

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30TH NOVEMBER 2021

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Charles)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Miah)
Councillors Fryer, Grimley, C. Harris, Shepherd,
Taylor and Ward

Councillor Harper-Davies (Cabinet Lead Member
for Community Support and Equalities) and
Inspector Oswin (Leicestershire Police)

Strategic Director; Environmental and Corporate
Services
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Community Safety Manager
Organisational Change Officer
Head of Financial Services
Democratic Services Officer (LS)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Paling

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.

18. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

19. **DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS**

Councillor Taylor declared an interest as the LCC representative on the Town Deal Board. This was declared when item 9 on the agenda was being considered due to discussion on funding from the Town Deal Board for the Bedford Square, Loughborough scheme.

20. **DECLARATIONS - THE PARTY WHIP**

No declarations were made.

21. **QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16**

No questions had been submitted.

22. **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

Considered, a report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services to scrutinise the Community Safety Partnership, statutory responsibility to do so at least every 6 months (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the report: Community Safety Manager, Inspector Oswin (Leicestershire Police), Cabinet Lead Member Community Support and Equalities.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Report was presented by Cabinet Lead Member. She wished for the record to thank the previous Charnwood NPA Commander, Inspector Botte for his contribution.
- (ii) Reference agenda page 12, key locations for crime volume Beats 62 and 65, stated problem with engagement from partners. Reason for? In response, was CCG and Fire Service. Action taken to make clear statutory responsibility.
- (iii) Increase in shoplifting, reason for and where occurring? In response, was challenge in town centre, targeted via Loughborough Central Delivery Group, focus on key individuals and actions taken outlined. Noted, increase compared against lockdown period previous year.
- (iv) Increase in violence with injury, causes? In response, outlined what that included, any injury. Increase nationally, lockdown/Covid significant factor, domestic violence, pubs re-opening.
- (v) Recent changes to improve recording by Leicestershire Police and reason for that outlined.
- (vi) How were Police beats determined? Covered wide areas, therefore not known if reported problems were in specific Borough ward or not, could this be indicated to assist? In response, had tried to align with Borough ward boundaries, but beat may include more than one ward. Focus given to and action taken in respect of key locations for crime volume outlined. Aimed to make best use of available resources. Importance of good data to assist that. Would look to make information more specific to locations where possible, but resource implications noted.
- (vii) Recent news that CCTV camera to be installed in Queen's Park, not aware of problem in that location? In response, followed approach from Police and Crime Commissioner via Home Office, funding granted specific to issue of violence against women, locations identified by Police.
- (viii) Overall increase in crime, what driving? Also, position in family group worse. In response, challenges outlined including significant Police staff changes, work to mentor less experienced officers. Need for refocus, all partners to engage, improved offender management. Considerable issue with substance misuse in Borough.
- (ix) Beat 58, increase in burglaries, perpetrators since charged and imprisoned, however need for reassurance of communities during the process. Suggested Community Safety Partnership might look at how that could be improved, noted. Also, useful if social media campaigns emailed out to councillors to share through local networks.
- (x) Beat 61, useful to know hotspots, anecdotal evidence suggested Syston, could Police presence be looked at? Confirmed that policing team dedicated to

- Syston, should be presence there daily. Brief outline of issues specific to settlements covered by that beat.
- (xi) Why had Drugs Strategy not been effective in recent times? How many referrals made to the Channel, had those all been accepted? In response, associated funding stream for partners ended but should still be engaged. Importance of signposting to recovery services. Reducing crime required the tackling of substance misuse. Enforcement needed where support not successful. Refocus required, that would be recommended for 2022/23. Regarding Channel, there had been several referrals in Borough, latest update to JAG reported 9, predominantly via educational settings, none by JAG. Channel explained as early intervention initiative for individuals at risk of extremism.
- (xii) Number of community triggers a concern, what action being taken? In response, number received outlined, approximately one every six weeks, much more than other districts. Duty bound to signpost repeat victims to community trigger not just include information on website. Planned work to understand better, were repeat themes, more joined up approach needed among partners to tackle and by identified leads. Education of staff around risk assessing. Likely to be more community triggers, prevention best approach.
- (xiii) Reference to family group, unclear why grouped as were, no clear similarities. How used by officers, which were good, was good practice shared? In response, based on similar demographics, challenged that not all were university towns, effect on crime. Did seek out good practice, no obvious gaps in what Charnwood doing. Recording practice could be affecting.
- (xiv) View that good work being done in difficult circumstances, all involved thanked for that.
- (xv) Regarding anti-social behaviour, particularly in area covered by Beat 62 which had seen considerable increase. Concentration of student HMOs and associated issues. What action being taken/planned? How would new HMO licensing assist/be enforced? How was existing Public Space Protection Order enforced? In response, initiatives in Op Lexical outlined, multi-agency CSP response to crime and anti-social behaviour associated with student population in area. Included weekly partners meeting, identification of repeat cases, most at risk, incremental and firm action against perpetrators outlined. Cumulative impact on permanent residents recognised, doing all could against those causing harm. Tackling problems via landlords welcomed as approach, consistent factor. Purpose of and position with Public Space Protection Order explained, including importance of recording data and robust enforcement. Student Street Support Scheme also operated, good value.
- (xvi) How linked up were Council's ASB team and Police in respect of reports entered on to the Sentinel system? Concern that former not always aware of a report when councillor contacted regarding. Limitations to system, didn't always flag up repeat incidents? In response, background to Sentinel outlined, case management system. Allowed alert of partner agency, not always being used as should be, user/training issue. Better training proposed, new case management module from Sentinel would assist, also flagging of alerts so action taken.
- (xvii) The Council's Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing was in attendance for the next item on the agenda. As the issue of HMO licensing had been raised, she outlined the two schemes due to be implemented, in particular requirements on licence holders in relation to anti-social behaviour by tenants. Guidance on the schemes would be available in due course.

- (xviii) Those attending to assist with the report were thanked for their clear and honest responses. Inspector Oswin was asked to pass on the Committee's best wishes to the PCSO Rita Purkayastha who had been seriously injured while on duty in Charnwood.
- (xix) Confirmed that, although not specifically listed on agenda page 15 (beat areas), Walton on the Wolds and Cossington were covered.

RESOLVED that the report, discussion and responses be noted.

Reason

Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee has been allocated the statutory responsibility to ensure that effective scrutiny of the work of the Community Safety Partnership takes place.

23. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Considered, a report of the Strategic Director; Environmental and Corporate Services providing Quarter 2 performance monitoring information (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Chair and Vice-chair had identified the following principal topics/focus for this item:

- % rent loss through void properties (red indicator);
- Sheltered schemes – where are we on progress?
- Age criteria for acceptance into certain properties.

Assisting with consideration of the report: Strategic Director; Environmental and Corporate Services, Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing, Organisational Change Officer.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Report was presented by Organisational Change Officer. Noted in respect of 2 red actions Corporate Delivery Plan 2021/22, 1 would be closed for Q3 as Outwoods Visitor Centre Café recently opened. Also, relevant Head of Service now shown for indicators as requested previously by Committee.
- (ii) Agenda page 35, collective switching, look at how increase profile/uptake? Particularly important given increase in energy prices. In response, current position in energy market had meant that not feasible for offers to be made in last auction. Continuing in scheme as per Cabinet decision, once change in market/benefit to switching would do more promotion. Focus currently energy efficiency.
- (iii) When likely to have contractor kitchens/bathrooms/heating? Remit of Head of Landlord Services, response could be requested following meeting.
- (iv) Timeline needed for when sheltered schemes review would be completed, had been delayed for some time. Additional narrative agenda page 51 useful. Refocus needed. Needed to update properties so that provided what tenants needed, perhaps switch focus of capital spending from purchasing properties to

updating properties so could be let. Income to Council being lost and not housing as many people as could otherwise do. Funds available in HRA as not spent on repairs over last year. In response, had been increase rent loss, less voids end of quarter, decrease in terminations, starting this quarter in better position. Had been increase in re-advertised properties, linked into previous comments made re: sheltered schemes/age designation, had been more offers made. Longstanding nature of sheltered schemes review outlined, also schemes completed to date, agreed standard, assessment/work undertaken and plans moving forward, in particular timeline for next scheme, Thurcaston and report to Cabinet on that and prioritisation of remaining schemes. Considerable work had been undertaken. However, progress had been impacted by Covid. Also, by staff leaving. Updates on sheltered schemes review was provided to Housing Management Advisory Board. Recognised that had been delay, apology for that including to affected residents. Funds from Right to Buy being used to purchase properties could not be used for refurbishment costs.

- (v) Clarified that void rent loss, review of sheltered schemes, age designation all within remit of Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing.
- (vi) Regarding age designation, project had commenced, past changes looked at, currently 1,079 45+ properties, approximately 5% void. Progress on plan affected by available staff resources, work to recruit and position in that respect outlined, had been difficult, also staffing to assist turnaround. Analysis of age designation changes made previously and practice elsewhere indicated that there had not been a problem with management/additional anti-social behaviour, which had been the main concern. Housing Management Advisory Board to consider, possibility of pilot blocks initially. View expressed that age criteria had become barrier, removal supported.
- (vii) Unclear why some indicators green, not yet delivered, example provided. Feedback on example provided noted. Also, in response, the check and challenge approach taken to position stated by responsible officers was outlined, if progress sufficient against deadline for completion, fair to state as green. Aim always to give realistic indication of position through the year, therefore position at end year not significantly different than expected. Noted that not a perfect science.
- (viii) Agenda page 36, action “35 empty homes back into use”, why green when only 16 achieved? Also, action “purchase 10-20 properties” why only 5 achieved, funds available, reason for? In response, cumulative over year, met for quarters so far, therefore considered realistic indication. Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing anticipated that both targets would be met by year end. Post meeting note: At 6th December 2021, 24 empty homes back in use, 9 properties purchased.

RESOLVED

1. that the performance results, associated commentary and the explanations provided be noted;
2. that a response of the Head of Landlord Services be sent to members of the Committee in respect of paragraph (iii) above.

Reasons

1. To ensure that targets and objectives are being met and to identify areas where performance might be improved.
2. The question could not be answered at the meeting.

24. **REVENUE MONITORING POSITION (GENERAL FUND AND HRA) PERIOD 7**

Considered, a report of the Head of Financial Services setting out the revenue position for the General Fund and HRA at the end of Period 7 (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the report: Strategic Director; Environmental and Corporate Services, Head of Financial Services.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Report was presented by Head of Financial Services. Noted that would know at Period 9 on financial performance of pantomime, some cancellations.
- (ii) Regarding Essential Car User saving, not achieved this year, had it been prudent to include before agreed with staff? Would it be achieved next year? In response, had been more complicated than envisaged. Considerable spend each year by Council, analysis had been that very few staff meeting mileage benchmark (3,500 miles per annum based on tax advice, lease car becoming viable). As progressed, different management views on how should be applied, had delayed proposals. Would not be implemented this year, anticipated would be saving next year, approximately £100k. Included given budget focus of protecting frontline services and jobs as far as possible. Projected overspend £314k, essential car user and salary award (higher than 0% anticipated, current position outlined, remained uncertain).
- (iii) Agenda page 54, effect of Bedford Square works on car parking income. How much longer expecting to subsidise car parks? In response, not considered that Bedford Square works having significant impact, decisions taken in year to support town centre by offering free parking. Not known extent to which reduction car park use would be temporary or permanent. Covid income loss claim made for car parks, several causes of reduced income, across all car parks.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

The Committee's remit includes receiving regular financial monitoring reports.

25. **CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT**

Considered, a report of the Head of Financial Services setting out capital spend position at Period 7 (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the report: Strategic Director; Environmental and Corporate Services, Head of Financial Services.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Report was presented by Head of Financial Services.
- (ii) Considerable slippage in respect of DFG, the scheme helped people live in their homes better, was slippage caused by Covid, difficulty securing contractors? Unlikely that applications not being received? The Council's Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing was in attendance for an earlier item on the agenda. As the issue of DFG had been raised, she outlined how the scheme operated (Lightbulb Programme) and the current position with it. Was a waiting list, plan to request additional resources to assist with reducing that and spending funds. High slippage affected by receipt of two additional DFG amounts, approximately £400k. Also, increase in DFG allocation each year outlined, so larger budget than ever had. Had been affected by Covid, unable to visit and some residents didn't wish to be visited, had tried to maintain service as far as possible. View expressed that important to spend money, residents needed to access.
- (iii) What was overspend on Bedford Square scheme? In response, Period 7, profile issue at that time, since then delegated decision to approve revised budget, see agenda page 63, budget reflected receiving some Town Deal funding, external funding, capital receipts. Confirmed that funding from Town Deal secured. How funding of the scheme had progressed as spending had meant more funding was available was outlined. £3.869m was current size of scheme.
- (iv) Reference to considerable slippage re: carbon neutral project, understood carbon neutral plan been amended, delayed spending. When anticipated it would be spent? What would be priority projects? Remit of Strategic Director; Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure? Response could be requested following meeting. Noted that physical assets key factor, decision on Council offices. Additional budgets for energy efficiency improvements.

RESOLVED

1. that the capital monitoring summary position for Period 7, 31st October 2021 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account be noted as per Table 1 in the report, the detailed Capital Monitoring Report was included in Appendix 1;
2. that a response of the Strategic Director; Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure be sent to members of the Committee in respect of paragraph (iv) above.

Reasons

1. To enable the information to be used when considering the future 3-year Capital Plan and the future Capital Strategy.
2. The question could not be answered at this meeting.

26. THEME IDENTIFIED FOR THIS MEETING - COMMUNITY SAFETY

To enable open discussion on theme identified for this meeting: Community Safety. No further discussion following consideration of item 6 on the agenda earlier in the meeting.

27. WORK PROGRAMME

Considered, a report of the Strategic Director; Corporate and Environmental Services to assist the Committee in determining its work programme (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the report: Strategic Director; Environmental and Corporate Services.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Reference to discussion under item 9 on the agenda regarding carbon neutral. View expressed that useful if Strategic Director; Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure attended March 2022 meeting to discuss position with that. Also, other areas of his remit. Noted that Climate Change Strategy monitoring programmed for September 2022 meeting. Could ask for attendance in respect of delivery of his elements of capital plan at next meeting, in particular carbon neutral plan spending.
 - (ii) Reference to scrutiny of Community Safety Partnership, whether more appropriate for Scrutiny Commission to undertake? Had been raised at previous Scrutiny Commission meeting. Advised that scrutiny remits set out in Council's Constitution, not a matter for decision by this committee. Perhaps could be suggested as part of annual review of Council's Constitution process. View expressed that appropriately allocated to this Committee, performance matter.

RESOLVED

1. that the Committee's scrutiny work programme, as set out in the report and with any amendments made at this meeting, be agreed;
 2. that the Strategic Director; Commercial Development, Assets and Leisure be invited to attend the Committee's meeting in March 2022 in respect of the Capital Monitoring report, in particular carbon neutral project position.

Reasons

1. To enable the Council's scrutiny arrangements to operate efficiently and effectively.
 2. To ensure that questions from the Committee on areas within the remit of the Director can be provided at the meeting.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the next available Ordinary Council meeting 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 Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.