

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Thursday, 2 September 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
J. Illingworth	E. Holmes
M. Steadman	

In attendance Councillor L. Higgins

Officers

- Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
- Director for Growth and Regeneration
- Assistant Director for Housing
- Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
- Democratic Services Officer (HA)

Minute No.	Minute
16	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies received for this meeting.</p>
17	<p>MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021 were approved.</p>
18	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST No declarations of interest were received.</p>
19	<p>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN The Chair introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members for comments.</p> <p>The Chair raised concerns about the cost of Lifeline to the taxpayer and offered to do some research into the service that Age UK offer in terms of cost and service.</p>
20	<p>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22 The Chair introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme and invited members for comments.</p> <p>The Chair introduced Cllr Bindloss who informed the Committee he had been investigating the lack of youth services throughout the Borough and wished to provide an update to his findings, which are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a lack of supportive infrastructure, guidance and positive challenges a number of villages in the Borough have ongoing nuisance issues and Members would need to consider why this is and consider what the consequences would be if nothing was to be done. • When new developments are built there is little or no regard for the provision for youth services making villages less attractive for families to wish to live in. • Leicestershire County Council have now withdrawn funding for youth services forcing parish councils to look at raising funds to keep the clubs running and for paying towards the rent of properties too. The local County Councillor, Mark Frisby, had suggested setting up a charitable trust to pay for youth leaders. • It would be difficult to allow parents or voluntary organisations to be involved in the running of clubs as there would be the issue of child protection and enhanced DBS checks. • Cllr Bindloss and Cllr Chandler are considering how to form a directory of

youth provision within the individual villages and wards and would collate this information by contacting the organisations and parishes to establish where their satellites are across the borough.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- 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.
- Cllr Steadman advised that Long Clawson, Hose and Harby as a cluster of villages share leisure facilities such as tennis and football.
- Cllr Holmes suggested that developments should be built in or near areas where there are already established youth and sports clubs to encourage more children to get involved.
- Cllr Bindloss would continue with his investigations following comments from the Committee and consider if the Scrutiny Committee would like to be involved and set up a Task and Finish Group.

The Chair introduced Cllr John Illingworth informing the committee he had decided to compare car parking charges in Melton Mowbray with other local towns:

- Cllr Illingworth advised members he had decided to take a look at the car parking charges in Melton Mowbray to get an understanding of how Melton compared to other towns in the area in regard to short term parking, long term parking, permit and on street parking.
- He hoped to have this information collated by November 2021 and would discuss the findings with the Portfolio for Growth and Prosperity, Cllr Higgins and whether there would be the need to include the item on the Scrutiny Work Programme for further investigation.
- The Chair asked members to contact Cllr Illingworth with any ideas they would like him to consider in his investigations.

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**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY (DEPUTY LEADER)
ANNUAL PRESENTATION**

The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity (Deputy Leader), Cllr Leigh Higgins, joined the meeting remotely and introduced the presentation to the Committee, highlighting areas of responsibility within his portfolio.

****At 8.00pm, Cllr Child left the meeting and did not return.****

During the presentation the following comments were noted:

- Members praised the officers involved for the speed of the covid grant pay-outs to local businesses.
- A member raised concerns about the lack of information for the north of the borough on the Discover Melton website, the Director for Growth and Regeneration advised that businesses and tourist spots in the north were included and would provide members with the full directory following the meeting.
- Members were reminded that any business can be included on the Discover Melton website provided they had given permission to the Council to do so.
- It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have representation from Bottesford on the Place Board to help promote that part of the Borough.
- Cllr Higgins advised that the Council was currently working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to bring about a secondary health provision in Melton Mowbray.
- Cllr Higgins advised that the decision to relocate the Christmas tree pit last year was taken due to health and safety issues as the current location was too unstable and the Leader wished for a tree to be in place, he advised that had also been a lack of tenders for the work.

****At 8.30pm, Cllr Illingworth left the meeting and did not return.****

The Chair thanked Cllr Higgins and the Director for Growth and Prosperity for the presentation and asked to pass her thanks to the teams who had continued working throughout the pandemic helping to save a lot of businesses.

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HOUSING VOIDS MANAGEMENT AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

The Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive), Michelle Howard and the Assistant Director for Housing, Craig Spence, introduced a report updating Members on the actions taken since Cabinet accepted the Committee's recommendations on housing voids management and temporary accommodation on 22 January 2020.

****At 8.38pm, Cllr Holmes left the meeting and did not return.****

During the presentation the following comments were noted:

- The Director for Housing and Communities advised Members that a review of the allocations policy had been triggered as the currently policy is not up to date and the current IT systems are not fit for purpose. The review would be completed within the next three months with a formal consultation taking place in which Scrutiny would be invited to be part of the process. It is hoped the new policy and system will go live by March 2022.

- The Director for Housing and Communities advised Members that by the housing assets, housing options and tenancy services teams working together they had prevented people from losing their homes and avoid the homeless process. For those that did come through the homeless process the properties would be allocated in the correct and sustainable way, which is how the Council have been able to balance their responsibilities around the Afghan scheme alongside the housing register.
- The Assistant Director for Housing advised members of annual returns via the Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) that allows the Council to benchmark its performance against other social housing landlords locally. In addition, it would be beneficial for the council to look at joining Housemark which benchmarks against other landlords throughout the UK, though there would a cost to this and a consideration would be the need to take into account the resources to undertake the work.
- 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.
- Melton has a current of stock of 1800 properties of which a large number are the Intensive Housing Management Support (IHMS) properties. Due to the high demand of the housing register it may be necessary to release some of these IHMS properties to general needs.
- The average time on the waiting list for those in the current priority banding is 18 months to 2 years which is in line with other authorities nationally.
- There are currently 32 void properties, which is the lowest since March 2021 with 16 properties to be handed back in the next 7-10 days.

The Chair thanked the Director for Housing and Communities and the Assistant Director for Housing for their presentation and asked to pass on her thanks to the teams and contractors who had worked throughout the pandemic.

RESOLVED

1. Scrutiny NOTED the progress and ongoing work across the Housing Communities directorate to satisfy the recommendations made.

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URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss at the meeting.

The meeting closed at: 9.00 pm

