

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Thursday, 11 February 2021
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	This meeting will be held remotely - details below

Present:

Chair Councillor P. Cumbers (Chair)

Councillors

R. Bindloss (Vice-Chair)	R. Browne
R. Child	J. Douglas
C. Evans	C. Fisher
E. Holmes	J. Wilkinson

Observers

Councillor P. Chandler
Councillor P. Posnett MBE

Officers

Director for Housing and Communities
Director for Growth and Regeneration
People Manager
Case Management Lead
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (HA)

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89	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Smith.</p>
90	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021 were approved and authorised to be signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Cllr Holmes abstained from the vote as she had not been in attendance for this meeting.</p> <p>Cabinet had asked the Chair to thank the Committee for the feedback provided on the budget papers.</p>
91	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
92	<p>REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN 2020-21 AND THE ANNUAL FORWARD PLAN</p> <p>Councillor Cumbers introduced the Scrutiny Workplan and the Cabinet Forward Plan, highlighting.</p> <p>The review date for the Melton BID had been put back as the date for the ballot had been deferred.</p> <p>During the discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Director for Housing and Communities, Mr Cotton, assured Members that though the general housing application list is currently on hold, homeless applications are still being taken on a day to day basis and he would make sure that the website would be updated to clarify this. He would provide Members with an update on housing and the housing application system. ➤ Cllr Evans had requested for an item to be added to the Scrutiny workplan in relation to a recent decision by Cabinet regarding the sale of a piece of land at Lake Terrace and an allegation made by Leicestershire County Council Cabinet over best value that could have been achieved for the sale of the land. ➤ The request put forward by Cllr Evans was as follows: <p style="padding-left: 40px;">That a Task and Finish Group be established to examine the claim made by Leicestershire County Council:</p>

1. That Melton Borough Council never informed them that a potential requirement for Leicestershire County Council to sell a piece of land for a potential development to take place.
2. That Melton Borough Council, via the Chief Executive and officers, misled members as to the value of said ransom strip, thus breaking the rule on the best value for a sale.

Cllr Cumbers thanked Cllr Evans for providing this request, but highlighted that there was currently not enough information or evidence to make a decision regarding addition to the work plan. She advised the committee that she and Cllr Bindloss would be meeting as a matter of urgency to investigate the request. Further detailed information would be gathered regarding land registry; land searches; planning applications; evidence of ownership; previous discussions with highways, LCC and developers and any relevant communication relating to this item.

The committee was in full agreement that this was a serious allegation and warranted further investigation. Cllr Cumbers provided assurance that she and Cllr Bindloss would give this matter careful consideration and they would update members as soon as possible.

RESOLVED

The Committee **NOTED** the Annual Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Plan.

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COMMUNITY SUPPORT HUB

The Director for Housing and Communities, Mr Cotton, gave a brief summary of the presentation, the purpose of which was to highlight the Community Support Hub Development and to update Members on the progress made to date, he then handed over to the Leisure Culture and People Manager, Mrs Rahman and the Case Management Lead, Ms Swift.

During the presentation the following points were highlighted:

- Mrs Rahman advised that it had been a challenge to capture all the elements required for the running of the Hub as so much had to be considered and interlinked.
- With the lack of detailed national or county guidance during the early implementation stages, the skills and diversity of roles that would be needed by staff seconded to the Hub had to be considered; coaching had been put in place immediately to ensure the right people had the right skills to get support out to the public as soon as possible e.g. homelessness, addiction, ASB, mental health.
- Staff welfare was a high priority. We were responding to a pandemic in a way we had never done before, dealing with so many unknowns; staff were used to working in face to face engagement roles and suddenly had to change how they delivered, whilst dealing with their own anxieties and concerns.

- The Communications department were very proactive in getting information out to the public. We worked well with our core partners in delivering consistent messages, monitoring and addressing unregulated false information being published on Facebook and other social groups. .
- Ms Swift advised that the Venue at Phoenix House had been sourced for sorting the food parcels as there was a kitchen and adequate space for the storage of food. Storehouse provided many of the parcels, Partners, groups and volunteers assisted in the delivery of food parcels as did the Melton Learning Hub, the delivery is now with the Storehouse as numbers have reduced.
- The Hub supported community groups with funding information on grants and how to apply for them.
- Recently, we have engaged with new groups such as 'Unlock Your You' to ensure we address and reassure ourselves of the governance behind the groups, and where appropriate, help them to develop and grow. Recently, Unlock Your You received funding through the CCG to deliver mental health specific services.
- Toys for Christmas had proved such a success that this would be continued again this year, The toys that had been collected, cleaned and wrapped up by the Team, provided up to 50 children across the borough with a Christmas present, something which some of them had never received before.

Members thanked Mrs Rahman and Ms Swift for their presentation and passed praise on the work that had been achieved, the support and understanding of the needs of people and the success they had working with agencies and partners

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HOUSING STRATEGY

The Director for Growth and Regeneration, Ms Parikh presented a report the purpose of which to seek the views of the Committee in respect of the strategic approach to managing the housing need, supply and delivery of housing in Melton prior to finalising the Housing Strategy Document for public consultation.

Ms Parikh offered apologies of absence from Cllr Higgins, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity and from the Growth and Regeneration Manager, Nicola Butcher the report writer.

During the discussion the following points were noted

- Ms Parikh stressed that this is a draft report and any comments that are received from tonight's meeting would be discussed with the Portfolio Holder and accommodated in the final draft which would then go out to public consultation.
- The Climate Emergency Group would be discussing electric car charging points. The Design SPD which is being consulted on, could include measures to encourage developers to provide such provisions on new build developments.

During the discussion, Members offered the following suggestions:

- New developments for social housing to be closer to the town centre or in larger villages as those living in the smaller villages on low incomes may struggle financially to pay for heating in the winter and fuel to get into the town for work and shopping.
- Consideration given to the building of more 1 and 2 bedroom properties in the town centre.
- Consideration given to ensure that good quality materials and workmanship would go in to the new build properties/developments to avoid residents having to call out plumbers and electricians a few weeks after moving in.
- To consider the growing ageing population and to assist people to move into smaller dwellings adapted to medical//mobility needs to help reduce the number of under occupied properties.
- To consider assisting with adapting properties to help keep people in a safer home for longer.
- To provide advice and signposting to home owners, those in social housing and those on low income, regarding the fitting of cavity wall insulation and loft insulation for an energy efficient dwelling.
- A need for increased outside space for people to exercise in and enjoy.
- Consideration to costs as more people are now working from home using bedrooms as workplaces which in turn increases overhead costs for heating, food etc.

RESOLVED

1. The Committee **NOTED** the Draft Housing Strategy
2. The Committee provided comments and a steer on the priorities and proposed actions.

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URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business for discussion.

The meeting closed at: 8.25 pm

Chair

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