



## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 7th OCTOBER 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor T Jay (Chair), Councillors J Chesworth, R Ford, S Goodall, J Harper, Dr S Peale and R Rogers

The following officers were present: Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets), Sarah McGrandle (Assistant Director Operations and Leisure), Mark Greaves (Operations Manager) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) S Pritchard and A Cooper

### **22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Pritchard and A Cooper.

### **23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 August 2021 were approved as a correct record.

*(Moved by Councillor J Harper and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)*

### **24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor J Chesworth reported for transparency reasons that during previous discussions of the Cemeteries Regulations he had held the Portfolio for Environment and Culture however, he did not consider that this was an interest which would preclude him from participating in the agenda item on the memorial / reflection area.

### **25 CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair reported that the Executive Director, Finance had provided a detailed update to Councillor S Pritchard on the treasury / investment policy item raised at

the 24<sup>th</sup> August meeting. The Chair summarised the response received where the Executive Director, Finance agreed that the investment return was low but that you could not compare general investment returns with treasury management and that the strategy by the Council was a reflection of the Council's low risk appetite, aiming to keep treasury investments short to meet the Council's cashflow needs with two key objectives around security and liquidity.

## **26 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair reported that following this Committee's consideration of the Disabled Facilities Grant Funding report at its meeting on 24 August 2021, the Chair attended Cabinet at its meeting on 30 September 2021 to report this Committee's recommendation to raise the issue regarding Disabled Facilities Grant funding with Staffordshire County Council through County Councillors. The Chair reported that Cabinet approved the recommendation.

The Chair confirmed that the County Councillors had been updated on this recommendation.

## **27 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET / COUNCIL**

The Chair reported that the work plan had been updated to reflect Reset & Recovery workstreams.

## **28 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan and did not raise any further items for this Committee's consideration at this time.

## **29 UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSING REPAIRS CONTRACT**

The Chair introduced the Assistant Director, Assets to the meeting to update the Committee on the implementation process for the new housing repairs contracts and to provide some performance statistics for the first year of the contract.

The Assistant Director reported that prior to March 2020, following a full formal tender process it was agreed by Cabinet that a new ten year contract for the delivery of repairs would be let for housing and non-housing stock and it was further agreed that we would bring in house the call centre through Customer Services. The contract was awarded to Engie, with a commencement date of 1 April 2020, against the backdrop of full COVID lockdown.

The Assistant Director reported that initially due to the lockdown activities were limited to emergency repairs although by June 2020 urgent repairs were being undertaken and by August 2020 a full repairs service with appropriate safety measures was in place. The call centre team coordinated with tenants regarding pre-COVID checks which supported good access rates for the repairs team.

The Assistant Director reported that Engie had attended just under 14,000 repairs calls in the first 12 months of operation which was broadly similar to previous

years, which had meant that no repairs backlog had built up even given the periods of lockdown experienced in the first 12 months of operation.

It was further reported that the Right First Time rates had been recorded at 94% with monthly satisfaction levels at between 90-97% which met and exceeded the performance targets for the first year in the contract. In terms of complaints there average around 8 complaints per month.

The Assistant Director reported that there were issues across the industry in terms of the supply of materials and labour, which would remain closely monitored.

In terms of gas servicing these rates remained high throughout the period. In addition Engie picked up some additional work to support health & safety checks in sheltered housing. In terms of social value activity, despite COVID there had been some activities undertaken which supported social value, including the creation of apprenticeship roles, and undertaking some employability activities and further work continued to create How To videos for simply DIY activities.

The decision to bring the call centre activities back in house had supported the ability to seek qualitative feedback from tenants on the performance of the repairs activity, and generally the reported qualitative data showed a high level of satisfaction from tenants in respect of repairs completed.

The Committee sought clarification in the following areas:

- In terms of satisfaction levels and complaints, whether the types of complaints received and their causes were categorised. The Assistant Director reported that the Call Centre sought detailed qualitative feedback from a sample of repairs undertaken and issues were feedback to the contractor, however, these qualitative responses were not part of the performance statistics. In terms of the types of complaints received, one of the more common areas was in respect of communication issues, as opposed to complaints in respect of the repairs itself. The Committee considered that recording expressions of dissatisfaction received in addition to those recorded through the Tell us Policy would provide further data for the Council.
- What types of repairs were undertaken, where the Assistant Director reported that issues regarding damp and mould were reported which resulted in part from the types of housing stock, older properties. Advice to tenants would be provided as well as looking at methods to improve ventilation where possible. Further details of the types of repairs undertaken was requested which the Assistant Director agreed to circulate to members.
- In respect of the DIY videos, in terms of the types of areas proposed to be covered and the methods of access for this, where the Assistant Director confirmed that the plan was to look at basic jobs, such as unblocking drains, bleeding radiators, and turning off the water within a property. The Assistant Director confirmed that the contractor was working with the Council's communications team.

- On activities associated with void properties, where the Assistant Director reported that initial turnaround times had been slow, due to ensuring safe systems of working during the period, however the performance was improving.
- The extent to which there was any backlog in terms of repairs and how these were prioritised. The Assistant Director reported that as repairs had continued throughout the lockdown periods there was no known backlog and the fact that the total numbers of repairs undertaken reflected those undertaken in previous years supported that. Gas servicing had remained a priority and the systems in place were robust.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee:

- thanked the Officers; and
- noted the contents of this report.

*(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peaple and seconded by Councillor S Goodall)*

### **30 MEMBER'S PROPOSAL TO CONSIDER A MEMORIAL / REFLECTION AREA WITHIN THE BOROUGH**

The Chair introduced the Assistant Director, Operations and Leisure and the Operations Manager who were in attendance to present a report which followed a review of parts of the Cemetery Regulations by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in 2020/21, following which officers were requested to explore the potential of a new memorial area for Tamworth residents to pay their respects to their departed loved ones.

The Assistant Director reported that three potential sites within Borough were identified, together with a fourth option, outside the Borough. The Assistant Director provided an overview of the four potential sites:

1. Jubilee Gardens, in the Castle Grounds
2. Area at Corporation Street, in the town centre
3. Garden area within Wigginton Cemetery
4. National Memorial Arboretum

It was reported that since the Committee had previously considered this item, there had been two requests from members of the public for a commemorative bench with a plaque and both families had requested a very specific location and there had been no requests for any plaques on our existing benches.

The Committee sought clarifications and commented on:

- The estimated costs of any consultation exercise with the public, where the Assistant Director responded that the costs would depend upon the extent of the consultation.
- The limited space in cemeteries for additional memorials, and the fact that requests were very personal and location specific.
- The possibility for a memorial wall of plaques within a cemetery to be considered.
- The costs associated within any additional scheme.

Following consideration and debate, the Committee:

**RESOLVED:**

1. To note the report  
(Moved by Councillor T Jay and seconded by Councillor J Chesworth)
2. To propose no further action at this time  
(Moved by Councillor T Jay and seconded by Councillor J Chesworth)
3. To add this item to the Committee's work plan in 2023  
(Moved by Councillor R Ford and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peaple)

Following which, Councillors J Chesworth and R Rogers left the meeting

**31 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Committee considered its work plan and agreed to update it as follows:

**Corporate Scrutiny Work Plan**

<b>Work Plan 2021 – 2022</b>		
<b>TARGET MEETING DATE</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>MEETING WHEN ITEM ADDED TO WORK PLAN</b>
18 November 2021	Quarter Two 2021/22 Performance Report	
9 December 2021	Customer Portal - post implementation review	November 2020
9 Dec 2021 / 1 Feb 2022	Asset Management update	December 2019
1 February 2022	Quarter Three 2021/22 Performance Report	
10 March 2022	Solway Trading Company Update	
<b>Dates to be agreed</b>		
TBC	Update on corporate prioritisation	August 2020
TBC	Market tender progress Update	August 2019
TBC	Parking Toolkit review	October 2019
Bi-annual updates (March & September)	Solway Trading Company Update	December 2019
TBC	Gungate Masterplan	January 2020
TBC	Ways of working	June 2021
TBC	Joint Waste contract update	June 2021
TBC	Reset & Recovery Workstreams	

<b>Upcoming Corporate Scrutiny Committee Meetings</b>
18 November 2021 (Q2 QPR)
9 December 2021
1 February 2022 (Q3 QPR)
10 March 2022

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Chair