

CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Climate Change and Communities Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Tuesday, 31 January 2023 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Nick Clarke in the Chair

Councillors Dexter Bullock, Anne Clarke, David Dixon and Jen Wilson (from during Minute No CLI45-22/23).

Officers:- Peter Wilmot (HR Business Partner), Ian Barber (Assistant Director of Property Services & Housing Repairs), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement) (for Minute No CLI48-22/23) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

CLI4122/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Evonne Parkin.

CLI4222/23 URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CLI4322/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CLI4422/23 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor David Dixon and seconded by Councillor Anne Clarke
RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 15th November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

Councillor Jen Wilson entered the meeting during the following item of business.

CLI4522/23 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Committee considered the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document.

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Moved by Councillor David Dixon and seconded by Councillor Anne Clarke

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

CLI4622/23 HEALTH AND WELLBEING FRAMEWORK UPDATE

The HR Business Partner provided Members with an update on the current operation of the HR and Payroll Service following a recent restructure. It was noted that the Service had previously been delivered jointly with NE Derbyshire District Council but had now been brought in-house with a lead HR Business Partner covering strategic development and a separate HR & Payroll Manager.

The officer provided an overview of the last twelve months and noted that the service was adapting where required to the new structure and changes in operational delivery. This included reviewing the existing Health & Wellbeing Strategy to ensure it still met the Council's requirements. The officer also noted a programme currently operating via the Leader's Executive & Partnerships team – Treacle.me. The website was free and easy to use, helping local people to find help and support whenever and wherever it was needed. The site was also available to staff to access.

A Member commented on the Council's employee sickness figures over the last few years, particularly during the pandemic, and noted that it was a testament to Council staff and their commitment to service delivery. The officer noted that the figures for 2021/22 did include some Covid absence, which was typically a couple of days per employee.

A Member questioned if external benchmark data was available in relation to sickness absence. The officer noted that there was local government benchmark data available but this was historic as benchmarking by its nature was always looking back at past years. Previous local government averages were around 9 days per annum. They noted it was better to use a specific local government benchmark rather than a more generalised national figure which could reflect the situation in the private sector as this would not give an accurate benchmark for comparison. This type of data could be included in future reports.

A Member queried if the Streetscene service was particularly affected by high instances of muscular/skeletal absences due to the nature of the work carried out. The officer noted that whilst that service had more risks to mitigate within the work undertaken, the Council as a whole had an ageing workforce and that this was a standard feature within absence figures across organisations.

A Member commented that desk set-up was key to reducing potential muscular/skeletal injury, especially for staff working at home.

A Member queried whether the Council had a number of staff that were due to retire at a similar time creating additional workforce pressures. The officer noted that analysis work was taking place of each service area to try and plan for future expected retirements, and managers were being given guidance on succession planning.

Moved by Councillor David Dixon and seconded by Councillor Jen Wilson

RESOLVED that the monitoring update be noted.

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CLI4722/23 CARBON REDUCTION PLAN - MONITORING REPORT

The Assistant Director of Property Services & Housing Repairs, as lead officer on the Carbon Reduction Plan, provided Members with a verbal progress report on activity following recent additional informal meetings with the Committee.

The lead officer noted that the planned recruitment to a dedicated officer had been placed on hold pending the report to Council in February 2023, in relation to Dragonfly Development Ltd, which would result in an alteration to Council structures.

Following release of the proposed Business Case for Dragonfly Developments Ltd, it was clear that the lead for Climate Change would sit within the Council structure. Members agreed that this was the right course of action to ensure the Council kept control over planning and delivery.

The lead officer noted that pending the roll-out of Microsoft 365 across service areas, this may be the best option for improving file sharing and monitoring. However, the roll-out of SharePoint was within phase 2 of the project, which could create further delays in effective monitoring.

Members were also mindful that there were now regular meetings between the Chief Executive and ICT on the roll-out of improved Microsoft systems, and that this was being done in a staged approach, taking account of implementation risks including cyber security.

Members queried whether the Loop software was being used where possible to track 'environmental' social value outcomes from current delivery. It was noted that this was an area that still required further development as the software became embedded across service areas. The lead officer had access to the Loop software and further training was planned before projects could go live in the system for monitoring.

The officer noted that the Citizen's Panel survey was now complete but that the results report was still pending. Members agreed that this work was still necessary in order to shape future engagement by the Council. It would also help the Council to develop local awareness campaigns and to influence any future funding bids by the Council in relation to energy efficiency in the District's housing stock and to support local businesses.

The Committee noted that they would welcome sight of the survey results as part of a future report and hoped that the Council was able to take effective action as a result of the findings.

The lead officer noted that the Woodlands development in Langwith was likely to complete early with 19 properties completed in total. This development included air source heat pumps and extra insulation with the properties being built to a high-spec 'future homes' standard. Members noted they were keen to see the Council use such specification for other Bolsover Homes developments in future.

The lead officer offered the option of a site visit to see the completed properties and Members agreed this was something they would like to take place.

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Members were also updated on work at Whaley Common where the Council had a number of 'off-gas' properties that had air source heat pumps fitted. Whilst this had been completed at a higher cost to the Council due to the lack of grants available, the difference to the properties was significant. Members were again keen to see this approach used elsewhere, and the officer noted that this would be the likely approach for any remaining 'off-gas' properties.

Members noted that they were keen to see a greater shift towards installation of air source heat pumps and asked to what extent this was being delivered in place of gas boilers. The lead officer noted that the Council planned to continue use of gas boilers whilst legislation allowed. However, whilst there was no long term plan, staff were being trained on how to service air source kit and would eventually be trained on installation.

The lead officer noted that the Council has been successful in delivering a number of external wall insulation schemes through securing funding via LAD1 and LAD2, which had a huge impact on reducing CO2 emissions. Unfortunately, although more properties had been identified that would benefit from such work, further grants were not currently available.

Members were updated on the Safe & Warm Programme being completed across the Council's Independent Living Schemes. A number of the Schemes were already completed and the Council was learning where possible from each phase and making amends as required to each new phase of roll-out. The works were making a significant difference to residents' energy bills and the overall quality of the accommodation offer.

Members were also keen to ensure the District was able to benefit from other innovations such as Mine Water Energy. The lead officer noted this was being assessed in conjunction with Derby University but further work was required to understand which sites could benefit from such a system.

One of the key queries from Members was around the Council's current energy tariffs and how the Council was also looking to generate its own energy. The lead officer noted that whilst the Council had previously moved to a green tariff, due to the current rates, the increased costs associated with being on the tariff meant that it was no longer a viable option.

Based on the information presented and discussions with the lead officer, it was concluded that the Council would need to be clearer moving forward on its approach to carbon reduction and the Council's core objectives. This would also require the Council to be clear on the financial commitment that was being made to ensure the Council could deliver on its core objectives and meet its 2050 target.

Members agreed that following the additional research which had taken place, and evidence provided by the lead officer, the following recommendations should be put to Executive:

1. That the officer function addressing the Council's strategic approach to carbon reduction should be kept in-house, with partnership work as required with Dragonfly Developments Ltd, for delivery associated with the service functions transferred.
2. That a dedicated operational post be recruited to, in addition to the designation

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of a lead senior officer, to ensure that the delivery in relation to carbon reduction maintained momentum to reach the 2050 target.

3. That data quality related to carbon reduction be improved, with a clear baseline agreed from which to track progress up to 2050, with regular data reports as part of the corporate performance reporting.
4. That the lead senior officer take account of the Member analysis of the Council's current Ambitions and how activity was supporting carbon reduction as part of new programme development.
5. That a revised approach to communication of objectives and achievements be implemented, both external and internal, with a full review of the website to ensure the Council's activity, and progress towards the target, is clearly documented.
6. That the Council ensures that a lead Portfolio Member is agreed for Carbon Reduction from within the Executive, post-election May 2023.
7. That the membership of the Low Carbon Thematic Group is reviewed, post-election May 2023, to ensure it incorporates the Portfolio lead and a link to Climate Change & Communities Scrutiny to further improve communication. It is also recommended that the cross-party representation remains going forward as this is seen as a positive way of working.
8. That the Council website is reviewed and updated to provide clear guidance on current Council activity.
9. That Scrutiny analysis of progress against the Council Motion previously passed to the Low Carbon Thematic Group, be shared so future work planning can take account of outstanding areas capable of delivery.

Moved by Councillor David Dixon and seconded by Councillor Anne Clarke

RESOLVED that (1) the verbal report from the officer be noted,

(2) a final report outlining the Committee's findings from the review and recommendations for future action (as listed above) be submitted to Executive.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

CLI4822/23 REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANT ALLOCATIONS: POST-SCRUTINY MONITORING (INTERIM REPORT)

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer presented the monitoring report to Members and updated on progress by officers in implementing the recommendations.

It was noted that to date 5 out of 12 recommendations had been achieved, 3 had been extended and 4 were on track but would hopefully be completed within the original twelve month monitoring period.

It was noted that officers from the Leader's Executive & Partnerships Team had been unable to attend to provide an additional verbal update to Members on the new commissioning process and current progress. Members expressed their disappointment that officers were not present to give a more in-depth explanation and asked for further clarification post-meeting as to the commissioning process being used. Members were particularly concerned that a revised procedure had been developed to ensure that there

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was no duplication in the allocations given to local voluntary and community sector organisations.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement was present to advise Members on the grants that would still be transferred from Housing budgets directly rather than monitored by Leader's Executive & Partnerships Team. It was noted that the grants currently transferred to Derbyshire Law Centre in relation to homelessness prevention, which supported provision of a dedicated officer, would be kept within the control of Housing services due to the nature of the government grant it came from and the monitoring required. The officer noted that there was no duplication in relation to this money. It was also noted that for completeness the outcomes achieved in relation to this particular allocation could be incorporated in to the wider annual report by the Leader's Executive & Partnerships team so all the data could be accessed in one place.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement advised Members that further clarity was still being sought in relation to the additional funding transferred from the HRA to NEDCAB as it was still believed there was a potential overlap that needed to be addressed as part of the 2023/24 allocations. If a grant was to remain from the HRA, it was likely easier for the monitoring of the money to take place as part of wider monitoring of NEDCAB outcomes by Leader's Executive & Partnerships team.

Further discussion took place and it was questioned whether the core grant to Derbyshire Law Centre should still look at immigration, debt and employment, on an equal footing given the current cost of living crisis and known increase in advice and guidance required in relation to debt and benefits.

Moved by Councillor Nick Clarke and seconded by Councillor Jen Wilson

RESOLVED that (1) the progress against the review recommendations be noted,

(2) the exceptions to delivery and additional action required by the service be acknowledged,

(3) the report and findings be made public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Council's Constitution,

(4) officers continue to implement the recommendations and submit a final report in six months' time highlighting any exceptions to delivery.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

CLI4922/23 REVIEW OF COUNCIL POLICY ON SKY LANTERNS AND HELIUM BALLOONS: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

The Scrutiny & Elections Officer advised Members that following presentation of the final report to Executive, all recommendations from the review had been endorsed. The review was now in its post-scrutiny monitoring phase and the first update report would be due to Committee by June 2023.

It was also noted that due to the nature of the report, the review recommendations had received press coverage with a section featured on Bolsover TV and coverage on the

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Council's website, noting that the Council had agreed to develop a Charter.

Moved by Councillor David Dixon and seconded by Councillor Anne Clarke

RESOLVED that (1) the Executive's Response to the Review of Voluntary & Community Sector Grant Allocations be noted,

(2) the report and findings be made public, in accordance with Part 4.5.17(4) of the Council's Constitution,

(3) officers monitor progress on the recommendations and report in six and twelve months' time highlighting any exceptions to delivery, in accordance with Part 3.6(1) of the Council's Constitution.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

CLI5022/23 CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2022/23. The Scrutiny & Elections Officer noted that following further discussion with officers, it had been decided that the original date agreed for the Annual Review of the Community Safety Partnership was the preferred option. The meeting would remain on the 7th March as scheduled.

Moved by Councillor Jen Wilson and seconded by Councillor David Dixon

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2022/23 be approved and noted.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 11:15 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 11:28 hours.