

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Tuesday, 18 April 2023
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Phoenix House, Nottingham Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 9SB

Present:

Chair Councillor R. Child (Chair)

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

In Attendance Leader of the Council – Councillor J. Orson
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources –
Councillor R. de Burle

Officers Chief Executive
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Assistant Director for Housing Management
Revenue and Benefit Manager
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer

Minute No.	Minute
67	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE No apologies for absence were received. Councillor Evans was absent.</p>
68	<p>MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 were approved.</p>
69	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST An interest in respect to Councillors Orson and Posnett was noted as being on record for any matter which relate to Leicestershire County Council.</p>
70	<p>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members to comment.</p> <p>Following a query on the Learning Management System Project, it was explained to Members that the system is an online learning portal for staff and the decision relates to the renewal of the contract.</p>
71	<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>
72	<p>THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL PRESENTATION The Leader delivered his presentation. In delivering his presentation the Leader made the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council had been nominated as the most improved Council at the LGC Awards and is the only district council that has been nominated in that category. • The Leader thanked the Officers and Leicestershire County Council for the smooth implementation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. • The Council were the first district in Leicestershire to introduce measures to alleviate the cost of living for residents. • The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services has effectively used his expertise when assisting homelessness prevention. • The Council had been involved in successful high profile prosecutions including Krispy Kreme and animal welfare. • Eight houses in Old Dalby have been purchased for social housing provision. They are currently being built and six will be built with enhance environmental measures. • It was recognised that the northern and eastern section of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) is now proceeding and the Council has supported the construction of the southern section. The application for the southern section is expected in the autumn. The Leader noted that if the

MMDR doesn't proceed then the local plan would have to be revisited as targets would not be met.

- The staff survey has shown that there is high positive satisfaction amongst staff which is positive as high satisfaction is important when wanting to retain staff.
- The Leader noted that with inflation running at 10%, this devalues the funding that has been received as a part of the Levelling Up Fund and the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, therefore it is important that the funds are spent 'on time' in order to receive maximum value.
- The Leader thanked all Members and Officers of the Council for all their hard work and contributions over the past four years.

Following a question regarding the upgraded CCTV network, Members were informed that the upgraded network had recently gone live but that the Director for Housing and Communities will provide some further clarity on when it went live.

In response to a query about Council property with damp, the Leader confirmed that whilst there have been properties with damp, the issue has been dealt with swiftly by Officers. It was recognised that the Council's response to properties with damp has improved during this term.

Following a query on waste collection and in particular food waste collection, the Leader stated that changes in waste collections is to encourage residents to recycle more but that the implementation of a new waste collection regime is dependent on sufficient funding being provided from central government.

The comment was made that irresponsible dog owners are causing a number of issues in the rural areas, the Leader responded by confirming that the Council has a Community Safety Team who can tackle issues such as dog fouling, however the Council can't tackle trespass, as that is a civil action between the landowner and the dog owner. The point was raised in relation to tenants with problem animals. In response, it was confirmed that unless it can be proved the animal is causing a significant problem then the issue can be difficult to deal with. There is also an issue balancing the problems the animal causes and the comfort the animal gives the tenant.

In response to a question on the MMDR, the Leader stated that he was confident that all sections would be built.

A discussion ensued on the town centre offer, in response the Leader commented that a new hotel could entice extra visitors and rejuvenate the night time economy.

(At 7:20pm, following the conclusion of this item, the Leader, Councillor Orson left the meeting and did not return.)

73

INCOME COLLECTION AND DEBT MANAGEMENT - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Housing Management and the Revenue and Benefit Manager introduced the report.

In response to a query, it was explained that the Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officer was appointed on 24 October 2022 and since then they have taken action which has recovered £35k. It was explained that it has been difficult to recover debt from some tenants as they are on benefits and have less income to be able to pay their debts. Members were informed that Housing Officers will be visiting tenants more regularly so that any potential issues can be identified and the Council offer the option for weekly direct debit payments in order to assist tenants manage their bills more effectively. In some instances an agreement which is affordable to the tenant would be reached. The recovery of £35k was welcomed by Members and it was seen as a sign of moving in the right direction.

Following a question, it was explained that there has been an 11% reduction in garage rents and that Officers are looking at alternative uses for some undesirable garage sites in order to maximise value. The comment was made that if the tenant of a garage is in arrears then the tenancy should be terminated.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that there has been a reduction in the amount of sundry debt. In addition to this, the wheels to work debt has been written off.

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RESOLVED

that Members' comments are presented to Cabinet at the next Cabinet meeting.

74	<p>SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 The Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 was presented to the Committee.</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>1) that the Annual Report be approved; and</p> <p>2) that the report is presented to Council at the meeting scheduled for July 2023.</p>
75	<p>URGENT BUSINESS There was no urgent business.</p>

The meeting closed at: 7.51 pm

Chair

