

## **CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 20 March 2023 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

Councillors Allan Bailey, Patricia Clough, Ray Heffer, and Andrew Joesbury.

Officers: Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management & Enforcement), Chris McKinney (Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager) and Joanne Wilson (Scrutiny & Elections Officer).

### **CS47-22/23      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors David Dixon and Rita Turner.

### **CS48-22/23      URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **CS49-22/23      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **CS50-22/23      MINUTES**

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury  
**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### **CS51-22/23      LIST OF KEY DECISIONS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

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

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rose Bowler  
**RESOLVED** that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private

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document be noted.

### **CS52-22/23          HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-24 - ACTION PLAN MONITORING UPDATE: MARCH 2023**

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement and the Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager provided Members with a progress update on delivery of the Housing Strategy 2021-24.

Since the last report, the Joint Housing Strategy Team with North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC) had been disestablished and ceased to operate on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, with its staff remaining with NEDDC. From 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 onwards, the duties of the former Joint Team had been transferred to the Council's Housing Management Team and Planning Policy Team, with the general split being as follows:

- a) Housing Management Team – to undertake duties relating to homelessness, rough sleeping, private sector lettings and tenancy strategy.
- b) Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Team – to undertake duties relating to the preparation of strategic housing policies, housing stock analysis and work on empty homes.

Officers noted that at the Chair's request they had adapted the action plan to show historic progress and added the status of each action (RAG status). Specific areas of note/query were as follows:

#### Priority 1, Aim 4 – Making best use of the Council's Housing Stock

Work was due to progress from early May 2023, post-election, to commence the periodic review of the Allocations Policy.

#### Priority 1, Aim 5 – Private Rented Sector

A Landlords Forum event was held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023, with Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC) and NEDDC, and had been well attended. Legislation changes were expected in the short-term to Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) which would require private landlords to bring stock up to the required standards. There was now additional support available for landlords to help their tenants to apply for Universal Credit. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) were also providing support due to the cost of living crisis to both tenants and landlords supporting tenants.

A Councillor queried how the Council was engaging with Housing Associations and noted that they were having issues with one specific local provider, who were not engaging over local resident issues. The Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager noted that as part of the handover from the Joint Team, the Council had received a contact list of all registered providers in the area. Meetings were being arranged to introduce the new team and establish what support they required and to ensure they were engaged with the new service. Officers would check the list for their details and follow-up and would welcome contacts/suggestions from Members where issues had arisen.

Councillors commented that they would like to see all private landlords charging affordable rents rather than extortionate rents, above market rate, which were beyond the capacity of those who relied on the rented sector.

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A Councillor queried the extent of issues with damp and mould within the area and whether private landlords were also dealing with this. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement noted that from 2024 the regulations in relation to EPCs would change. There would be a significant focus on private rented accommodation being improved to the required standard expected, particularly in relation to damp and mould. The Council was working jointly with NEDDC to develop a Private Rented Sector Strategy. The aim was to encourage landlords to agree to a Charter and set property standards. It was hoped to work with those landlords already minded to charge affordable rents to further enhance the Council's response to homelessness.

A Councillor noted that they would welcome a copy of the landlord presentation that had been delivered recently at the Landlords Forum. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement agreed to arrange for the presentation to be provided to the Member.

### Priority 2, Aim 1 – Growth

The Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager updated Members on the Town Centre Health Checks that had taken place annually over the last three years 2020-22, with surveys for 2023 planned for April/May. The areas had been split in to two categories:

- Town Centres – Bolsover; Shirebrook, South Normanton and Clowne
- Local Centres – Creswell; Whitwell; Pinxton and Tibshelf

The Health Checks assessed the health of the centres, number of businesses, the mix of business uses, number of vacant units, and the quality of the public realm.

A Councillor queried progress made in the South Normanton centre. The officer noted that while the centre was small in nature the health of the town centre was not of concern. The Councillor also queried why there had been little development within the south of the District. The officer noted that it had been a political choice to prioritise Bolsover as the area had faced a number of challenges through business closures. Work was also currently progressing on a public realm bid for Shirebrook. The officer noted that there were currently no clear priorities for the Clowne area to enable completion of a large development funding bid for the area.

The officer noted that the Planning team currently had three years of data for the town centres. They noted that the rating for South Normanton had remained stable and the business uses also remained similar. The physical environment score was the same, however, the footfall had dropped. The officer noted that all town centres would benefit from investment. The current model used in Shirebrook had involved a small investment of £27,000 to create architect plans with partner engagement to enable a stronger funding bid. The Councillor noted that it needed to be clearer if the responsibility for investment was with the District or Parish/Town Council. The officer noted it could be either party or could be done jointly.

Another Councillor noted that while Glapwell was not covered by a Health Check, the locality suffered from a lack of services. There was currently only one small local shop, which was insufficient given the housing development within the area. Access to services in the area was particularly impacted when there was bad weather (snow), due to road access and proximity of services, which often resulted in the need for a local support

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network to ensure more vulnerable residents' needs were addressed. The Councillor noted that improved infrastructure was required to match the population levels. Health service provision in particular was not sufficient for the locality. The Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager noted that the team were working with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), on health service provision, and looking to specifically expand provision in the Tibshelf area via s.106 monies. Officers noted that further to the discussion at this meeting, they would also raise the issue of provision in Glapwell with them.

### Priority 2, Aim 4 – Bringing Empty Properties Back into Use (private sector)

A Councillor queried whether work on this could be expanded further where land had been purchased by third parties and permissions had not been enacted. This created areas of 'waste land' within the District and they queried whether the Council could now look to acquire the land for use by Dragonfly Development Limited, where there was inaction by the owner. The Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager noted that this could be a potential benefit of the creation of the wholly owned company and that the Planning service was already tackling land where development had stalled or was in breach of permissions. The new company would also be looking at how additional land could be brought forward for development. It was noted that the District had a lot of housing in development, with more sites planned, and there was sufficient supply.

Another Councillor raised a query in relation to staffing and asked when the current vacancy situation would be resolved so work could progress. The Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager noted that the Council was currently looking to recruit an additional officer to the Planning Policy team to cover the elements of the Strategy that had transferred to the team, part of their focus would be on empty properties.

In relation to the same issue, a Councillor queried whether landlords making improvements within the West Lea area were keeping properties once renovated. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement noted that enforcement action had been taken against one landlord who had chosen to sell on the properties rather than refurbish. The new owners of the properties were now being advised by the Council as to the works required to bring them to expected standards.

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury  
**RESOLVED** that the Housing Strategy Action Plan Monitoring Update: March 2023 be noted.

(Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement/  
Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Manager)

## **CS53-22/23      CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

Committee considered their proposed work programme for 2022/23, and noted this meeting was the last meeting of the municipal year.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury  
**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme 2022/23 be approved and noted.

(Scrutiny & Elections Officer)

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The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:38 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 11:19 hours.