

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION
3RD JULY 2023**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Seaton)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Needham)
Councillors Maynard, Harper-Davies, Cory-
Lowsley, Lennie and Rattray

Councillor Hamilton (Deputy Leader of the
Council, Public and Private Sector Housing)

Director Housing and Wellbeing
Director Customer Experience
Head of Contracts, Leisure, Waste and
Environment
Head of Governance and Human Resources
Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager
Democratic Services Officer (SW)

APOLOGIES: Councillor B. Gray and N. Taylor

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.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 11th April 2023 were approved.

2. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS, AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

3. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

The Head of Governance and Human Resources outlined the process of party whipping and the requirement to make declarations.

4. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions were submitted.

The Head of Governance and Human Resources outlined the Questions under Scrutiny Committee Procedures 11.16.

5. COST OF LIVING ACTION PLAN UPDATE

A report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing to provide the Scrutiny Commission with an update on the work undertaken in relation to the cost-of-living action plan, was submitted (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Director of Housing and Wellbeing and the Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager attended the meeting and assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. It was clarified that 'ECO4' and 'LAD3' were national grant funding schemes to support low income families to increase the energy efficiency of their homes.
- ii. The Cost of Living Grants funding was allocated following an applications process similar to the usual grants applications process used by the council. The funding allocated was managed well by partner organisations, and the total amount from the Cost of Living fund had not been used. Some of the organisations involved in the scheme had used their own funds to support residents, and had used less of the Cost of Living funding allocation than expected. Approximately £90k had been returned to the Council's Reserves Fund.
- iii. Leicestershire County Council had been operating a Household Support Fund, which was financed by Government. This scheme provided support to families and individuals in the County in need of financial assistance, and the Council's partner organisations had referred residents of Charnwood into the scheme.
- iv. It was highlighted that 'top slicing' the Disabled Facilities Grant budget would not have a negative impact.
- v. The support offered through the Cost of Living action plan did include some debt and budgeting advice services. Some of the partner organisations involved in the scheme, such as Citizen's Advice Bureau, Age UK and Equality Action, already provided this service, and the funding provided enabled these services to increase capacity in this area. Providing debt advice required organisations to have specialist professionals to cover this area of support.
- vi. The Council had also addressed health and wellbeing and leisure facilities available to residents facing financial hardship. A scheme offering heavily discounted access to leisure centres in the area had been rolled out and the Council continued to work closely with and promote organisations offering health and wellbeing services.
- vii. The sum of £40k initially identified for topping up the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) budget was not needed. The DHP fund was a means-tested resource used to support residents with paying rent, or to move into a more suitable property. The fund was allocated to the Council by Government on an annual basis. The fund had not been fully exhausted at the end of the financial year and so did not require the intended top up.

- viii. It was suggested that members were offered a member development session on the support schemes available to residents in financial hardship, such as the Household Support Fund, the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme and Discretionary Council Tax support scheme.
- ix. Members thanked officers and acknowledged that the work undertaken in relation to the Cost of Living support was invaluable to residents.
- x. Members highlighted that a follow-up report in early 2024 would be beneficial to allow members to monitor the support provided to residents over the winter period.

RESOLVED

1. That the Commission noted and commented on the update and the extension of funding for initiatives that support communities facing challenges arising from the cost of living.
2. That a member development session on the support schemes available to residents in financial hardship, such as the Household Support Fund, the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme and Discretionary Council Tax support scheme, be scheduled.
3. That a further report detailing the support provided to residents over the winter period be scheduled for the Scrutiny Commission for early 2024.

Reason

1. To reflect the Commission's consideration of the update and the continuing work around the cost of living.
2. To enable members to better understand the support available to residents.
3. To enable members to monitor the support provided to residents over the winter period.

6. UPDATE ON INTERNAL ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REVIEW

A report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing and the Director of Customer Experience to update on the on the Internal Anti-social Behaviour Review (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Public and Private Sector Housing (and Deputy Leader of the Council), the Director of Housing and Wellbeing and the Director of Customer Experience attended the meeting and assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) reporting form on the Council's website was based on a risk management framework which triaged reports of ASB. The form had been created internally and had undergone a significant testing process. The way the form had been created was to ensure all of the relevant and required information would be collected by the customer, as ASB reporting was complex. In general, there had been positive feedback from people using the form.
- ii. It was highlighted that all reporting channels were still available for residents to use and that no service was digital only.
- iii. The council was keen to enable customers to utilise the online facilities available. The Director of Customer Experience stated that she would look into providing an online link for customers that required more help when completing the online ASB form.
- iv. The Council worked closely with Loughborough University to manage ASB related to students. Loughborough University operated a 24 hour security service which dealt with the majority of issues without any need for Police involvement. If there were persisting issues and there was a need for further action, the Council would follow the usual process of addressing persistent ASB by undertaking an evidence gathering exercise and involving the courts.
- v. The Council's Community Safety team worked closely with the Police and other agencies involved in tackling crime. The Community Safety Partnership was a statutory body, responsible for reducing ASB, amongst other objectives. There were two Joint Action Groups (JAGs) (one youth-based and one adult-based). These groups undertook case work related to individuals involved in crime. It was highlighted that the Community Safety Partnership and the JAGs worked effectively as partnerships and undertook significant and valuable work. The Charnwood Neighbourhood Policing Area Commander, Inspector Dave Stokes, was praised for his work in the Borough.
- vi. A restructure was being planned in the ASB area of the Council and so it was unclear whether the ASB Services Facilitator role would be recruited into. The aim of the restructure was to increase resilience across the team and to ensure more officers were able to undertake a wider range of work. The new Head of Service for Regulatory and Community Safety, Gareth Harvey was now in post.
- vii. Information on the progress of an ASB report could be made available to members in particular circumstances. The Director of Housing and Wellbeing agreed to expand the scope of the forthcoming member development session on ASB to incorporate this.

RESOLVED

1. That the Commission note the update.
2. That the Commission conclude its scrutiny of the ASB service review.

3. That the Director of Customer Experience look into providing an online link for customers that required more help when completing the online ASB form.
4. That the Director of Housing and Wellbeing arranged for members to receive training around what information could be shared in respect of ASB case management updates.

Reasons

1. To confirm scrutiny has considered the update.
 2. The ASB review concluded in September 2022. New working practices are embedded. The actions identified by scrutiny at its last meeting are complete or scheduled.
 3. To ensure that customers were aware of the other channels they could use to report ASB.
 4. To enable members to understand the process of ASB reports.
7. 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.

8. CABINET ITEMS FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

There were no items identified for pre-decision scrutiny from the Cabinet agenda.

The Head of Governance and Human Resources outlined the link between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Commission and the process of pre-decision scrutiny.

9. 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, was submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Governance and Human Resources outlined the process of the Cabinet response to pre-decision scrutiny.

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.

10. SCRUTINY PANELS

A report of the Head of Governance and Human Resources to consider updates on the work of scrutiny panels, was submitted (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Governance and Human Resources and the Democratic Services Officer assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Head of Governance and Human Resources and the Democratic Services Officer briefly outlined the scrutiny panels procedures.
- ii. The Chair referred to the paused scrutiny panels (Promoting Tourism in Charnwood and Combatting Loneliness). The panels had been paused for a considerable amount of time and the Commission agreed that they were no longer relevant, and could be removed from the scrutiny panels table.
- iii. It was suggested that a list of the previous scrutiny panels be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Commission to enable members to see the topics that had been reviewed previously. It was considered that this would help members to understand the types of topics which would form a valuable scrutiny panel.
- iv. It was highlighted that a Scrutiny Work Programme and Panels Workshop would be scheduled in the coming weeks to allow members to discuss ideas for scrutiny panels.
- v. It was suggested that a survey be circulated to all non-executive members of the Council to inquire about issues raised in their wards. Following this exercise, any themes or significant issues could be identified and panel topics could be developed from this.
- vi. It was advised that before suggesting a topic for a scrutiny panel, members could liaise with officers to understand the topic in more detail. Following this, the member should be able to identify if there was an issue to be solved.
- vii. A 'Scoping Document' was issued when a scrutiny panel had been identified. It was suggested that the 'Scoping Document' be circulated to members of the Commission for them to use when liaising with officers about potential topics for scrutiny panels.

RESOLVED

1. That the Scrutiny Commission note the progression of scrutiny panels.
2. That the following scrutiny panels be removed from the table; 'Promoting Tourism in Charnwood' and 'Combatting Loneliness'.

3. That a list of the previous scrutiny panels be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Commission.
4. That the 'Scoping Document' be circulated to members of the Scrutiny Commission.

Reasons

1&2. To ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the matter and subject.

3. To enable members to see the scrutiny panel topics that had been reviewed previously and to help members to understand the types of topics which would form a valuable scrutiny panel.
4. To enable members to identify the issues required during the consideration of the topic.

11. WASTE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE

A report of the Head of Contracts (Leisure, Waste and Environment) to enable the Commission to consider the implementation of the decisions taken by the Cabinet following its consideration of the report of the Waste Management Scrutiny Panel and what, if any, further action may be required, was submitted (item 12 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Contracts (Leisure, Waste and Environment) attended the meeting and assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Commission agreed to close the following panel recommendations approved by Cabinet; 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13.
- ii. The Commission agreed that an update on the following panel recommendations approved by Cabinet would be required in six months (January 2024);
 - Panel Recommendation 5; Promote partner agencies/local groups, businesses and organisations working to reduce waste.
 - Panel Recommendation 6; Comms campaign – Charnwood waste champion challenge, what can go in your recycling bin, etc...
 - Panel Recommendation 9; Support the establishment of a scrap store/library of things/ other similar initiatives.
- iii. Regarding panel recommendation 11 (introduce recycling collections for interested local businesses) members request more information on the scheme so that they could promote the service in their wards.

RESOLVED

1. That the following panel recommendations approved by Cabinet be closed; 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13.
2. That the following panel recommendations approved by Cabinet remained open, with a report to update on the progress of the actions in six months (January 2024); 5, 6 and 9.
3. Regarding panel recommendation 11 (introduce recycling collections for interested local businesses) the Head of Contracts (Leisure, Waste and Environment) circulate more information on the scheme to members.

Reasons

1. The Commission was satisfied with the progress of these recommendations/actions.
2. The Commission was not satisfied with the current progress of these recommendations/actions.
3. To enable members to gain more information on recycling collections for local businesses which can be shared with businesses in their wards.

12. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Governance and Human Resources 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 was submitted (item 13 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Governance and Human Resources outlined the Scrutiny Work Programme and the process of referring items to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Programme.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Commission reviewed the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work Programme and make any amendments the Commission feel necessary.

Reason

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

13. SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Governance and Human Resources was considered, to enable the Commission to consider its work programme and forthcoming Key Decisions and

decisions to be taken in private by the Cabinet in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny, was submitted (item 14 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Governance and Human Resources assisted with the consideration of this item and outlined the Scrutiny Commission Work Programme and the process of adding items from Cabinet agendas.

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.

Reasons

- 1 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.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 4th September 2023 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.
3. The following Lead Members and officers attended the meeting via Microsoft Teams; The Lead Member for Public and Private Sector Housing (and Deputy Leader of the Council), the Director of Customer Experience and the Head of Contracts (Leisure, Waste and Environment).