base-line for carbon-neutrality had recently been reset and the way in which carbon-emissions were measured had changed.

- v. Whilst the plan focussed on what the Council could do to cut carbon emissions, it was important to encourage businesses and organisations across the borough and the county to cut emissions.
- vi. The plan emphasised the need to work with concerted action across the Council to address the challenges to ensure that the carbon-footprint was reduced. This would involve some direct projects and action but would also top-up existing projects such as boiler-replacements and insulation.
- vii. The latest IPCC report was not included in the report being presented, as it was released after the plan had been finalised but had been noted. The IPCC report had laid out the greater challenge.
- viii. Projects would be reviewed over time through the Carbon-Neutral Board and the plan kept under review to ensure that the best outcomes from investment were secured.
- ix. There had been a high-level of officer buy-in to the plan and 'green awards' had been made within departments. With many people working from home there had not been the same ability to communicate between officers for the same sort of outcome. However, officers were aware of the need to stay on top of the plan and to review it.
- x. The target of carbon neutrality by 2030 was monitored through the corporate monitoring system. A Sustainability Officer was working to the service plan with the targets in mind, however, the need to concerted action across the council was stressed, with a particular regard to thinking what can be done to achieve the bigger target.
- xi. Future committee reports were recommended to include a section on how they contributed to the green agenda.
- xii. Risks were identified such as 'the Council fails to meet carbon neutral 2030 target outlined within its policy commitments', 'reputational risk to authority for not pursuing or meeting carbon reduction targets' and 'Carbon neutrality not seen as a strategic priority by the Council' were considered to be low due to investment from the Council. The commitment of the Council was monitored through the Corporate Performance Indicators and the Sustainability Officer had good networks across the Council to bring initiatives into play. If these initiatives were followed then it was anticipated that the Council could achieve its target.
- xiii. Companies Urban Foresight and DCA had been commissioned to prepare a carbon-neutral plan for the Council. Urban Foresight had done a lot of similar work around the country and DCA had skills in using the data from building audits to identify projects. The companies had worked collectively and had written a plan in consultation with the Council. The companies had met with the Corporate Leadership Team and had held an officer and member workshop and a there was a further member briefing in the summer of 2021. When the plan was refreshed, the companies had carried out follow-up interviews with those

originally involved. Urban Foresight and DCA had also undertaken a re-basing of the carbon footprint standard.

- xiv. The priority was a reduction in energy usage in buildings and the fleet. Renewable energy was then considered, and then carbon-positive options were considered such as planting trees to take Carbon Dioxide out of the atmosphere. The design and the age of Council buildings made being carbon-neutral difficult. It was acknowledged that technology would change, however, the need to be realistic was also realised and as such the need for carbon-offsetting was identified.
- xv. It was recognised that the best options for carbon-reduction may not be the cheapest and the costing over time needed to be considered, including long-term cost savings. In terms of investments such as double-glazing normal Council maintenance budgets would be used, but could be topped up by the Carbon Neutral Fund where this would assist the Council meet the carbon neutral target.
- xvi. In terms of waste management, in the long term it was sought to make all processes carbon-neutral, however it was important to look first at what the Council could immediately control and make carbon-neutral.
- xvii. The fund was initially £500k per annum for three years, however, in October 2020 this was revised to £100k for 2020/21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with £500k per annum from 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- xviii. If plans covered a long period it may be found that technology had moved on in that time, such that new projects are introduced or previously discounted projects become viable. It was recognised that it was important not to waste money and to use departmental budgets effectively.
- xix. It was recognised that it was possible that projects may create more carbon than they saved, especially since construction was seen as a large carbon-emitter. However, it was also recognised that many of the schemes introduced had substantially decreased the costs incurred by the Council.
- xx. With regard to requiring developers and private companies and their premises to conform to carbon-reducing standards, the Council's leadership role was highlighted. It was clarified that government planning policy intended to encourage than require energy efficiency. The Building Regulations provide the regulatory and enforcement role. However, it was highlighted that customers of housing projects were looking for energy efficient homes which had features such as electric car charging points. Attitudes were changing and accelerating towards energy efficiency, in part due to the cost of energy. With regard to Council car parks, it was suggested that more energy-efficient LED lighting was used and not illuminated all night. With regard to the relationship between the Council and the wider role with building regulations, there was a limit to what could be done at a local level and the need for national changes to planning policy was emphasised. It was recognised that there had been moves in the right direction regarding the proposed future homes standard and banning the sale of petrol and diesel cars from 2035.

- xxi. In response to a suggestion that if action was not taken quickly on emissions then 'green air levies' such as the one in Birmingham may have to be introduced, it was clarified that the Council needed to focus mainly on its own emissions, but it also needed to look more widely to encourage businesses throughout the borough and county to reduce emissions.
- xxii. Concern was raised over the amount of retrofitting that may be needed in new housing and it was emphasised that developers needed to make housing sustainable.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet be informed that the Commission supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration.

Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered the report, felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

30. CORPORATE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND HATE INCIDENT POLICY 2021-25

A Cabinet report of the Head of Landlord Services, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Head of Regulatory Services to seek Cabinet approval for a new Corporate Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Incident Policy to cover the period 2021-2025 was considered for pre-decision scrutiny (item 9b on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Community Support and Equalities and the Head of Landlord Services attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. Members praised the Corporate Anti-social Behaviour and Hate Incident Policy 2021-2025 and acknowledged the diverse and comprehensive range of issues covered within it. It was anticipated that the policy would improve the experience of victims and those supporting victims, by making information more accessible.
- ii. It was suggested that the contact information on reporting incidents as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report, be made available in leaflet form for easy distribution to members of the public.
- iii. Members stated that they would be interested in seeing the conclusions of the internal ASB review, which aimed to develop a co-ordinated and targeted approach to ASB work.
- iv. The policy was inclusive of the work of a number of services at the council, namely Landlord Services, Neighbourhood Services and Regulatory Services. More detail on the response to ASB within these individual services was outlined in service level procedures.

- v. The 'minor' amendments referred to in the recommendation to Cabinet would be considered by the relevant Head of Service in consultation with the Monitoring Officer.
- vi. The Council worked in collaboration with partner organisations and completed risk assessments in order to determine the vulnerability of perpetrators. Support and mediation were available through the Council.
- vii. The Council was committed to protecting the privacy and personal information of members of the public and would not relay this information to members if it was not appropriate.
- viii. An Anti-Social Behaviour training pilot had been trailed by a number of Councillors. This training was commended and members found it to be advantageous in their role. It was suggested that all members received the training.
- ix. The Housing Associations working in partnership with the council were required to have an anti-social behaviour policy in place and the council maintains effective and close working relationships with these organisations.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet be informed that the Commission supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Landlord Services, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Head of Regulatory Services.

Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered the report, felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

31. FEASIBILITY WORK ON SOUTHFIELDS EXTENSION CAR PARK

A Cabinet report of the Strategic Director for Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure to seek approval and delegation to begin the exploratory works required to construct a new Council office was considered for pre-decision scrutiny (item 9c on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Strategic Director for Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The council was proposing to assess the site due to financial pressures and with a view to further support the Carbon Neutral Plan by reducing office space to reflect new working practices. The survey undertaken would eliminate the risk of overspending and allowing for a proactive plan should the council choose to develop on the site.

- ii. Any future development for the purpose of constructing new office space for Charnwood Borough Council would be flexible and sustainable in terms of potential use.
- iii. The current Southfields offices had been well-maintained but were no longer fit for purpose for the council. It was possible that following the development of a new site, the current Southfields building could be sold or rented.
- iv. The sum of £150k included an initial estimation of £100k, plus contingency funds to mitigate any risks. The procurement process would be undertaken using compliant and competitive processes.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet be informed that the Commission supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Strategic Director for Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure.

Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered the report, felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

32. SCRUTINY COMMISSION PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - CABINET RESPONSE

A report of the Cabinet was considered setting out its responses to the recommendations of the Commission on pre-decision scrutiny items (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet's responses to the Commission's recommendations be noted.

Reason

The Commission was satisfied that it added value where appropriate and welcomed the Cabinet's consideration of the Commission's views and recommendations as part of its decision making process.

33. PROGRESS WITH PANEL WORK

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to review the progression of scrutiny panels (item 11 on the agenda files with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item.

- i. There had been a total of 8 expressions of interest for participation in the Budget Scrutiny Panel for the Council year 2021/22 and it was recommended that the panel consist of 5-6 members only. The Head of Strategic Support was required to make a decision on membership.

- ii. The first meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Panel will take place on 6th October 2021.
- iii. Scoping documents had been received from all of the Chairs allocated to scrutiny panels. The Democratic Services Manager was required to discuss the content of each scoping document with the relevant Head of Service. Following this, scoping documents would be submitted to the next available meeting of the Scrutiny Commission for approval.
- iv. It was highlighted that the maximum number of scrutiny panels had been reached. It was suggested that the Crime, ASB and Youth Crime scrutiny panel, to be Chaired by Councillor Bolton, commenced in January 2022.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the Scrutiny Commission reviewed the progression of scrutiny panels.
2. That the Budget Scrutiny Panel for the Council year 2021/22 consisted of 5-6 members, with the Head of Strategic Support deciding on the membership.
3. That the Crime, ASB and Youth Crime scrutiny panel commenced in January 2022.

### Reason

- 1-3. To ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the matter and subject.
3. To ensure scrutiny panels are run in accordance with the Council's scrutiny panel protocol.

## 34. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to enable the Commission to review and agree the Scrutiny Work Programme. This includes reviewing the changes made by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and adding items to their work programme (item 12 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion.

- i. The Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee had considered maintaining a virtual aspect to their meetings and had discussed options in terms of inviting Cabinet Lead Members and Heads of Service to meetings virtually, in order to support consideration of the Performance Monitoring report item.
- ii. The process of choosing two key areas for scrutiny taken from the Performance Monitoring report for each meeting was trialled at the last meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee. However, it was decided that this was not a satisfactory approach to effective scrutiny and so the committee would not continue with this approach.

**RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Commission reviewed the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work Programme.

Reason

To ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the matter and subject.

35. SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to enable the Commission to review its own work programme, including considering the list of forthcoming Executive Key Decisions in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny (item 13 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion.

- i. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Scrutiny Commission was required to consider an update following the completion of the Commercialisation Scrutiny Panel. It was suggested that this update report be submitted to the Scrutiny Commission at their meeting scheduled for 6th December 2021.
- ii. The Scrutiny Commission was required to review the Bulky Waste Collection Charges on a six-monthly basis. It was suggested that an update report be submitted to the Scrutiny Commission at their meeting scheduled for 15th November 2021.
- iii. The Scrutiny Commission chose the following from the forward programme for pre-decision scrutiny;
  - Residential Mobile Home Site Licence Conditions – 11th October 2021
  - Policy on Pets in Council Accommodation – 11th October 2021
- iv. The Scrutiny Commission discussed the possibility of adding the 'Loughborough BID Ballot Vote' item on the forward programme to their work programme for pre-decision scrutiny. However, the Commission felt that more information was required from the relevant Head of Service prior to deciding whether to add the item to the work programme.

**RESOLVED**

1. That forthcoming Executive Key Decisions or decisions to be taken in private by the Executive, set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and scheduled scrutiny of those matters, be noted.

2. That the Commission's current work programme be noted.
3. That the work programme be updated as follows;
  - The Commercialisation Scrutiny Panel update report to submitted for review to the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 6th December 2021.
  - The Bulky Waste Collection report to submitted for review to the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 15th November 2021.
  - The Residential Mobile Home Site Licence Conditions be submitted for pre-decision scrutiny to the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 11th October 2021.
  - The Policy on Pets in Council Accommodation be submitted for pre-decision scrutiny to the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 11th October 2021.
4. That more information on the 'Loughborough BID Ballot Vote' report be provided to the Scrutiny Commission.

#### Reasons

- 1&3 To ensure effective and timely scrutiny, either to provide Cabinet with advice prior to it taking a decision or to ensure that the Council and external public service providers and partners were operating effectively for the benefit of the Borough.
2. To ensure effective and timely scrutiny.
- 4.To enable the Scrutiny Commission to decide whether pre-decision scrutiny is appropriate for this item.

#### NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 8th November 2021 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 Scrutiny Commission.