

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Wednesday, 12 October 2022
Start time	4.30 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

In Attendance Councillor Robert Child

Officers Chief Executive
Director for Corporate Services
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Director for Growth and Regeneration
Deputy Monitoring Officer
Regeneration Manager
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Services Officer (HA)

Minute No.	Minute
23	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies for absence.</p>
24	<p>MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 were confirmed.</p>
25	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillor Orson declared an interest in any items relating to Leicestershire County Council, due to his role as a County Councillor.</p>
26	<p>MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultancy and Agency Use <p>In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this item had been referred from Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Robert Child, introduced the report to the Committee, the purpose of which was to advise Cabinet that the Scrutiny Committee had considered a report on 25 July 2022, regarding consultancy and agency use, providing a comprehensive overview of the Council's approach to resource management including recruitment, retentions, vacancy management and the use of consultancy and agency spend in support of the Council's corporate objectives.</p> <p>Councillor Child highlighted comments from the Scrutiny Committee, including queries and concerns raised and answered during the Committee meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Child added that vacancy costs over the 3 years averaged at approximately £450k and the professional consultancy spend was a similar figure so on average the Council had spent approximately £900k over the last 3 years.</p> <p>The Leader, Councillor Joe Orson, thanked Scrutiny Committee for their hard work and diligence on preparing the reports and thanked the Chief Executive and officers who provided the information to the Scrutiny committee.</p> <p>Councillor Orson highlighted whether the council needed additional inhouse capacity as opposed to consultants. He advised that as Melton Borough Council is the 4th smallest council in the country and that the Council's spending power is 42% smaller than it was in 2010, this does make it difficult to employ experts on a full-time contract and that consultants will continue to be used. However, as there is strength building up in the team this would go towards reducing costs in the future.</p> <p>Cabinet AGREED to have regard to Scrutiny Committee's feedback.</p>

- Crime and Disorder Annual update.

In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this item had been referred from Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Robert Child, introduced the report to the Committee the purpose of which was to advise Cabinet that the Scrutiny Committee had considered a report presented to them on 27 September 2022, on Crime and Disorder which provided an update on a range of thematic areas including: Partnership Working and Collaboration; CCTV; Engaging with communities and young people; Antisocial behaviour management in housing services and Domestic Abuse.

Cllr Child highlighted comments from the Scrutiny Committee, including queries and concerns raised and answered during the Committee meeting.

Councillor Child advised that Scrutiny are due to hold a Crime and Disorder Workshop on Thursday 20 October 2022, which is being attended by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Malise Graham, thanked Councillor Child for the positive meeting held on 27 September 2022 and highlighted the importance of reporting any form of antisocial behaviour as the police can only act on reported incidents. It was noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner had stated that by knowing about anti-social behaviour the Police can get the appropriate funding to deal with it.

The Leader thanked Councillor Child and the Scrutiny committee for their work and advised he is looking forward to feedback from the Scrutiny workshop with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Cabinet AGREED to have regard to Scrutiny Committee's feedback

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ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN LETTER, HOUSING OMBUDSMAN & CORPORATE COMPLAINTS 2021/22

The Deputy Monitoring Officer, Natasha Taylor, introduced the report, the purpose of which was to inform Cabinet of the contents of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) annual letter and to provide a summary of the ombudsman complaints and corporate complaints received by Melton Borough Council for the year ended 31 January 2022.

The Leader, Councillor Joe Orson, thanked Mrs Taylor, highlighting the LGCSO annual letter and a summary of the complaints received for the period 1 April 21 to 31 March 22, including Corporate complaints.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Communities Councillor Malise Graham commented that it was disappointing that two out of three complaints were upheld, and it would be nice to be zero, but the low number of complaints was acknowledged.

Cabinet:

- (1) **NOTED** the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter 2021/22.
- (2) **NOTED** the contents of the report in respect of LGSCO findings, Housing Ombudsman findings and complaints statistics for 2021-22

Reasons for Recommendations:

It is a constitutional requirement for Cabinet to have strategic oversight of complaints data to support Priority 1 – Excellent services positively impacting on our communities and Priority 5 – Ensuring the right conditions to support delivery.

Receipt of regular complaints data also demonstrates good governance in line with the Governance Framework.

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RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Director for Corporate Services, Mrs Dawn Garton, introduced the report, the purpose of which was to provide members with an update on the Risk Management arrangements, outlining the current significant risks that had been captured on the recent review of the Council's Strategic Risk Register by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Mrs Garton confirmed that this is the first six-monthly review for this year and the report would be presented to the Audit and Standards Committee in November 2022 also showing the outcome of the review that had been done with the Chair of Audit and Standards into the policy and strategy which was three years old and due for a refresh.

The Leader, Councillor Joe Orson, thanked Mrs Garton and her team for the report and commented that he was pleased to note that the internal review undertaken in the last year on risk management provided good assurance on the risk management arrangements and with Councillor Don Pritchett as the Chair, there had been a lot of activity around risk management and the Leader added that he was grateful for Councillor Pritchett's diligence in this area.

The Leader pointed out that risk management is not just the responsibility of the Audit and Standards Committee, and this report is essential in enabling the Cabinet to keep up to date with the risk profile and effectiveness of risk management actions. The risk to the Council's future financial sustainability remained a top risk

and we now see the cost-of-living risk to communities and businesses added in as a high risk. With the risk of future leisure provision also being dependant on funding availability, as well as the success of the HRA business plan and finances remain key strategic risks to the Council.

The Leader commented on how well the Council managed the pandemic demonstrating the ability to rise to a challenge and as such the risk in this area is reducing and hopefully would be removed shortly from the strategic register. The Leader spoke of the risk to the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) and advised that it is a risk to Leicestershire County Council primarily and that he believed there was a continued focus to deliver the northern and eastern section of the MMDR.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services, Councillor Ronan Browne enquired if there could be further discussions with the portfolio holders in relation to risk management so as to increase member engagement and oversight.

Mrs Garton agreed that this would be a good idea and was confident the Chair of Audit and Standards would agree. Mrs Garton also confirmed the portfolio holders would benefit by being kept up to date on what is on the service risk register too. Mrs Garton will discuss with SLT and report back.

Cabinet:

(1) **NOTED** the contents of the Report and the updated Strategic Risk Register and the associated Risk Management Action Plan.

Reasons for Recommendation:

Whilst Risk Management form part of the Audit and Standards terms of reference, it is important that Cabinet have oversight and awareness of the strategic risks that could impact on the Council and to review the risk management arrangements in place and the activities that are being undertaken to mitigate those risks.

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OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Chief Executive, Mr Edd de Coverly, introduced the report, the purpose of which provided Cabinet with details of a recent review undertaken by Harborough District Council (HDC) and the subsequent invitation from them to explore the potential for establishing a strategic partnership with Melton Borough Council (MBC). The report is also seeking to confirm MBC's interest in exploring this opportunity further and its commitment to develop a full business case with a view to this being considered further by both Councils in December 2022.

Mr de Coverly advised members that for the business case to be developed it will need to provide a robust and comprehensive assessment of potential opportunities benefits and risks across a range of factors including the potential to work jointly on shared priorities, skills and capacity and improving organisational resilience. The

business case will also include wide engagement across both organisation and stakeholders.

The Leader, Councillor Joe Orson, thanked Mr de Coverly for the report. The Leader emphasised to the Cabinet that this proposal is not a merger nor represents a loss of sovereignty or identity. The Leader highlighted that as MBC and HDC share a number of common characteristics, these could be worked on jointly together in reducing duplication and helping us to do more and improve our impact. The business case will allow MBC to explore whether by collaboration with a trusted partner in certain areas we can better deliver for our residents.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- There would need to be an element of trust and openness from both parties for this proposal to work.
- The business case will clarify the extent of the potential opportunities that could be realised
- The Council would remain open and have regular discussions with staff as to ensure that any partnership is ultimately positive.
- There would be the potential for stronger financial stability due to the pressures on local authorities so we can deliver better services.

Members agreed that developing a business case to fully understand the opportunity with HDC would be welcome. It was also noted that the opportunity to work together to reduce duplication, share learning, and share capacity, as well as increase resilience and learn from good practice was compelling and should be explored further through the business case.

The Leader advised that there will be a meeting taking place at Harborough on Thursday 13 October 2022 which himself, Councillor Graham and Mr de Coverly are attending and can provide further information following this.

Cabinet:

- (1) **NOTED** that through a strategic partnership review, Harborough District Council had identified Melton Borough Council as a preferred strategic partner and had formally approached the Council to explore this further.
- (2) **ACKNOWLEDGED** the outcome of the review carried out by Harborough District Council and **AUTHORISED** working with them to develop a full business case and approach to operating such a partnership to be considered by Council in December 2022.

Reasons for Recommendations:

To enable the preparation of a comprehensive business case which will formally set out the benefits, opportunities and risks of a strategic partnership, enabling the Council to make an informed decision about the considerations and implications on

the Council and the community. The business case will enable the Council to respond meaningfully to the invitation form Harborough District Council.

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RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND

The Regeneration Manager, Lee Byrne, introduced the report, the purpose of which is to provide Members with an overview of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), update on the progress made in developing a bid and to seek approval to further explore opportunities around the pooling of resources and submission of the bid.

The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity, Councillor Rob Bindloss, confirmed that the fund sets out to support rural businesses such as farm diversification and the empowerment and cohesion of rural communities. This includes digital infrastructure, supporting village halls, pubs, post offices which are the hubs of small communities. Councillor Bindloss advised that to achieve a strong bid and a successful application we would work closely with our communities, stakeholders and partners and those living in the communities to address the needs of the Borough.

The Leader, Councillor Joe Orson, thanked Councillor Bindloss and Mr Byrne for the report and also thanked the local MP Mrs Alicia Kearns who had been instrumental in Melton Borough Council getting this funding.

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Malise Graham, requested that the Country Land and Business Association be included on the list of stakeholders, and he would share the contact details with Mr Byrne after the meeting. Councillor Graham also declared himself a Member of the Country Land and Business Association.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access, and Engagement, Councillor Alison Freer raised concerns about the resources required for taking the fund to the communities, and that the staff involved would need assurances that they would be supported with further resources. Councillor Bindloss commented that the mechanisms and experience gained from the UKSPF bid would be considered.

Cabinet:

- (1) **APPROVED** the continuation of work to develop an evidence-based submission including a Rural Capital Grants Scheme to draw down £400k funding allocated to Melton Borough Council via the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).
- (2) **DELEGATED** authority be given to the Director for Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity, to finalise and submit the final REPF submission as an addendum to the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and application and arrange appropriate administrative arrangements for delivery of the fund.

Reasons for Recommendations:

The management and delivery of the REPF scheme will support the Council to deliver on its Corporate Priorities and in particular:

- a) Priority 1: Excellent services positively impacting on our communities*
- b) Priority 3: Delivering sustainable and inclusive growth in Melton*
- c) Priority 4: Protect our climate and enhance our rural, natural environment*
- d) Priority 6: Connected with and led by our community.*

It would provide a direct boost towards the local economy and communities through providing capital grants to business and eligible community groups where certain conditions are met.

To enhance the reach and impact of the aspirations set out within the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.

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HOUSING MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive) Michelle Howard introduced the report the purpose of which was to present three Housing Management Policies for Cabinet approval.

Mrs Howard informed Cabinet that by having clear and robust policies in place, this would support the Council to deliver high quality council homes and landlord services by demonstrating compliance for both clients and staff. Mrs Howard advised the policies will be uploaded to the website to there will be a library of policies which customers can access regularly and demonstrate to the Regulator that the Council is being transparent with the work that we have got in place. Members were advised that there were more policies under review.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services, Councillor Ronan Browne, thanked Mrs Howard and her team for bringing the documents forward for review and for having a processes and structures in place to allow for documents to be readily available. Councillor Browne advised there had recently been a workshop around the Asset Management Improvements on the Northgate Housing System and advised that these policies link into that and that officers have a clear system on what they are doing.

The Leader thanked Mrs Howard, Doug Stother and Alison Bennett for the report.

Cabinet:

(1) **APPROVED** the following Housing Management Policies:

- (i) Tenancy Management Policy
- (ii) Mutual Exchange Policy
- (iii) Decent Policy.

Reasons for Recommendations:

The Council is committed to delivering excellent homes and landlord services and is resolute in its commitment to being an effective and responsible landlord.

Having clear and robust policies, procedures and operating arrangements will support the Council to deliver high quality council homes and landlord services and to demonstrate compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. It will also provide clarity to staff and to tenants and will provide assurance that the associated housing management processes and procedures are transparent, robust, effective and can assist in the management of expectations and resolutions of complaints.

The meeting closed at: 5.22 pm

Chair