

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Thursday, 21 September 2023
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor M. Brown (Chair)

Councillors A. Thwaites (Vice-Chair) R. Child
H. Cliff M. Gordon
R. Sharp T. Webster

In Attendance Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services – Councillor P. Allnatt
Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, Growth and Prosperity – Councillor S. Butcher
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources – Councillor S. Cox

Officers Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Director for Corporate Services
Director for Growth and Regeneration
Assistant Director for Housing Management
Regulatory Assurance Lead
Housing Asset Manager
Corporate Property and Asset Manager
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer

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9	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Atherton, Evans and Lumley.</p>
10	<p>MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2023 were approved.</p>
11	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillor Gordon declared an other registerable interest in relation to Minute Number 14, preparing for regulatory change (housing) report, as she is a tenant of a Council home.</p> <p>Councillor Sharp declared an other registerable interest in relation to Minute Number 15, the report on cattle market leases, as he is a vendor at the cattle market.</p> <p>Councillor Webster declared an other registerable interest in relation to Minute Number 15, the report on cattle market leases, as he was previously employed at the Cattle Market for 30 years, however Councillor Webster stated that he had left the role four years ago. Councillor Webster also stated that he the Senior Town Warden for the Town Estate, which is an organisation whom own land at the cattle market.</p>
12	<p>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members to comment.</p>
13	<p>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 The Chairman introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 and invited Members to comment upon the document.</p>
14	<p>PREPARING FOR REGULATORY CHANGE (HOUSING) The Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive) introduced the report and the Regulatory Assurance Lead delivered a presentation. The Committee was informed that the regulatory changes will cover all social housing stock.</p> <p>Following the comment that was made stating that rent arrears remain high, Members were reassured that steps are being taken, with further action proposed to ensure a significant and sustainable improvement on rent arrears.</p> <p>A concern was raised regarding the ability of the Council to evict tenants who damage property but are covered by statutory obligations to house them. In response, the Committee were assured that Officers have sufficient tools to resolve</p>

these problems and that eviction can take place, although in certain circumstance it would not be an easy process. It was also noted that tenants do pay between one week and four weeks rent in advance as a deposit, which can be used to offset arrears at the commencement of a new tenancy.

Concerns were raised in the respect that 48 hours' notice for an inspection of regulatory compliance seemed like short notice and wasn't reasonable. In responding Officers advised that it is at the discretion of the inspector, but that they would be preparing for an inspection with limited advanced warning for the Regulator to check the Council's landlord service at any given time and give them the opportunity for a realistic insight into the service provided.

Following a question on whether the revenue and capital budgets would be spent this year, Members were informed that the service is on target to spend both budgets capital and revenue by the end of the year.

The Committee agreed to review the progress on preparing for regulatory change at their meeting in April 2024. The Committee also agreed that this meeting would be hosted in a community location and managed in a way that enables Scrutiny Committee Members to hear directly from tenants.

15

CATTLE MARKET LEASES

The Director for Growth and Regeneration introduced the report on Cattle Market Leases.

During the debate a discussion ensued regarding the total income from leases and the Portfolio Holder and Officers were asked as to what assurances could be given that more investment would provide more income. In response, Members were informed that the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) development does not affect current lease income but will provide additional income streams as new commercial space would be generated. The payments outlined in the report are in respect to active units whereas the income from the development zone (Zone E) is expected but the precise amount is yet to be determined.

It was noted that Zone E is currently used for car parking, however the Committee was informed that Zone E car parking is not part of any current lease arrangement. It was noted that the Council does receive some car park income from the site.

Concern was raised regarding the fact that only 12 of the 21 units within the Principle Leased Area are let and the query was raised as to whether the Council monitors the performance of the tenant who then subsequently sub-lets the units. In response, it was confirmed that the Council, as the landlord of the site, does hold monthly meetings with the tenant and monitors their performance. In addition, Officers confirmed that Zone E is not part of the tenant's lease.

A query was raised regarding the £22k car parking income generated from Scalford Road Car Park. Members were informed that the car park is not used often unless there is an event on.

At 7:50pm, the Committee agreed the following motion.

RESOLVED

The Committee, in accordance with Part 1, Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, AGREED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting then proceeded to private session.

(At 8:40pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Child left the meeting and did not return.)

16

URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at: 8.48 pm

Chair