

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Wednesday, 21 June 2023
Start time	4.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor P. Allnatt (Chair)

Councillors S. Butcher S. Cox
P. Cumbers

Observers

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

Minute No.	Minute
1	<p>Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from Councillor Glancy.</p>
2	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March were confirmed and authorised by the Chief Executive to be signed by the chair.</p>
3	<p>Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p>
4	<p>Matters referred from Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rules In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this item had been referred from the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny Feedback on Homelessness <p>The Scrutiny Officer introduced the report advising members that the Scrutiny Committee met on 14 March 2023 and considered a report on the work undertaken by the Council to prevent and relieve homelessness and to assist households who have experienced homelessness.</p> <p>The Director for Housing and Communities advised members that she would circulate the report which Scrutiny had considered alongwith the presentation made at the meeting on 14 March 2023, which would provide more information regarding numbers of families affected, and she would ask the team to include the age breakdown.</p> <p>The Director for Housing and Communities advised that there is a Care Leavers protocol being developed across Leicestershire and the team was actively working on this and that this would be brought forward to members for consideration at a later stage. It would explain the steps that we go through as a local authority and the steps that County have to go through due to their social care role. It is important to try to keep young people at home, where safe to do so, though there are other options, for example supported housing, which Cabinet will be sighted on in due course.</p> <p>The Director for Housing and Communities advised members and that there is a new Homeless Strategy being developed for Melton that would include specific details based on evidence of needs, and if there was a challenge on young people and homelessness then that would be a focus in there.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods thanked the Director for Housing and Communities for the detailed report.</p>

Cabinet **AGREED** to have regard for Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

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

- Scrutiny Feedback on Progress Update on Income Collection and Debt Management.

The Scrutiny Officer introduced the report advising Members that the Scrutiny Committee had met on 18 April 2023 to consider a report on the management of debt owed to the Council.

The Director for Housing and Communities highlighted to Members that the Council had developed resources as a Team to support tenants in sustaining their tenancies and are looking at further developing that resource to further develop the income management. The Director for Housing and Communities advised that any information disclosed to Members, would be considered on a case by case basis and only with the consent of the tenants.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities confirmed that Universal Credit is paid directly to the tenant which includes an element towards the rent with the responsibility sitting with the tenant to pass that payment to the Council. Officers work closely with the tenant and do encourage them to set up a regular direct debit.

The Director for Housing and Communities advised that through the corporate performance monitoring, reports can be raised regarding rent collection and income management. The hardship fund that is being introduced would be tracked for demand and take up. There would periodic updates on the cost of living in general and the support that is in place for our communities. Any trends in specific that we see in our own tenants can then be included.

Cabinet **AGREED** to have regard for Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

5

Complaints Update Report: Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, Housing Ombudsman & Corporate Complaints 22/23

The Director for Corporate Services introduced the report the purpose of which updated Members to the Ombudsman Complaints and Corporate Complaints for April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The Director for Corporate Services highlighted to members that there were two cases detailed in the report that were referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and both cases were closed after initial enquiries.

One case was referred to the Housing Ombudsman which was partially upheld, and compensation was paid as a result.

Other complaints dealt with directly by the council were detailed in the report and regular information is provided to Members as part of the regular Performance Management Monitoring which is also published to the website.

The Director for Corporate Services confirmed to Members that not all enquires made to the Council are clear so should they read as a complaint then they are logged and dealt with accordingly.

Cabinet **NOTED** the contents of the report.

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.

6

Leicester and Leicestershire Business Rates Pool

The Director for Corporate Services introduced the report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the latest position regarding the Leicester and Leicestershire Business Rates Pool and the funding allocated to the Council for 2020 to 2023/24.

The Director for Corporate Services highlighted to members that the distribution of the funding to each member of the pool has been agreed as a three-way split between the County, City and Districts and then a hybrid model of distribution across the districts.

The final figures for distribution would be dependent on the final position post audit for each of the members of the pool. It is hoped that provisional amounts can start to be distributed, at least for the earlier financial years, in the coming weeks.

The funding would need to be used for economic priorities and due to prior years spending in this area, would be likely to exceed this amount. The funding, when received, would be allocated to the Corporate Priorities Reserve for future consideration for spend as part of the budget process.

Discussions are ongoing regarding future years' allocations and, therefore, delegation is requested to enable this to be finalised by officers and the leader.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources thanked the Director for Corporate Finance for the report and the work that had been done. It showed a good example of how the partnership will strengthen the new Corporate strategies going forward and how important it is to work with partners for continuance of the pooling. The Portfolio Holder encouraged the officers to continue the good work they have done in this area.

The Leader thanked the Director for Corporate Services for an excellent report.

Cabinet:

1. **NOTED** the allocation of funding for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 which, after allowing for interest paid, would be allocated to the Corporate Priorities Reserve.
2. **AGREED** that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Leader of the Council, to exercise the Council's vote in reaching agreement for the allocation of funding for 2024/25 and future years.
3. **AGREED** that authority be delegated to the Director for Corporate Services, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council, to make any future amendments to the pooling agreement.

Reasons for Recommendations:

To ensure there is transparency regarding the funding received by the council through the distribution of the Business Rates Pool.

To enable sufficient flexibility to vary the Business Rates Pooling Agreement going forward by delegating this to an officer in consultation with the Lead member.

7

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement, Annual Report

The Director for Housing and Communities introduced the report the purpose of which provided Members with an update on engagement activity, outcomes and associated improvements and service changes over the last 12 months providing assurance that meets its regulatory requirements and corporate commitments to providing high quality council homes and landlord services.

The Director for Housing and Communities drew Members' attention to section 4.2 of the report which showed an overview of actions committed to 12 months ago and the progress to date.

The Director for Housing and Communities also drew Members' attention to section 4.4 of the report which highlighted some notable achievements and improvements which showed the maturity of the Council.

The Director for Housing and Communities highlighted other areas of the report for members:

- Signed up to Housemark benchmarking services – providing comprehensive and cost performance comparative information.
- New website for tenants being developed – to enable tenants and leaseholders to access relevant information more easily.
- The new Housing Asset Consultation Toolkit – allows tenants a choice (where possible and appropriate) on future options for outbuildings/ sheds and on kitchen cupboards etc as part of a kitchen upgrade programme.
- Annual reporting to tenants incorporating information around the performance of Melton Borough Council as a landlord and key information about the services provided to customers.

The Leader expressed thanks to Councillor Ronan Browne, the recent Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services, for the excellent work done with the housing department on the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Annual Report.

The Director for Housing and Communities advised members that the results for the Annual Survey of Tenant Satisfaction, due to be sent out later this youe, would be shared with all members, tenants, and the Regulator.

The Director for Housing and Communities advised members that there was an officer leading on the regulatory diagnostic assurances and there were a number of networks we are keyed into, especially the Chief Housing Officer groups where all of the housing officers from across the district meet that come together to share good working practices. There is also a relatively new mechanism nationally, around peer review in Housing done the Local Government Association which we can feed into and would appreciate Cabinet feedback on this.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities confirmed to members that contact details for tenants are regularly checked and updated for online access and have a distribution list of 300 online tenants. Though tenants are encouraged to go online, paper copies are always available of all information and can be sent out when requested. Assistance is also available for those who have difficulty accessing online services due to connectivity issues or lack of understanding.

The Director for Housing and Communities confirmed that a 6 monthly newsletter is printed and sent by post to reach all tenants. This is shared with members who are asked to share this with residents who are tenants and to report back any gaps that need attention.

The Tenancy and Services Manager advised members that walkabouts are being arranged within the community giving the opportunity for officers and members to engage with customers and discuss various issues including connectivity and to gather information on what support is needed, from this information can be passed to account managers or the tenant can be signposted to other agencies.

Cabinet **NOTED** the progress to date and endorsed the approach taken to engage with Melton Borough Council tenants and leaseholders.

Reasons for Recommendations:

To provide assurance to Cabinet that the Council takes engagement with tenants and leaseholders seriously and puts recommendations into practice, and in doing so, that the Council can met its regulatory requirements and corporate commitment to providing high quality council homes and landlord services.

The meeting closed at: 5.04 pm

