

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Wednesday, 9 March 2022
Start time	4.00 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor J. Orson (Chair)

Councillors M. Graham MBE (Vice-Chair) R. Bindloss
R. Browne R. de Burle
A. Freer

Officers Chief Executive
Director for Corporate Services
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Director for Growth and Regeneration
Assistant Director for Housing Management
Assistant Director for Governance & Democracy
Democratic Services Officer (HA)
Democratic Services Officer (CR)

Minute No.	Minute
237	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies for absence.</p>
238	<p>MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2022 were confirmed.</p>
239	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillor Bindloss declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 – Allocation of Community Grants 2022/23, as a Member of Melton and Oakham Waterways Society (the Society was a grant recipient).</p> <p>Councillor Freer declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 - Matters Referred From Scrutiny Committee in Accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rules - Scrutiny Feedback on the Allotment Service, as an allotment tenant.</p> <p>Councillor Orson declared an interest in any items relating to Leicestershire County Council, due to his role as a County Councillor.</p>
240	<p>MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES</p> <p>Scrutiny Feedback on the Allotment Service</p> <p>Councillor Robert Child, Chair of Scrutiny Committee introduced the report, advising that of the 5 allotment sites in Melton, the Council managed 3 sites (at Lake Terrace, Redwood Avenue and Doctors Lane) and an allotment association managed 2 sites (at Victoria Street and the Crescent). Scrutiny Committee had reviewed information on the location, condition, accessibility, occupancy levels, charging structure, income from fees, expenditure and the need for future considerations for the sites. The Committee provided the following feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service recorded a loss over the last 6 years (when including support costs in calculations) • Fencing improvements costs at the 3 Council managed sites were estimated at £50k. If the sites were self-managed by an allotment association, the Council would not bear the associated staff support costs and would be able to recover the fencing costs over a number of years. • The estimated fencing costs appeared to be inflated and would be subject to a procurement process. Currently there was no budget in the 2022/23 budget estimates for fencing. • Self-managed allotments, managed by an allotment association should be considered, although issues such as vandalism may cause some allotment holders to be reluctant to this. • Any fencing erected by the Council (if funds become available) should be high security to protect the allotments from vandalism.

- Condition surveys had identified that the repairs were not urgent/health and safety risks and as such there was no support for any budget.
- There was no budget allocated for the allotment competition, which had been held in previous years.
- It was suggested that allotment tenants be asked to relocate to enable raised beds to be installed
- There had been no complaints to the Council from allotment tenants over the last 3 years but it would be useful to gain tenant feedback on the Council's service.
- Members were reassured that as standard allotment sites, the sites would not be used for housing development, unless the Council decided to decommission them and then followed a lengthy legal process.
- Members were encouraged at the suggestion of planning more allotment sites, as part as the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR).
- The current term for allotment tenancies was for an indefinite period. Support was expressed for shorter tenancies, as the Council may be able to regain the tenancy more quickly, particularly in cases of disrepair.
- The outstanding debt for this service stood at £822 and there had been 50 different debts written off over the last six years. There was concern that 10% of tenants were paying in arrears and that it may be difficult for the Council to obtain payment at the end of some tenancies.

The Leader commented on the good work undertaken by Scrutiny Committee and noted that it was encouraging that more allotments were planned as a result of the MMDR development.

In response to a question from the Leader, Councillor Child confirmed that currently there was a waiting list for allotment tenancies.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Members thanked Scrutiny Committee for their feedback. Much work had been undertaken by the Committee and its report was comprehensive.
- The allotment waiting list could be reviewed to determine if there were particular areas in Melton which needed additional allotment land.
- The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration would visit allotment sites with officers to consider various issues, such as fencing, raised beds etc.
- There was some reluctance expressed over the expenditure for fencing.
- The allotment sites were subject to some vandalism but the extent of this was not confirmed at the meeting.
- Difference in rental charge between cl and management company and different sizes between allotments plots on cl and managed side
- It was noted that a full allotment plot was approximately 250 square metres and a half plot was 125 square metres.
- There were 30 full plots and 16 half plots at Lake Terrace, 7 full plots and 14 half plots at Redwood and 44 full plots and 20 half plots at Doctor's Lane. These sites were managed by the Council.
- There was 1 full plot and 25 half plots at Victoria Street and 10 full plots and 26 half plots at the Crescent. These sites were managed by an association.
- At the time of the report, there were 7 vacant plots at Lake Terrace, none at Redwood and 4 at Doctor's Lane.

Cabinet **AGREED** to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

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HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Michelle Howard, Director for Housing and Communities introduced the report, the purpose of which was to present the final Housing Allocations Policy for approval.

Mrs. Howard advised that the Council was required to have a policy which provided a process to assess housing need, advertise available social housing and to allocate properties to those in need (the Housing Allocations Scheme). This provided a framework for prioritising and allocating properties appropriately through the Council's Housing Register. To facilitate meaningful engagement, the Council had undertaken a public consultation on the Policy and to date had received a good response from residents and stakeholders (154 responses and overwhelmingly positive feedback). The feedback had not required amendments to the Policy but some minor changes had been made in response to helpful advice and feedback from colleagues in the Legal Team.

Mrs. Howard confirmed that the Council was in the final stages of configuring an IT system, which would enable delivery of the new Policy. This would be undertaken in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services to ensure a seamless transition for residents and applicants.

Councillor Ronan Browne, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration thanked the Director for Housing and Communities, the Assistant Director for Housing and their team for the work undertaken. He highlighted that the Policy provided a framework to manage the process of allocating housing to those who met the criteria and providing appropriate support (such as signposting to outside agencies) to those who were not eligible. The Council was working with others such as the private rental sector, housing associations etc. on the future supply of housing. He noted the high level of engagement from local agencies and organisations and reiterated that the Council's aim was to help and support those in need.

The Leader commented the Council was making good progress on its Housing service and he thanked the Assistant Director for Housing and her team for their good work.

Cabinet

- 1) **APPROVED** the revised Melton Borough Council Housing Allocations Policy;
- 2) **DELEGATED** to the Director for Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services, authority to finalise the implementation plan and associated timeline.

Reasons for the recommendations

The Council is required to have a mechanism to assess housing need, advertise available social housing and allocate properties to households in need. This should

provide a clear and transparent framework to determine eligibility and prioritisation of applications for social housing properties.

The revised housing allocations scheme proposed for approval is a robust and legally compliant policy. There has been a comprehensive consultation exercise as part of its development.

Alongside the revised policy is the development of a new Choice Based Letting IT system. This is at an advanced stage of configuration and testing. Delegated authority to determine the implementation plan and associated timescales will allow for alignment of the policy and system changes for customers.

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ALLOCATION OF COMMUNITY GRANTS 2022/23

Michelle Howard, Director for Housing and Communities introduced the report, the purpose of which was to outline and seek approval for the award of the Community Grants budget for the financial year 2022/23 and to propose a repurposing of unallocated funds to create a one-off Platinum Jubilee Grant Fund.

Mrs. Howard advised that the report was the product of considerable work undertaken by officers and the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement, during a challenging period where there was much demand for community support.

Mrs. Howard highlighted that the Council had continued to invest in the Community Grant Scheme. Its Community Grants Policy Framework was used to assess applications for grants and how to ensure the best impact and value for money.

Mrs. Howard confirmed that the process for grant applications involved a bidding window, within which community organisations could express an interest to receive a grant from the Community Grant Scheme. A panel was then established to consider applications in line with policy and prioritise and assess the ability to award funding. This year, the Council had in excess of £99k worth of requests for funding from a budget of £44k, which presented a challenge. However, positive decisions had been made, as detailed within the table at paragraph 5.9.2 of the report. The Council had not awarded grants to all partners due to eligibility and being unable to demonstrate how the policy criteria had been met. In these cases, alternative support (i.e. through a contribution or other funding opportunities and support etc.) had been provided.

Mrs. Howard advised that due to an underspend of £7,128k on the allocation of community grants budget, an additional 1 off grant scheme for 2022 was proposed (the Platinum Jubilee Grants Scheme). This would enable the Council to manage a small grant scheme to support community groups across the borough to deliver events in line with the Jubilee.

Councillor Alison Freer, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement commented that the allocation of community grants was a particularly positive aspect of her portfolio, as it resulted in such a direct impact on the community and

had a positive impact on residents. This was an outstanding project and the officers involved had worked to ensure that all eligible applicants had been successful, either wholly or in part in gaining funding. Officers had engaged with community organisations to foster positive relationships with new and existing organisations and projects. This work had resulted in an budget underspend, which could be used for Melton jubilee celebrations.

Councillor Freer highlighted that the allocation of community grants work had creating links with the Melton Community Lottery, increasing this pot of funding. The work had helped the Council to learn more about the organisations benefiting from the grants and the positive impact the projects would have on the community.

The Leader thanked the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement and officers for their work, noting that it was positive that more organisations were accessing the Melton Community Lottery.

Cabinet

- 1) **APPROVED** the award of Community Grants;
- 2) **APPROVED** the use of £2,040 unallocated funds for the 2022/23 community grants budget and £5,088 unallocated funds from the 2021/22 community grants budget to create a one-off Community Grants Fund of £7,128 specifically for the Platinum Jubilee;
- 3) **DELEGATED** authority to the Director of Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Environment, to develop and implement a Platinum Jubilee Community Grants Scheme for Melton.

Reasons for the recommendations

The Council's investment in a Community Grants Scheme enables a fund for community groups and voluntary agencies to bid for. The grants support the corporate theme of "Helping People" and the Council's role both as supporter and enabler of community-based activities. The allocation of the grants is important in supporting activities that benefit the residents of the Borough and bring positive social value.

The proposed allocation of grants for 2022/23 has been made following a robust, clear and transparent assessment panel approach in line with the approved Community Grants Policy criteria.

This year will be a unique one with the Borough preparing for Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. The Council has an opportunity to expand the reach of the Community Grants budget to enable community organisations to bid for grant funding to support and enable their Jubilee celebrations.

This also provides the Council an opportunity to enhance its community leadership role in supporting Melton communities with Jubilee celebrations.

Delegated authority to develop and implement Platinum Jubilee Community Grants Scheme for Melton is requested to enable this to be progressed in readiness for the Jubilee. It is proposed this would be best delivered as a small grants scheme, with maximum allocations not exceeding £1,000.

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ACTIVE TOGETHER 10 YEAR FRAMEWORK

Michelle Howard, Director for Housing and Communities introduced the report, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of the framework for physical activity and some background information as to its purpose, objective, and relevance to the work of the Council and to seek Cabinet endorsement of the framework and a commitment to supporting the delivery of its priorities and principles through continued collaboration.

Mrs. Howard advised that this report was the result of collaborative work across Leicestershire and Rutland. Active Together was a positive and proactive Sprots Partnership, aiming to increase physical activity in communities and find ways to improve physical activity amongst those who may not engage in such activities. The Framework demonstrated continued commitment to support health and wellbeing in the community, as per the Council's Corporate Strategy etc. and showed unity across all councils endorsing the Framework. There were considerable benefits to partnership working and officers were keen to maintain the collaboration and positive work.

Councillor Malise Graham, Portfolio Holder for People and Communities commented that the Framework provided a focus and commitment to shape, design and deliver the Council's services, as aligned with the principles in the Framework. Across the county, districts would consider similar reports and a collective endorsement and strong partnership helped Active Together to drawdown funding from other organisations, such as Public Health and Sports England etc. In 2021, the Council invested £3,708k in Access Together and accessed approximately £55k from Public Health and approximately £29k from Leicestershire County Council (LCC) as a result. The funding from Public health was used to deliver the Council's physical activity and health based action plan to support delivering core public health priorities, as well as Melton priorities. This included £30k for a Physical Activity and Development Officer, £14k to deliver physical activities and health opportunities to children and young people in schools, £1k to support active travel (walking, cycling and running), £5k to deliver the exercise referral programme, £2k support falls prevention classes, £3k toward physical activity and health interventions in the community. The funding from LCC was used £14k was used for a graduate community physical activity health and sports assistance, £10k to support youth engagement activated in delivering physical activity interventions to support children and young people's mental health due to Covid 19 and £5k for LCC's Active Together campaign 'Let's Get Moving'.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- It was noted that the report was comprehensive, detailing organised activities but not activities such as allotment gardening/dog walking etc.

Cabinet

- 1) **APPROVED** and endorses the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Active Together Physical Activity Framework 2022/2031;
- 2) **PROVIDED** a commitment in principle to exploring new ways of working and supporting the delivery of sport and physical activity services.

Reasons for the recommendations:

The 10-year framework encourages greater joint working opportunities with Council services, including, Supporting People, Planning, Environment, Housing etc.

The framework is described as a “call for partners working across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland to join us in thinking differently as we collaborate in using policy and practice to reduce physical inactivity and reduce inequality”. It encourages other public services for the purpose of furthering the ambitions and objectives of the 10 year framework and increasing physical activity levels within local communities.

The framework aligns with the councils continued focus on health, wellbeing and the wider determinants of health. The principles and priorities of the 10-year framework are

compatible and complimentary with current council services, programmes and projects to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Current delivery examples include:

Developing Physical Activity Messaging – Utilising our digital offer to promote the Physical Activity Narrative & Self Help Offer. Acting as a ‘Physical Activity Hub’ to showcase Physical Activity opportunities delivered by organisations, partners, community groups for the benefit of residents in the Melton Borough.

Improving Children & Young People’s Mental & Physical Health – Creating connectivity with partners, schools, other services and the local community to provide opportunities for targeted children and young people to access interventions/programmes delivered locally.

Older People to Live Longer better Lives – Providing various opportunities for targeted/vulnerable residents to prevent falls, weight management programmes and signposting to Physical Activity opportunities to create lasting behaviour change to residents physical and mental health.

The meeting closed at: 4.38 pm

Chair

