

## **EXECUTIVE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne, on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 at 1000 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Jane Yates in the Chair

Councillors Mary Dooley, Donna Hales, Rob Hiney-Saunders, Phil Smith, Tom Munro and John Ritchie,

Officers:- Karen Hanson (Chief Executive), Theresa Fletcher (Section 151 Officer), Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Pam Brown (Director Executive and Corporate Services), Kath Drury (Information and Improvement Manager) (to Minute No. EX84-24/25), Cheryl Staples (Programme & Projects Officer (Devolution Team), (to Minute No. EX84-24/25), Alice Willoughby (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer) (to Minute No. EX83-24/25), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement), Deborah Whallett (Housing Services Manager) and Alison Bluff (Governance).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Junior Cabinet Members, Councillors Duncan Haywood (substituting for Councillor Clive Moesby), Jeanne Raspin and Cathy Jeffery (from during Minute No. EX82-24/25).

### **EX78-24/25. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Clive Moesby.

### **EX79-24/25. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

### **EX80-24/25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **EX81-24/25. MINUTES – 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025**

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro  
**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of an Executive meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

## EXECUTIVE

### **EX82-24/25. POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS OR CUSTOMERS**

Executive considered a detailed report, presented by the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services, which sought Members approval to implement a policy and procedure for the management of unreasonable complaints or customers.

The Council aimed to deal with complaints and customers in a way which was fair and impartial. On occasion, however, customers may behave unreasonably or make unreasonable complaints. The Council did not expect its staff to suffer behaviour or complaints by customers which were unreasonable in content, tone or persistence. In appropriate circumstances the Council would take proportionate action to protect the wellbeing of its staff, Members and contractors, and also the integrity of its processes and limited resources.

When considering this policy and procedure, the Council would have regard to other relevant policies and procedures operated by the Council. It was to be emphasised that the document was a framework and not intended to be prescriptive and each case would be considered on its own facts. The policy and procedure had been drafted with regard to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's and Housing Ombudsman current guidance note on managing unreasonable complainant behaviour.

Members welcomed the policy and procedure.

Moved by Councillor Mary Dooley and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro  
**RESOLVED** that the Policy and Procedure on the Management of Unreasonable Complaints or Customers be approved.

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

To note the development of the Policy and Procedure on the Management of Unreasonable Complaints or Customers.

To provide Members the opportunity to give comments for consideration as part of the development of the Policy.

#### **Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

None.

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting.

### **EX83-24/25. COUNCIL PLAN TARGETS PERFORMANCE REPORT – OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2024**

Executive considered a detailed report in relation to the Quarter 3 (October to December 2024) outturns for the Council Plan targets 2024-2028.

Out of the 34 targets, 31 (91%) targets were on track, 1 (3%) target had been achieved and 2 (6%) targets were not on track.

## EXECUTIVE

### Our Customers – Providing excellent and accessible services

8 targets in total, all of track.

### Our Environment – protecting the quality of life for residents and businesses, meeting environmental challenges, and enhancing biodiversity

9 targets in total. 8 (88%) targets were on track.

1 (12%) target; **ENV.05 - Carry out 155 targeted proactive littering / dog fouling patrols per year**, was not on track and the narrative for this exception was contained in Appendix 3 to the report.

### Our Economy – by driving growth, promoting the district and being business and visitor friendly

7 targets in total, all 7 on target.

### Our Housing – by delivering social and private sector housing growth

10 targets in total. 8 (80%) targets were on track.

1 (10%) target; **Hous 01 Prepare and adopt new Council Housing Strategy by December 2024**, was behind as it had been achieved in December 2024 (*originally to be achieved in October 2024*).

1 (10%) target; **Hous 02 - Deliver 200 new homes through a new Bolsover Homes Programme using Dragonfly Development Ltd by March 2028**, was not on track and the narrative for this exception was contained in Appendix 4 to the report.

### Dragonfly KPIs

Dragonfly, a company wholly owned by the Council, significantly contributed to the achievement of the Council Plan. A summary of their performance against their key performance indicators was contained in Appendix 5 to the report.

A discussion took place and Councillor Ritchie noted that a Housing Summit meeting had been arranged for Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025, where this target would be discussed.

Moved by Councillor Donna Hales and seconded by Councillor Tom Munro  
**RESOLVED** that quarterly outturns against the Council Plan 2024-2028 targets be noted.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

This was an information report to keep Members informed of progress against the Council Plan targets noting achievements and any areas of concern.

### **Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

Not applicable to this report as providing an overview of performance against agreed targets.

## EXECUTIVE

*As the Information and Improvement Manager was leaving the Authority, this would be her last Executive meeting. Councillor Dooley noted that she wished to thank the Information and Improvement Manager for all the work she had done for the Council over the previous 40 years. Members echoed this comment and also noted their thanks.*

The Information and Improvement Manager, and the Programme & Projects Officer (Devolution Team), left the meeting.

### **EX84-24/25.            GAS AND HEATING COMPLIANCE POLICY**

Executive considered a detailed report, presented by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, which sought Members approval for the Gas and Heating Compliance Policy.

The Regulator for Social Housing revised Consumer Standards were effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and were designed to protect tenants and ensure they received high quality services. The Safety and Quality Standard required landlords to provide good quality homes and landlord services to tenants. It was explicit that the Council must ensure that all legal assessments were carried out with any arising actions to be completed within appropriate timescales.

The Gas and Heating Compliance Safety Policy set out the Council's legal obligations with regard to the installation and maintenance of gas appliances and its responsibility for heating systems in the Council's residential properties, and detailed how the Council would ensure it met those legal obligations, specifically that gas safe accredited operatives and contractors would carry out annual gas safety checks. The policy also sets out how the Council would monitor and report on its performance of these legal requirements, including an escalation process for when there was non-compliance.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Rob Hiney-Saunders  
**RESOLVED** that the Gas and Heating Compliance Policy be approved.

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

It was considered best practice to have a policy which set out the Council's approach to legislative compliance requirements.

#### **Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

The Policy was considered necessary so that members of the public were aware of the Council's responsibilities and approach to how it ensured compliance with these, as well as how it would use legal remedies contained within the tenancy agreement to gain access where needed to fulfil these legal obligations.

### **EX85-24/25.            ELECTRICAL COMPLIANCE POLICY**

Executive considered a detailed report, presented by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, which sought Members approval for the Electrical Compliance Policy.

## **EXECUTIVE**

The Regulator for Social Housing revised Consumer Standards were effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and were designed to protect tenants and ensure they received high quality services. The Safety and Quality Standard required landlords to provide good quality homes and landlord services to tenants. It was explicit that the Council must ensure that all legal assessments were carried out with any arising actions to be completed within appropriate timescales.

Then Electrical Safety Policy set out the Council's legal obligations with regard to the servicing, maintenance, and repair of Electrical Installations and detailed how the Council would ensure it met those legal obligations, specifically that qualified electricians and contractors would carry out five yearly electrical installation inspections and tests to all the Council's residential properties. The Policy also set out how the Council would monitor and report on its performance of those legal requirements, including an escalation process for when there was non-compliance.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor John Ritchie  
**RESOLVED** that the Electrical Compliance Policy be approved.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

It was considered best practice to have a policy which set out the Council's approach to legislative compliance requirements.

### **Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

The Policy was considered necessary so that members of the public were aware of the Council's responsibilities and its approach to how it ensured compliance with these, as well as how the Council would use legal remedies contained within the tenancy agreement to gain access where needed to fulfil these legal obligations.

## **EX86-24/25.            HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE Q1-Q3 2024-2025**

Executive considered a detailed report, presented by the Portfolio Holder for Housing, which provided Members with performance information for Quarters 1 – 3 (2024/2025), to understand progress made in meeting actions under the Regulator for Social Housing Improvement Plan, as well as an update on specific areas of activity for the Housing Service.

The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) had updated the Consumer Standards with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 - these fell into four main categories designed to ensure tenants received high quality services. The Social Housing Regulation Act, which also came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, gave the RSH enhanced powers to inspect landlords to ensure they complied with the Consumer Standards.

The Council was one of the first local authorities to be inspected under the new inspection regime and received a C2 grading in August 2024 - C1 was the highest and C4 the lowest. The C2 grade recognised that the Council had provided some assurance and met the Consumer Standards in many areas but had identified some areas where improvement was needed. The Housing Management Team, working alongside Dragonfly Management, continued to work with the Regulator to develop an improvement plan to address the key themes they had identified as well as looking at

## EXECUTIVE

how the Council could continue to demonstrate continuous compliance with the standards and strive for a C1 grading.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) were introduced by the Government in April 2023, and were designed to help monitor how well landlords were doing at providing quality homes and services, and to understand how they could make improvements. The Council, as a registered provider with more than 1,000 dwellings, was required to annually publish performance information regarding compliance with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). This included information which the Council held; Landlord Management Information and the Tenancy Perception Survey. In order to monitor compliance, figures were reported quarterly to the Housing Liaison Board (HLB), as well as the operational Housing Stock Management Group (HSMG).

The Council was also required to publish information on its complaint performance. The Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report must be published by June each year, and to ensure the Council monitored compliance with timescales and trend data, this information was also presented to the Housing Liaison Board (HLB) and Housing Stock Management Group (HSMG).

Between February and April 2024, the previous Government consulted on proposals to introduce a new, regulatory standard relating to the competence and conduct of social housing staff. This would ensure that staff had up-to-date skills, knowledge, and experience, and that they exhibited the right behaviours to deliver a high quality, professional service and treated residents with respect. This standard would require senior housing managers to hold a Level 4 Housing qualification and Senior Housing Executives to hold a Level 5 Housing qualification. The proposed standards were to be introduced with effect from April 2025, however, there had been no update from the new Government on this proposal.

Members asked various questions to which the Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement responded to.

Members thanked and congratulated the Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement for an in depth report.

**RESOLVED** that the performance information, and updates against the Regulator for Social Housing Improvement Plan be noted.

### Reasons for Recommendation

The Regulator for Social Housing had emphasised the need to have greater oversight of the Housing Service by Executive. This was an information report to keep Members informed of the Housing Services performance information for Quarters 1 – 3 (2024/2025) to provide an update regarding actions under the Regulator for Social Housing Improvement Plan as well as an update on the Stock Condition Survey.

### Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

Not applicable to this report as providing an overview of performance and for information only.

## **EXECUTIVE**

### **EX87-24/25. MANAGEMENT OF CORPORATE DEBT**

Executive considered a report, presented by Junior Cabinet Member, Councillor Duncan Haywood, which sought Members approval to write-off of debts in respect of Business Rates, Council Tax, Housing Rents and Overpaid Housing Benefits as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

When an amount of arrears becomes uncollectable it was described as a bad debt. Writing-off amounts which were no longer collectable was an essential part of the debt management process. It ensured that a focus was maintained on those amounts which were collectable, thus maximising overall levels of collection.

The Council's Constitution allowed the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to authorise the write-off of bad debts up to an approval limit of £2,500. The report recommended the write-off of a number of individual debts which were above the limit of £2,500 and a table in the report provided a summary of each class of write-off. In all cases every attempt had been made by the Council, and agencies working with the Council, to collect the outstanding debt before write-off was proposed.

Moved by Councillor John Ritchie and seconded by Councillor Phil Smith  
**RESOLVED** that the amounts included at paragraph 2.1 of the report (£159,640.52), and individually detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be written off.

#### **Reasons for Recommendation**

Given that all available options to recover the debt have been explored, it was important that the Council recognised the position and approve the write-off of the uncollectable debt.

#### **Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

These are outlined in the main body of the report.

The meeting concluded at 1040 hours.