



## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8th DECEMBER 2022**

**PRESENT:** Councillor T Jay (Chair), Councillors D Cook, M Cook, C Cooke, A Cooper, J Harper and S Peale

**CABINET** Councillor Marie Bailey

The following officers were present: Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets) and Jo Hutchison (Senior Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer)

### **55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Goodall and Councillor S Smith.

### **56 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2022 were approved as a correct record

*(Moved by Councillor J Harper and seconded by Councillor M Cook)*

### **57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **58 CHAIR'S UPDATE**

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

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

The Chair reported that the QPR Q2 Report, which had been considered by this Committee at the November meeting, was received by Cabinet at its 1 December 2022 meeting.

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

No new items referred.

## 61 ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Chair welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Risk and Customer Services, Councillor M Bailey, and the Assistant Director Assets, Paul Weston to the meeting for this item.

The purpose of this report was to present the updated Asset Management Strategy relating to Council owned operational, investment, heritage and housing built assets. Included within the updated strategy were documents covering acquisitions, disposals and the framework for the development of Asset Management Plans.

The Assistant Director, Assets reported that the report and supporting documentation had been considered by the Asset Strategy Steering Group and it was anticipated that, subject to any amendments arising from this committee, this document would be presented to Cabinet in January 2023 for approval and implementation.

It was reported that the Asset Management Strategy was intended to be a five year document, which would be reviewed in light of the current market situation and the Council's financial situation. It was reported that the Strategy aligned with the Council's corporate priorities and as the priorities changed this could be reflected in the strategy. It was reported that in this strategy the housing stock was included, it included different types of investment properties, covered rent reviews and enforcing tenancy arrangements to ensure tenants fulfilled their repairing obligations. Following the implementation of the strategy, there would be more operational plans developed and it was reported that the Asset Management Steering Group would lead on developing the asset management plans for properties or groups of properties in terms of the non-housing stock.

The Committee sought and received clarifications in the following areas:

1. What the take up was on the right to buy side, where it was reported that from the whole housing stock of over 4000 properties around 30-50 properties were subject to right to buy each year.
2. Where a list of all the Council's assets could be located, where the Assistant Director reported that the Asset Register was published on the Council's website and a link would be provided to members.
3. How the assets were depreciated, which did not appear to be covered in the draft strategy. The Assistant Director, Assets reported that on an annual basis the Council's assets were re-evaluated as part of the process for finalising the accounts and as part of that process depreciation would be taken into account at this point and that would be part of the asset management plans.
4. How the maintenance of housing stock was documented in the draft strategy, where the Assistant Director reported that this formed part of the work in the HRA Business Plan, which was updated regularly with further expected changes to deliver to the housing regulator's expected standards

and therefore this over-arching strategy aimed to reference to the more detailed HRA Business Plan.

5. Whether the current return on the assets of around 6% was expected to continue where it was reported that this was difficult to predict, although returns on industrial property was strong. Given the current climate this was not necessarily the case for retail properties. Many of the Council's retail properties were local, within housing estates, and served local communities, however, there were some larger investment properties where there could be more issues and where it would be difficult to say this would continue at this rate.
6. The lack of inclusion of references to vulnerability within the draft strategy.
7. The draft strategy referred to Climate Change, but did not specifically reference the fact that the Council declared a Climate Emergency. In terms of the scope of the zero carbon commitments made by the Council, it was noted that in terms of housing stock, the commitment reflected in the draft strategy covered common parts. The Assistant Director reported that this reflected the over-arching zero carbon commitments made by the Council by reference to the Council's own activities. It was highlighted that as the landlord of the housing stock, it was the Council who would be responsible for replacing kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and roofs when required and it was the Council who would have to set the policy for this.
8. How the disposals policy would be implemented in terms of disposals of small pieces of land with a value of less than £10,000, where the Assistant Director reported that the value raised from such small pieces of land could be outweighed by the costs of disposal to the Council, however, the draft strategy envisaged that the Council would normally take a pragmatic approach on a case-by-case basis. It was also highlighted that the new disposals policy did enable small disposals to be looked at, where the current policy was to not progress with sales of small pieces of land.
9. The alignment of this Asset Management Strategy to the current Vision of the Council, and the work now underway, following the State of Tamworth Debate, to revisit the Vision to take into account homelessness, vulnerability and mental health, and how this review to the Vision could change how the Council looked at its assets and could require a revisit to this draft Asset Management Strategy.
10. Whether the Community Impact Assessment undertaken addressed the impacts of the policies on the community correctly, and whether all the stakeholders were listed, where this could perhaps be extended to include highway authorities and emergency services.
11. Whether all the linked Strategies were included and further consideration could be given to Health & Safety, Reset & Recovery, Town Centre and Communications.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee approved the Asset Management Strategy and accompanying documents for presentation to Cabinet with the following 8 recommendations from this Committee:

The Committee recommended that Cabinet consider:

1. Including within the policy a link to the Asset Register

2. Adding explicitly within the Strategy how depreciation would be managed
3. Adding a section regarding maintenance
4. Delaying the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy until the Vision had been revisited
5. Adding reference to zero carbon investment into the Asset Management Strategy
6. Adding in a glossary of terms within the Strategy and developing “How to” Guides, where relevant, to be included as website resources to support understanding of the Strategy (but not form part of it)
7. Including within the strategy that a case-by-case approach be taken for the sale of small purchases of land (with purchasers bearing the legal and administrative costs of the Council in progressing any sale)
8. Expanding the stakeholder list to include highway authorities, county council(s), relevant partnerships, voluntary sector, emergency services.

*(Moved by Councillor C Cooke and seconded by Councillor M Cook)*

## **62 WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

The Chair reported that he had requested feedback by email from the members of the QPR Review working group.

The Vice-Chair reported that he planned to convene a further meeting of the Review of Leaseholder Charges Communications working group following receipt of further information from the Assistant Director, Assets.

## **63 FORWARD PLAN**

There were no new items identified.

## **64 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN & ACTION LOG**

The Committee reviewed and updated the Work plan as follows:

### **Corporate Scrutiny Work Plan**

<b>Work Plan</b>		
<b>TARGET MEETING DATE</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>MEETING WHEN ITEM ADDED TO WORK PLAN</b>
8 February 2023	Quarter 3 2022/23 Performance Report	
8 February 2023	Regulation Social housing for the Council's own stock	October 2022
8 February / 9 March 2023	Working group feedback - Review of Quarterly Performance Report	
9 March 2023	Update on Assure Project (Environmental Health)	September/ November 2022
<b>Dates to be agreed</b>		
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

<b>Working Groups</b>		
<b>Aiming for 8 February / 9 March 2023</b> – which meeting Working Group to report back to	<b>Review of Quarterly Performance Report</b> to align with new Corporate Plan 2022-2025  Members: Cllrs T Jay, D Cook, C Cooke, A Cooper	<b>June 2022</b>
<b>TBC</b> – which meeting Working Group to report back to	<b>Review of Leaseholder Charges Communications</b> following referral from full council meeting on 27.09.2022 meeting  Members: Cllrs D Cook, M Cook, C Cooke, S Goodall, J Harper, S Peale	<b>October 2022</b>

<b>Upcoming Corporate Scrutiny Committee Meetings</b>
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Meeting dates:
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8 February 2023
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9 March 2023
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The Committee noted the Action Log and items completed.

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Chair