

**FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28TH NOVEMBER 2023**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Maynard)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Forde)
Councillors Baines, Campsall, Charles, Cory-
Lowsley, S. Forrest, Snartt and Westley

Councillors Ashcroft (Cabinet Lead Member for Finance, Customer & Support Services, Revenues and Benefits), Blackshaw (Cabinet Lead Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods) and Hamilton (Deputy Leader of the Council, Public and Private Sector Housing)

Inspectors Stokes and Dickens (Leicestershire Police)

Director Finance, Governance and Contracts
Head of Regulatory and Community Safety
Community Safety Manager
Transformation and Improvement Manager
Director Housing and Wellbeing
Head of Strategic Housing
Chief Executive
Head of Transformation, Strategy and Performance
Head of Planning and Growth
Team Leader, Strategic Development
Acting Head of Finance
Democratic Services Officer (LS)

APOLOGIES: Councillor D. 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.

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

22. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

23. DECLARATIONS - THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

24. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

25. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Considered, a report of the Head of Regulatory and Community Safety: Community Safety Partnership (CSP) (statutory responsibility to undertake scrutiny every six months) (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Community Safety Manager, Cabinet Lead Member Communities and Neighbourhoods, Inspectors Stokes and Dickens (Leicestershire Police).

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Noted, Inspector Dickens would be replacing Inspector Stokes as Charnwood NPA Commander.
- (ii) There had been 4.5% reduction in crime overall.
- (iii) The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner had been complimentary of the work of the Charnwood CSP.
- (iv) Concern that position within family group was 12th of 15. Were themes sufficient to improve that? Was benchmarking/looking at what others were doing taking place, examples of that would be welcomed? In response, changes by Government to how crimes reported and recorded were outlined, in particular violence with injury and residential burglary. Positive change, but had increased figures for these. Cycle theft and shoplifting also increased, former affected by not accessing funding for target hardening work this year compared to last year when there had been significant success with university students, latter was a national trend and affected by economic climate. Re: family group, was for monitoring purposes, impact of being a university town highlighted, officers did take learning from others where possible. Noted that report looked at quarter 1 and 2 compared to last year, longer term trends were also important.
- (v) Student population resulted in an increase in some crimes, committed against and not by those students. Reference to considerable work by CSP with students to mitigate that, including to assist target hardening. Highlighted, previous campaign re: females targeted by males around spiking/alcohol consumption, eradicated.
- (vi) Concern that while "person on person" crime seemed to have reduced compared to 2021, crimes such as burglaries, vehicle theft, shoplifting had not, perhaps as a result of strategic focus, what was CSP doing in respect of the latter? In response, practice of ethical crime reporting in Leicestershire and its impact on figures outlined, particular reference to burglary.
- (vii) Noted, purpose of item was not to scrutinise performance of Police but the performance of the CSP against its strategic priorities (3 themes as set out in report).

- (viii) Concern re: anti-social behaviour Warwick Way estate, what being done to support victims? Targeted approach outlined, enforcement, prevention and community confidence, robust structure around it. Importance of recording stated, data required. CSP support of Police had driven more Police managers, increase from 4 to 9 sergeants in Charnwood, real impact moving forward.
- (ix) Reference to ongoing success in tackling substance abuse/county lines, how resources might be focused elsewhere following that.
- (x) Reason(s) for increased crime Birstall/Wanlip? In response, proactive beat management had been a challenge, above position with increased staffing should assist with response.
- (xi) Re: Theme 3, reducing criminal exploitation, possible impacts of Falcon Support Services loss of Leicestershire County Council funding, planned for that? In response, would be a challenge, CSP would look to support where it could, no doubt would affect some individuals' behaviours.
- (xii) Additional sergeants and progress re: drug misuse/county lines welcomed.
- (xiii) Responsibilities of Police and Crime Commissioner, CSP, Chief Constable and how they worked together briefly outlined. Also, how CSP was funded.
- (xiv) Use of disruptive effects, would it be/was it helpful? Also, what could Council do further to assist CSP? In response, reference to help provided by Council in respect of county lines/cuckooing, training provided by Council re: Police using civil powers such as closure orders, and creative thinking. Future focus, more effective public communication, improved reporting of anti-social behaviour.
- (xv) Further reference to importance of reporting crime, specific example comments to councillor re: purse thefts town centre, not reflected in reporting to Police. Perception of crime an issue, importance of reassurance. Previous work re: target hardening around purse theft outlined. Useful to encourage public to report crime.
- (xvi) Success rates of Council's CCV team in identifying persons highlighted.
- (xvii) Re: Figure 2, agenda page 19, useful in illustrating the crime taking place, it would be useful if that included information re: anti-social behaviour. Recent performance in that respect briefly outlined.

Further to (xvii) above, the Community Safety Manager noted the request and would include in the next report to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report 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 in the absence of Directorate Scrutiny Committees.

26. PERFORMANCE MONITORING (QUARTER 2) REPORT

Considered, a report of the Head of Transformation, Strategy and Performance: Performance Monitoring (Quarter 2) (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Transformation and Improvement Manager, Director Housing and Wellbeing, Head of Strategic Housing, Cabinet Lead Member Public and Private Sector Housing.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Re: action “review and procure a new corporate website”, reference was made to the position set out on agenda page 56. To be considered alongside procurement of a Customer Relationship Management system in the first instance, market testing currently taking place, better idea of position end of current quarter.
- (ii) Update on KI 11 (rent loss voids), actions taken to improve position: Voids Repair Manager post created and recruited to, due to start 2nd January. Contractor starting work on major voids this week. Concluded procurement process for further contractor to support work of in-house voids team, contract mobilisation expected January with work commencing February. Forthcoming Cabinet report proposing declassification of age 45+ properties, open up properties currently hard to let. Strategy being developed re: sheltered accommodation. Successful with further recruitment activity in housing services, briefly outlined, that should assist position. Expectation that by Spring should start to see reduction in voids. Progress was welcomed.
- (iii) No plans to bring open spaces contract back in-house at present.
- (iv) Re: action “adopt the draft Charnwood Local Plan when the Inspector’s report is received”, current position briefly outlined, councillors would receive update as soon as officers had confirmation of what Inspector now required.
- (v) Officers continued to monitor closely the performance of the leisure centre contract and had prepared as far as possible for all possible outcomes.

RESOLVED that the performance results, associated commentary and the explanations provided be noted.

Reason

To ensure that targets and objectives are being met, and to identify areas where performance could be improved.

27. RESOURCES UPDATE

Considered, a report of the Head of Transformation, Strategy and Performance: Resources Update (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Chief Executive, Head of Transformation, Strategy and Performance, Cabinet Lead Member Finance, Customer and Support Services, Revenues and Benefits.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Re: update earlier in meeting on some successful recruitment in housing services, use of agency staff would be reduced as a result. However, noted that

there would be an ongoing reliance on agency staff in some service areas due to market conditions.

- (ii) Brief discussion re: position in planning services, improved in some areas, national shortage of planning officers, particularly more experienced. Work aimed at addressing outlined, including training own.
- (iii) Extent to which Golden Hello and market supplements used was discussed, also control mechanism outlined.
- (iv) Measures that Council was permitted to put in place address reward of senior staff were limited. Reference to proposed paper to Council re: pay policy, add 2 spinal points to provide flexibility, currently progressing through required channels.
- (iv) Policy changes were consulted on via formal process, additional informal consultation with staff on matters such as morale, health and wellbeing.
- (v) Bringing Revenues and Benefits service back in-house unlikely to result in need to increase use of agency staff in that service.
- (vi) Re: personal development of staff, new process for staff reviews introduced approximately 18 months ago, the focus on ensuring that was undertaken for all staff was outlined, included a health and wellbeing element. Improvement was ongoing. Reference to strong cohort of staff undertaking leadership courses.

Further to (vi) above, officers would send information on the position with staff personal reviews to members of the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

To allow greater understanding of the staffing, turnover, recruitment and retention issues within the Council.

28. S106 AGREEMENT MONITORING REPORT

Considered, a report of the Head of Planning and Growth: S106 Agreement Monitoring (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Head of Planning and Growth, Team Leader Strategic Development.

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Concern that large sums of S106 receipts not yet allocated, approximately £8.3m. Why was this the case, was the position monitored, did monies have to be returned? In response, officers stated that a corporate working group monitored the progress and position on quarterly basis. Monies yet to be allocated related to both Council-led schemes and those led by stakeholders and were for a variety of infrastructure needs. The draw down of funds by stakeholders was dependent on them satisfying legal tests. The Council worked closely with those stakeholders to release funds, however not all were in a position to respond quickly. Expired monies were subject to return, but the Council monitored, notified stakeholders where deadlines were approaching and

worked with developers to request more time where needed (generally willing to do so). Funds were sometimes returned to developers, but more often those were smaller amounts; leftover balances. If there was a balance after a project had been delivered, the requirement was to return it to the developer as the need for infrastructure had been satisfied.

- (ii) Further question, what was causing organisations not to put forward suitable projects, could Council influence? In response, reiterated that Council worked actively with stakeholders, particular circumstances within those organisations sometimes affected, for example, the Police and NHS (ICB) had been subject to reorganisation which had delayed project delivery.
- (iii) Noted that contributions were index linked. Also, some legacy monies had no time limit for spend.
- (iv) Monies were kept in Council's accounts, managed and invested in line with Treasury Strategy.
- (v) Monies could only be used for affordable housing if they had been provided for that purpose. Preference was for developer to provide units directly, financial contributions in lieu often made provision more difficult in buoyant housing areas. Sustainable Urban Extensions: all were expected to provide affordable housing on site.
- (vi) Table 1, agenda page 76, contributions were being sought to cover the costs of monitoring S106 agreements and monies received. This began on 1 April 2023 and therefore there was no balance in the table as it presented the position at year end 31 March 2023.
- (vii) Biodiversity contributions in lieu of on-site compensation were currently project managed or overseen by the Council's Ecologist. Preference was for provision by developer on site.
- (viii) In response to a question, an explanation was provided of how currently held funds were allocated to different providers/organisations.

Further to (viii) above, officers would send further information on balances held to members of the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED that the content of the Infrastructure Funding Statement be noted.

Reason

To ensure that financial contributions secured under S106 of the Planning Act, and their spend, are considered by members in accordance with the recommendations of internal audit and before the statement is submitted to Government.

29. REVENUE MONITORING POSITION (GENERAL FUND & HRA)

Considered, a report of the Head of Finance: Revenue Monitoring General Fund and HRA (period 7 position) (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Director Finance, Governance and Contracts, Acting Head of Finance, Cabinet Lead Member Finance, Customer and Support Services, Revenues and Benefits

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) Re: risk relating to unrecoverable housing benefit, Carpenters Arms, position set out agenda page 96, could result in additional cost burden £1.4m. However, possible change in regulation of sector might assist in reducing financial impact, also working with organisation to encourage operation as registered provider rather than charity, would allow Council to claim back associated housing benefit. View that organisation did excellent work, but unfair that Council could not recover associated housing benefit.
- (ii) Noted that Leicestershire County Council withdrawal of funding to Falcon Support Services likely to have impact on Borough Council in terms of accommodation requests, extent of which unknown.
- (iii) Re: bank charges, consequence of Council collecting money in different ways, use of online, charges of different providers, no direct ability to influence.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason

The Committee was satisfied with the position set out.

30. CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT

Considered, a report of the Head of Finance: Capital Monitoring (period 7 position) (item 11 on the agenda supplement filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Director Finance, Governance and Contracts, Acting Head of Finance, Cabinet Lead Member Finance, Customer and Support Services, Revenues and Benefits

Summary, key points of discussion:

- (i) The budget profiling in the report was helpful.
- (ii) Brief discussion re: major underspends in General Fund, property maintenance and carbon neutral initiatives, position set out on agenda supplement page 3, expenditure affected by ongoing accommodation review.
- (iii) Re: overspend Bedford Square project, position set out on agenda supplement page 4, cost inflation had been a factor, also issues relating to working with utility providers and Leicestershire County Council, briefly outlined.
- (iv) Concern that struggling to spend large part of budget for acquisition of affordable housing when considerable housing need. In response, officers looking to expand criteria for such acquisition so less restrictive.

RESOLVED that the Capital Monitoring summary position for period 7, 31st October 2023 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 to the report).

Reason

To enable the information to be used as a monitoring tool and when considering the future 3-year Capital Plan and Capital Strategy.

31. WORK PROGRAMME

Considered, a report of the Director Finance, Governance and Contracts: Committee's Work Programme (item 12 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Assisting with consideration of the matter: Director Finance, Governance and Contracts, Democratic Services Officer.

RESOLVED that the Committee's work programme as set out in the report and with any amendments made at this meeting be agreed, to include:

- (i) the existing item programmed for 5th March 2024 meeting Car Parking Strategy Update to be a written report (rather than a verbal report) and that it include any car parking data available (see F&PSC Minute 19 2023/24);
- (ii) an additional item for 5th March 2024 meeting, Homelessness and Reducing Rough Sleeping Strategy, identified as amber RAG status in Performance Monitoring Quarter 2 report considered earlier in this meeting, a written report to consider in more depth where the Council was in terms of performance, to include consideration of impact of Leicestershire County Council withdrawing funding of Falcon Support Services;
- (iii) noting that the following action identified as amber RAG status in Performance Monitoring Quarter 2 report considered earlier in this meeting will require relevant officer attendance when the Committee considers performance at its next meeting, to assist discussion of the position: Develop a Garage Site Asset Management Strategy;
- (iv) noting that the following matter in Performance Monitoring Quarter 2 report considered earlier in this meeting will require relevant officer attendance when the Committee considers performance at its next meeting, to assist discussion of the position: performance relating to leisure centre contractor.

Reason

To enable the Council's scrutiny arrangements to operate efficiently and effectively.

NOTES:

1. Councillors Ashcroft and Hamilton attended this meeting virtually. They were not taking decisions.
2. 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.
3. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee.

