



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8th FEBRUARY 2023

PRESENT: Councillor T Jay (Chair), Councillors D Cook, M Cook, A Cooper, S Goodall, J Harper and S Smith

CABINET Councillor Jeremy Oates

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive) and Jo Hutchison (Senior Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer)

65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair reported that Councillor C Cooke was attending another council meeting and would be late for the meeting and had tendered his apologies accordingly. The Vice-Chair reported that Councillor M Cook had sent her apologies for being late.

66 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor J Harper and seconded by Councillor D Cook)

67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

68 CHAIR'S UPDATE

There was no further update on the Chair which was not otherwise covered on the agenda.

69 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair reported that he presented the recommendations from this Committee in respect of the Asset Management Strategy to Cabinet at its meeting on 19 January 2023 and Cabinet agreed that it would report back to this Committee on

its recommendations directly. The Committee agreed to retain this item on the Action Log with a review date of June 2023 to track the responses received.

70 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET / COUNCIL

No new items.

71 QUARTER THREE 2022/23 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Report of the Leader of the Council to provide the Committee with an overview of Council performance, risk and financial health-check towards achieving the strategic projects detailed within the Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The information contained within the report covered performance for the third quarter of the financial year (October to December 2022). Following this Committee's consideration the report to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd February 2023.

Councillor M Cook joined the meeting at 6.15pm.

The Committee sought and received clarifications in the following areas:

1. The reasons why the number of universal credit / housing benefit claimants was lower, given the difficult economic conditions. The Leader reported that he would seek further information for the Committee on this point.
2. Following the outcome of the Levelling Up Fund 2, the next steps for the Gungate project where it was reported that whilst the bid was a strong bid, it was designed to be sectional and the council would now work to produce a pipeline of projects to take advantage of any future funding pots.
3. On the Net Zero project given that the Council had declared a Climate Crisis, whether there was any further update available. It was reported that the baseline report had been received by Cabinet.
4. On the Corporation Street project and what were the factors holding this project back, where it was reported that over time the outcomes for this project had changed and the project required further review before it could be taken forward.

The Committee thanked the Officers for the Report.

RESOLVED: that the Committee endorsed the Report

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and Seconded by Councillor M Cook)

72 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

Quarterly Performance Report Review Working Group

The Chair reported that the target date for completing this review would be moved to the first meeting of the next municipal year so that working group members could provide any comments and the review be progressed over the next couple

of months. The Chair requested that members of the group provide these comments to him as soon as possible.

Leaseholder Charges Communication Working Group

Councillor M Cook presented to the Committee an overview of the activities undertaken and views and positions reached by the working group, together with other members of the working group, which covered:

1. That there had been two meetings of the working group which comprised councillors M Cook, D Cook, C Cooke, S Goodall, J Harper and S Peale.
2. Officers had provided information and data requested by the working group.
3. In terms of the numbers of properties impacted this had been confirmed as 44 leaseholder roofs and 72 roofs within council owned stock and the council was working through its retained properties and that there would be further roofs to be considered over the coming years.
4. The process previously used for undertaking replacements was outlined which involved a mixture of pre inspection, condition surveys, age profiling and local knowledge based on repairs history to build up an annual list.
5. In respect of the properties focussed on this time, the process had involved s20 Consultation. It was reported that the way that stock condition assessments worked meant that a sample of around 20% of similar properties would be undertaken, followed by data analysis to determine the programme of works and timelines. Therefore, the council had potentially sent letters to leaseholders to notify them that their roofs could require replacement where an inspection of the specific roof, in advance of the notification letters being issued, had not been undertaken. It was the working group's opinion that prior to such formal notification, the council should write to request access to inspect to determine what works would be required.
6. Residents had provided evidence and the working group had aimed to ensure they were involved as far as possible.
7. It was reported that the procedure was a complicated and legalistic one and whilst the council had followed the procedure, it was possible that there could be some holes in the procedure which could be looked at. It was reported that currently the council consulted with leaseholders first and following that inspected the properties and that potentially this should be done the other way round.
8. That the working group felt that the language used in communications was not sufficiently accessible and transparent to the leaseholders.

The Committee considered the working groups findings and following discussion made several recommendations to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommended:

1. That the council look at using an independent assessor for works to confirm costs were correct.

2. That an assessment be done for all repairs in advance of leaseholders being asked to contribute to repairs.
3. To reinforce the council's communications when residents buy a council house, including what responsibilities and obligations were on the owner occupier.
4. That the communications relating to the leaseholder works be reviewed and simplified.
5. That the contractor hold at least two face-to-face consultation drop ins to enable residents to understand the process.
6. That the specific 44 leaseholder roofs be assessed straight away.
7. That the council consider a mechanism such that the affected 44 leaseholders were not faced with increased costs as a result of the delay in works being commenced.

(Moved by Councillor M Cook and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)

73 FORWARD PLAN

No further items were identified from the Forward plan for this Committee's consideration at this time.

74 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN & ACTION LOG

The Chair highlighted that at the November 2022 meeting the Committee had discussed the Social Housing Regulation preparedness item and the Committee agreed to keep this on the work plan. The Chair highlighted that this item was expected to be considered at this Committee's meeting on 9th March 2023 and committee members were requested to provide any further questions or comments on the Social Housing Regulation – Improvement Plan prior to the meeting.

The Work Plan was updated as follows:

Corporate Scrutiny Work Plan

| Work Plan | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| TARGET MEETING DATE | SUBJECT | MEETING WHEN ITEM ADDED TO WORK PLAN |
| 9 March 2023 | Update on Assure Project (Environmental Health) | September/ November 2022 |
| 9 March 2023 | Regulation Social housing for the Council's own stock – Implementation Plan | October 2022 |
| 9 March 2023 | Solway Trading Company Update | February 2023 |
| 9 March 2023 | Committee's draft Annual Report | February 2023 |
| June 2023 | Working group feedback - Review of Quarterly Performance Report | |
| June / July 2023 | QPR Q4 2022/23 | |
| Dates to be agreed | | |
| TBC | Update on corporate prioritisation | August 2020 |
| Bi-annual updates (March & September) | Solway Trading Company Update | December 2019 |
| TBC (September 2023) | Joint Waste contract update | June 2021 |
| TBC | Gungate Masterplan | January 2020 |
| TBC | Reset & Recovery Workstreams | November 2021 |
| TBC | Staffordshire Leaders Board | February 2022 |
| TBC | Corporation Street (Gateway project) – review | September 2022 |

| Working Groups | | |
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| Aiming for June 2023 – which meeting Working Group to report back to | Review of Quarterly Performance Report to align with new Corporate Plan 2022-2025 Members: Cllrs T Jay, D Cook, C Cooke, A Cooper | June 2022 |
| February 2023 meeting – feedback received. | Review of Leaseholder Charges Communications following referral from full council meeting on 27.09.2022 meeting | October 2022 |

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| | Members: Cllrs D Cook, M Cook, C Cooke, S Goodall, J Harper, S People | |
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| Upcoming Corporate Scrutiny Committee Meetings |
| Meeting dates: 9 March 2023 |
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The Committee considered the Action Plan and agreed to retain the Asset Management Strategy item.

Chair