

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Tuesday, 5 October 2021
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor P. Cumbers (Chair)

Councillors R. Bindloss (Vice-Chair) P. Chandler
R. Child J. Douglas
C. Evans C. Fisher
M. Steadman

Observers Councillor R. Browne

Officers Chief Executive
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Assistant Director for Housing
Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager
Corporate Services Manager
Leisure, Culture and People Manager
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Services Officer (HA)

Minute No.	Minute
24	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Holmes and Illingworth.</p>
25	<p>MINUTES Subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2021 were approved.</p> <p>Review of the Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22</p> <p>That the following paragraph is deleted from the Minutes:</p> <p><i>Cllr Child advised that, through joint working between the parish council, the local cricket club and the Belvoir countryside, the Great Dalby summer cricket club was such a success that, due to a lack of facilities elsewhere, it would be moving to a larger venue within the village.</i></p> <p>The following paragraph is inserted to replace the deleted paragraph:</p> <p><i>Cllr Child advised that by working together between the local cricket club and the Belvoir cricket and countryside trust, coaching has been provided for primary school children between May and July and this has resulted in a marked increase in numbers over the last few years.</i></p> <p>Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation Update</p> <p>That the following paragraph is deleted from the Minutes:</p> <p><i>The void performance during the pandemic averaged 17.9 days compared to recent turnaround of 4 days. Turnaround had been improved due to properties being advertised and repairs completed whilst the term of notice was still active.</i></p> <p>The following paragraph is inserted to replace the deleted paragraph:</p> <p><i>The year-to-date void performance to the end of August 2021 was 68.89 days. A considerable amount of work has been completed by Officers on the void process. There have been recent void properties turned around in under 10 days, which provides Officers confidence that the process revision and clarity will enhance performance moving forwards.</i></p>
26	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillor Bindloss declared an interest in the Melton Community Lottery Update agenda item, due to his employer receiving funding from the lottery. He confirmed that he would leave the meeting during the consideration of the item.</p>

27	<p>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN</p> <p>The Chair introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members for comments.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed progress on the tenant survey and thought it was important that their views are obtained on the priorities for the Council's landlord services.</p>
28	<p>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22</p> <p>The Chair introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme and invited Members for comments.</p> <p>Councillor Bindloss confirmed that he would have a progress update on youth services at the Scrutiny Committee meeting in November.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that Councillor Pritchett would be co-opted to undertake a scrutiny review into the Community Grants Scheme. It was confirmed that Councillor Pritchett has agreed to the co-option. In addition, the Chair stated that some preliminary work would be carried out before Members decide on whether to formally proceed with the review.</p> <p>Following a discussion over allotments it was recommended that the Committee requests further information on the allotments in Melton Mowbray from the Corporate Assets Manager.</p> <p>A discussion ensued about GP services in the Borough and how residents can access those services. It was noted that a considerable amount of work was being carried out in the area of health and well-being across Leicestershire including access to services. It was agreed that the Chair and the Director for Housing and Communities would compile a list of questions on the topic for health professions to respond to.</p>
29	<p>PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COUNCIL HOMES AND LANDLORD SERVICES ANNUAL PRESENTATION</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services, Councillor Ronan Browne, presented to the Committee and highlighted areas of responsibility within his portfolio.</p> <p>Cllr Browne highlighted the three achievements of the service during the last year, these are: compliance, system development and the new tenancy agreement. It was confirmed that the tenancy agreement would be accompanied by a new handbook. In addition, the challenges facing the service were outlined to the Committee.</p> <p>Members were informed that the service would be carrying out a programme of planned maintenance as well as becoming more responsive when repairs are required. There will also be a new build development programme which aims to provide additional council houses across the Borough. Cllr Browne highlighted the next steps to be taken.</p>

Following a query, regarding the tenancy handbook, it was confirmed that Officers are currently in the process of making the handbook easily accessible on the internet.

In response to a question about the capital budget, Members were informed that the capital budget would not be fully spent this year, as Officers are still awaiting data which informs the decision on how to effectively spend the budget. In addition to this, contractors are struggling to source some materials, meaning that some projects are unable to proceed.

A question regarding the management of complaints was raised. In response, the Committee was informed that the service are effectively managing complaints and that they are low for a social landlord. Officers are working extensively on increasing tenant satisfaction; this included the issuing of a comprehensive tenants survey in order to obtain a baseline satisfaction rate.

Cllr Evans commented that he thought Cllr Browne was currently doing an exceptional job as Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services.

Concern was raised that by outsourcing the stock condition survey then there would not be any in-house knowledge of the stock. The Committee was informed that to carry out the stock condition survey requires a specialist skill, therefore outsourcing the work would mean reliable data would be obtained.

Following a question regarding the timeline of new build development, Members were informed that the Council has two years from 1 April 2021 to spend the right-to-buy receipts. In addition, it was noted that the Council are looking at development in the town centre.

(At 7:14pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Child left the meeting.)

(At 7:17pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Child entered the meeting.)

(At 7:39pm, at the conclusion of this item, Councillor Douglas left the meeting.)

30

MELTON COMMUNITY LOTTERY UPDATE

(At 7:41pm, before the consideration of this item, Councillor Bindloss left the meeting having previously declared an interest in this item.)

The Leisure, Culture and People Manager presented the Melton Community Lottery Update to the Committee.

After the introduction, Members commented that the community lottery has the potential to progress and that it has been well publicised over the last six months.

Following a query over the £25k jackpot, Members were informed that there is a

potential to win a jackpot each week.

A question was raised regarding how the cost of Officer time is calculated and budgeted for however, Members were informed that Officer time is charged at a priority level now following a change in accounting rules.

A Member commented that it was unfortunate about the impact of Covid but it was impressive that the Marketing Assistant could increase the revenue of the Community Lottery.

The statement was made that so long as the Council are not subsidising the community lottery then it should be allowed to continue for now.

In summary, the Chair stated that in light of the financially challenging times ahead for the Council, it is recognised that, whilst the community lottery provides a net benefit, there would be a need to review every non-essential service provided by the Council and assess the value of them.

(At 7:42pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Douglas entered the meeting.)

31

LEICESTERSHIRE WASTE STRATEGY

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager introduced the report and provided a presentation. Through the presentation, Members were informed that there are potential legislative changes with the key implications for Melton being: free weekly food waste collections; free garden waste collections and separate and standardised recycling collections.

The Committee was informed that weekly food waste collections would mean three additional rounds of collections. The current timescale is for implementation in 2023/24.

Members were informed that if the Council had to offer free garden waste collections, not only would there be a loss of £190k to deliver the existing collections, it would also include an additional two rounds of collection. However, it was noted that this is the least likely proposals to be adopted.

If the Government decided to standardise recycling collections nationally, then the Council would encounter difficulties with the current Casepak contract.

In terms of financial implications, the Committee was informed that the weekly food waste collections would involve an implementation cost of £500k plus costs of £450k per annum. The free garden waste collections would involve a loss of £190k plus an additional cost burden of £350k per annum. The recycling collections would involve an implementation cost of £500k plus additional running costs of £200k per annum.

The comment was made that, in light of other local authorities implementing food

waste collections and the likelihood that food waste collections will be mandated by the Environment Bill, the implementation of a trial collection of food waste would be unnecessary. In response, it was stated that Officers had previously considered the introduction of a food waste collection hence why there is budget allocated, however if the proposal is mandated by legislation, then the new burdens funding would initially cover the entire cost of the service.

Following a query on where municipal waste ends up, the Committee was informed that discussions would take place with the waste disposal authority to ensure that there is proper oversight on the end point of municipal waste and to ensure that it is correctly treated and not dumped on another country to deal with.

A comment was made that because some residents have a small amount of food waste then it might be more beneficial to encourage composting. In response, the Members were informed that one of the reasons why a food waste collection service would be introduced is to make residents aware of the amount of waste they are throwing away and therefore reduce that amount over time. Regarding composting, the initiative had previously been trialled but, unfortunately, it was not as successful as anticipated.

The suggestion was made that the Council should discuss with the waste disposal authority the use of anaerobic digesters to manage the disposal of food waste.

Cllr Chandler stated that she believes that Biffa provides a good service to residents.

Following a question over garden waste collections, it was confirmed that if the proposal goes ahead, then the Council would have to provide the service at no charge to the resident. There would be new burdens funding available, however it would be doubtful if the Government would cover the existing cost or loss of revenue.

(At 7:58pm, before the consideration of this item, Councillor Bindloss entered the meeting.)

(At 7:59pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Child left the meeting and did not return.)

(At 8:05pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Evans left the meeting.)

(At 8:09pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Evans entered the meeting.)

32

SCRUTINY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY (PEOPLE) TASK AND FINISH GROUP FINAL REPORT

The Chair introduced the Scrutiny Response and Recovery (People) Task and Finish Group Final Report. It was confirmed that recommendation 5 of the final

report would be amended and include the following paragraph:

In addition, the Council should consider using the Government's Kick Start scheme, to employ a 16-to-24-year-old on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term employment, to help residents develop their digital knowledge (Age UK has a Digital Buddy training video which provides guidance).

RESOLVED

That Scrutiny APPROVED the Final Report of the Scrutiny Response and Recovery (People) Task and Finish Group and recommended that the report is presented to Cabinet for their consideration.

33

URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at: 8.48 pm

Chair