

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, 15th July 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner (Vice-Chair), Amanda Davis, Louise Fox, Phil Smith, Vicky Waplington and Deborah Watson.

Officers:- Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director – Housing Management and Enforcement), Sarah Kay (Assistant Director – Planning and Planning Policy), Neil Oxby (Principal Planning Policy Officer), Elizabeth Ellis (Housing Options Manager), Jo Wilson (Housing Strategy and Development Officer), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillors Anne Clarke (Portfolio Holder for the Environment), Jeanne Raspin (Junior Portfolio Holder for the Environment) and Jane Yates.

CS11-23/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

CS12-23/24 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS13-23/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CS14-23/24 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.

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document be noted.

CS15-23/24 MINUTES - 3RD JUNE 2024

Moved by Councillor Amanda Davis and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd June 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CS16-23/24 HOUSING STRATEGY 2024-2029 - CONSULTATION DRAFT

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer presented the Housing Strategy (the 'Strategy') to Committee.

Strategy 2021-2024 was due to expire; a revised Strategy was required. The proposed Strategy would cover 2024-2029 but take the Council beyond this point, allowing the incoming Council of 2027 to formulate their new Council Plan. A longer Strategy allowed the alignment of existing District and countywide strategies, as well as a longer public consultation period to take into account the revised timescales for completion of the Housing Needs Study.

In the timetable provided, it was noted the Parish Council Liaison in July 2024 would not take place in person; a paper consultation would be carried out in its stead.

The Strategy of 2021-2024 identified key strategic housing policies:

- Key Priority 1 – Provide Good Quality Housing;
- Key Priority 2 – Enable Housing Growth; and,
- Key Priority 3 – Support Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People.

The Strategy of 2024-2029 would add:

- Key Priority 4 – Maintaining and improving property and housing management standards and ensuring that standards and living conditions in the district contribute towards better health outcomes for all.

Work on the draft Strategy had begun April 2024, with content based on existing policy framework, district profile data, and the commissioned Local Housing Needs Study (joined with Chesterfield Borough Council).

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Deborah Watson
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CS17-23/24 UPDATE ON BOLSOVER HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2022-2027

The Housing Options Manager presented the update on the Bolsover Housing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 (the 'Strategy') to Committee.

The Council had seen an increase of 94% in homelessness cases in 2023/24, with work being undertaken to keep residents in their current addresses. These statistics were attached at Appendix 3.

There were four clear strategic priorities broken down into individual actions within the Action Plan (attached at Appendix 2). These were:

1. Make homelessness everyone's responsibility through a system wide approach;
2. Prevent and respond to homelessness through early intervention and personalised solutions;
3. End rough sleeping and repeat homelessness; and,

CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4. Develop sustainable supported and settled housing solutions.

The Action Plan had been developed by Derbyshire Homeless Officers Group (DHOG) and was being progressed by the Homelessness Special Projects Officer. The areas of action within each key priority set out in the Strategy were in the Action Plan. Some early successes included: SIGNAL Pilot; Derbyshire Homelessness Charter; and Street Support Derbyshire.

Four planned activities for delivering actions within the Strategy were identified as in line with the Council's Ambition:

- Following consultation with private landlords, develop a comprehensive and attractive countywide landlord offer;
- React accordingly and ensure a range of measures were in place to prevent homelessness linked to the wider economy and increases in the Cost of Living;
- Streamline the duty to refer system, and work with partner agencies to improve timelines and quality of referrals; and,
- As part of the 'Rough Sleeper Initiative', develop a targeted prevention approach to prevent the flow of new rough sleepers on to the street.

An update on the Strategy would be provided annually.

The Chair noted under 25s were often most affected by insecure work and expensive housing costs; what was being done to address this. The Housing Options Manager agreed this was a gap in the Strategy, with private rent proving expensive and a shortage of social housing being present. At that moment, the full picture of this was unknown.

A Member highlighted the jump in figures at Appendix 3 and sought more information. The Housing Options Manager explained there were changing issues due to increasing cases of domestic violence and that of eviction from the family home. Figures were increasing nationally due to the Cost of Living, residents falling into rent arrears, and generally more people in insecure housing approaching the Council for assistance.

The Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement added an increase of private rental sector evictions was increasing due to landlords acting if Section 21 Eviction Notices were banned, many having bought-to-let and not being able to afford their mortgages, and the future requirement for rental properties to be Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C rated or above.

A Member asked if the Council spoke to tenants about their reasons for their evictions. The Housing Options Manager explained every resident who approached the Council provided this information, but the issue was while attempts were made to dissuade landlords from increasing their rent or selling, if landlords wanted to sell there was nothing the Council could do. However, if the Committee wanted this data, it could be provided.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CS18-23/24 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNCIL'S WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL EDUCATION

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report on the Effectiveness of the Council's Waste Collection and Disposal Education to Committee.

The Committee had agreed to undertake a review of the Council's waste collection and disposal education as part of the 2024-25 Work Programme. This was initially due to concerns of contamination rates within recycling collections.

The aim of the review was to ensure that the Council's approach to waste disposal advice and education was reaching all target audiences to reduce current contamination rates and improve recycling rates.

The key findings included: identified confusion over the burgundy bin; the struggle post-COVID-19 to regenerate school programmes on recycling; that Council acknowledged the introduction of food waste recycling from 1st April 2026; and that the Council considers the accessibility of communication services.

A Member asked why there had been a focus on younger members of society. The Chair and Scrutiny Officer explained that while a focus on young people had taken place, it was to address the reduction of interaction between schools and the Council on recycling. It was also noted that older people were more likely to use the Council's website, InTouch magazine, and the bin calendars to know what could and could not be recycled; a balance between ages needed to be reached.

On a question regarding carbon reduction, the Scrutiny Officer stated the effects of the review would be known in 2024/25.

Moved by Councillor Rita Turner and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox
RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CS19-23/24 CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer explained the Work Programme attached at Appendix 1 was a fluid document and items could be added and removed when the Committee wanted.

Moved by Councillor Louise Fox and seconded by Councillor Phil Smith
RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

Councillors Anne Clarke, Jeanne Raspin, Jane Yates and the Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement, the Assistant Director Planning and Planning Policy, the Principal Planning Policy Officer, the Housing Options Manager and Housing Strategy and Development Officer left the meeting.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:29 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 10:56 hours.