

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Tuesday, 14 March 2023
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor R. Child (Chair)

Councillors J. Wilkinson (Vice-Chair) S. Atherton
S. Carter P. Chandler
C. Evans S. Lumley
P. Posnett MBE T. Webster

In Attendance Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services – Councillor R. Browne

Officers Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Strategic Lead – Supporting Communities
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer

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60	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE No apologies for absence were received. Councillor Holmes was absent.</p>
61	<p>MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2023 were approved.</p>
62	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST An interest in respect to Councillor Posnett was noted as being on record for any matter which related to Leicestershire County Council.</p>
63	<p>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members to comment.</p>
64	<p>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23 The Chairman introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23 and invited Members to comment upon the document.</p>
65	<p>HOMELESSNESS The Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive), Michelle Howard, introduced the report on homelessness. The Committee then received a presentation from the Strategic Lead for Supporting Communities, Rachel Chubb.</p> <p>A Member mentioned that in their experience of encountering residents who are homeless or facing homelessness, the feedback they have given regarding the response from the Council has been positive. In the opinion of the Member, the actions taken were above and beyond what was expected. The Member thanked the team and stated that the work they do is appreciated.</p> <p>Following a discussion regarding the residents in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfasts, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services stated that getting people out of temporary accommodation and into permanent accommodation remains a top priority. However he reminded Members that it isn't always as simple as providing accommodation and that some may need extra support such as the support that can be provided in supported housing. The lack of supported accommodation within the Borough was highlighted as a risk.</p> <p>The comment was made by a Member that the Council is doing an exceptional job in regards to homelessness, however the Member felt that the Council could get a better idea of what the level of need is through more engagement with food bank providers.</p> <p>Following a query on whether the banding review (new allocations policy) has had an impact on homelessness, Members were informed that the new policy was</p>

implemented over a year ago and that there have been few complaints as a result of the review. Officers explained that they were confident that the review had not impacted on homelessness rates and applicants impacted by the review had been encouraged to discuss their circumstances with the housing options team. Officers committed to providing some further information to the committee on how many people were negatively impacted by the new policy/banding changes.

In response to a query on how long the Council it will take to get someone in a B&B or hotel into long term accommodation, Members were informed that the Council has a duty to move people in temporary accommodation into affordable permanent accommodation and that this will take as long as required. If the Council believes someone is a priority need, then temporary accommodation will be provided for until suitable accommodation is found.

Following a query, it was clarified that Armed Forces veterans are treated as a priority need.

Concerned was raised regarding out of area people being housed within the Borough. It was explained that the people would be isolated from friends and family and would not have the basics or access to services. Officers confirmed that they would always look at suitable properties in suitable locations relevant to each case and that availability of accommodation was a key consideration. It was also explained that in supporting homeless applicants into accommodation, referrals to charities and appropriate funds are made to help provide some household items. Officers confirmed that in temporary accommodation, the basics are provided.

Following on from this a discussion ensued regarding affordable housing to meet local need. It was recognised that the Borough, but in particular Melton Mowbray, requires more social housing and affordable rent properties to meet local need.

The comment was made that there have been some issues with private rented accommodation and that can't be brought up to standard due to new guidelines around energy efficiency. In response, the Committee were informed that the Council are aware of the risk in this area. Officers advised that it hoped to increase engagement with landlords through a landlord forum.

It was recognised that there have been some issues with private rented accommodation and that it has not been up to standard, however the Council were praised for the work it has done with the landlords in order to improve the standard of the accommodation.

A Member stated that they have received complaints regarding why some people seeking assistance do not receive a call back. Members were reassured that all people seeking assistance are registered with a duty officer and their case is processed in the appropriate manner.

Following a query regarding residents wanting to be added to the Council house waiting list, it was explained that in order to facilitate those requests, the team have

been split and so the requests are processed by Officers dedicated to that task.

A Member stated that they do not think it is helpful to house a person in a property where everything has been stripped out, however in response it was noted that this is usually done for health and safety reasons.

Members noted that in 2021/22 only 21% of cases have had successful homelessness prevention resolutions. It was explained that this meant that the case has been resolved with an outcome that meant the person did not lose their home. Service improvements have improved performance and as a result, in 2022/23 64% of cases ended in a successful homelessness prevention resolution.

At 7:21pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Evans left the meeting and did not return.

66	URGENT BUSINESS There was no urgent business.
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The meeting closed at: 7.31 pm

Chair