

**PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL
13TH DECEMBER 2016**

PRESENT: Councillors Bokor (Chair)
Councillor Jukes (Vice-chair)
Councillors Campsall, K. Harris, Jones, Maynard Smith, Radford,
Savage, Smidowicz and Tassell

Councillor Fryer – Cabinet Lead Member for Open Spaces and
Leisure (item 6)
Councillor Morgan – Cabinet Lead Member for Communities and
Customer Service (item 6)

Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Head of Finance and Property Services
Head of Landlord Services
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Head of Planning and Regeneration
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Improvement and Organisational Development Manager
Community Safety Manager
Corporate Improvement and Policy Officer
Democratic Services Officer (HT)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Brookes and Seaton

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 18th October 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

31. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures of interest were made.

32. DECLARATIONS – THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations of the existence of the Party Whip were made.

33. QUESTIONS UNDER OTHER COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.17

No questions had been submitted.

34. 2016-17 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

A report of the Head of Strategic Support providing performance information for the second quarter of 2016-17, in respect of the Corporate Plan objectives and key performance indicators was submitted (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Corporate Improvement and Policy Officer attended to assist the Panel with the consideration of the item.

At the invitation of the Panel, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, the Head of Neighbourhood Services, the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item.

At the invitation of the Panel, Councillor Fryer and Councillor Morgan attended the meeting as the Lead Member for Open Spaces and Leisure Services and the Lead Member for Communities and Customer Service to assist with consideration of the item.

In respect of Indicator BP3 (The number of empty homes brought back into use), in addition to the information provided within the report and in response to issues raised by the Panel, the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing stated that the recruitment process for the Empty Homes Officer had taken longer than expected having to go out to advert twice, therefore during that period the team had continued to provide a reactive rather than proactive service to bring empty homes back into use. The post holder started in his role in August 2016 and considerable progress had been made to establish the number of true empty homes in the Borough, questionnaires have been sent to all the empty homes on the Council Tax register. From the returned questionnaire it had been established that 157 homes previously believed to be empty were actually occupied and the Council Tax records had been amended to reflect that. The Empty Homes Officer's role now enabled the Council to provide a proactive rather than reactive service; however, given the delay in recruiting to the post it was unlikely that the target of bringing 50 homes back into use would be met this year. Advice, support and Partnership Grants were being offered to home owners to encourage them to bring homes back into use.

In respect of Indicator BP5 (percentage of contamination for dry recycling, for nine months of the year), in addition to the information provided within the report and in response to issues raised by the Panel, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Cabinet Lead Member for Open Spaces and Leisure Services stated the following:

- since the report had been published the percentage of contamination for dry recycling had reduced from 12.94% to 11.49%; however that was still above the 10% target. A campaign had been launched to remind residents what should not be put in recycling bins. A sticker listing the three main contaminants, textiles, food and nappies was being put on every bin in the Borough;
- individual circumstances would be considered, with education and support also offered to residents who persistently contaminated their bins.

In respect of Indicator KI2 (number of affordable home delivered – gross) in addition to the information provided within the report and in response to issues raised by the Panel, the Head of Planning and Regeneration stated the following:

- with 150 affordable dwellings currently under construction it was anticipated that the end of year target would be met;
- if a developer wanted to vary the agreed total of affordable housing for a development then an application would be required to request a variation to the Section 106 Agreement.

In respect of Indicator KI4 (percentage waste sent for reuse, recycling & composting) in addition to the information provided within the report and in response to issues raised by the Panel, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Cabinet Lead Member for Open Spaces and Leisure Services stated the following:

- recycling trends nationally and locally had plateaued as it was increasingly difficult to increase the levels of recycling. More innovative ideas were being promoted, including targeting street sweepings and educational programmes would continue;
- there were seasonal variations and it was likely that the target was reached in Quarter 1 due to the substantial garden waste that was collected which weighed a significant amount.

In respect of Indicator KI12 (significant reduction in all crime), in addition to the information provided within the report and in response to issues raised by the Panel, the Head of Neighbourhood Services, the Community Safety Manager and the Cabinet Lead Member for Communities and Customer Service stated the following:

- nationally crime rates were increasing; however the Council was working with its partners through multi-agency projects to manage and contain the problem. The Council was continually improving against its most similar family benchmarking authorities, moving from eighth to fifth out of fifteen;
- improvements had been seen in one of the Borough's highest crime areas, Beat 65 (Hastings) and work in student areas was ongoing to improve security in those areas;
- a significant problem involved the short custodial sentences given to offenders and the new Joint Action Group (JAG) structure was working positively to ensure that repeat offending was kept to a minimum.

RESOLVED

1. that the performance results, associated commentary and the explanations provided be noted;
2. that in respect of Business Plan Indicator BP3 (Number of empty homes brought into use), the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing provide further details on the 157 homes now identified as being occupied.

Reasons

1. To record the information contained in the 2016-17 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Information report.
2. To provide members of the Panel with greater detail on the types of properties that have been identified.

35. CAPITAL PLAN AMENDMENT REPORT

A report of the Head of Finance and Property Services detailing the Capital Plan Amendments was submitted (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Finance and Property Services attended to assist the Panel with the consideration of the item.

At the invitation of the Panel, the Head of Planning and Regeneration assisted the Panel with the consideration of the item and stated that there was specific guidance and tests governing planning obligations and Planning officers worked closely with parish and town councils to ensure their involvement at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLVED

1. that the information contained in the report of the Head of Finance and Property Services be noted;
2. that the Head of Finance and Property Services liaise with relevant officers to provide information to the following councillors and Panel in respect of the following issues:
 - in respect of scheme Z478 Shortcliffe Community Park – Councillor Campsall requested information on the virement of funds from Stapleford Park;
 - in respect of the Hallam Fields Community Hall development – Councillor Jones requested an update on the timeline for the development;
 - in respect of scheme Z393 Grants for Shop Front Improvements and scheme Z396 Shepshed Shop Front Improvement Grants – the Panel requested clarification regarding what each scheme covered.

Reasons

1. The Panel was satisfied with the information provided.
2. To provide responses to specific questions raised by members of the Panel.

36. HRA REVENUE MONITORING REPORT

A report of the Head of Finance and Property Services detailing the Revenue Outturn position of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to the end of September 2016 was submitted (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Finance and Property Services attended to assist the Panel with the consideration of the item and stated that the vacancy savings referred to in the report was the target rather than the actual figure. Savings were made when posts were left vacant during recruitment and when posts could not be filled. Agency staff were used if there were a high number of vacant posts in a particular service at any time.

RESOLVED

1. that the information contained in the report of the Head of Finance and Property Services be noted;
2. that the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing provide the Panel with a more detailed breakdown of the underspend on salaries, legal costs and consultation fees in that service.

Reasons

1. The Panel was satisfied with the information provided.
2. To provide the Panel with additional information for this particular service area.

37. UPDATE REPORT – HOUSING REPAIRS COMPLAINTS

A report of the Head of Landlord Services detailing the number of complaints received in respect of housing repairs was submitted (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Landlord Services attended to assist the Panel with the consideration of the item.

RESOLVED that the information contained in the report of the Head of Landlord Services be noted.

Reason

The Panel was satisfied with the information provided.

38. VACANT POSTS AND THE USE OF AGENCY STAFF – PLANNING SERVICE

A report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration providing an update on vacant posts and the use of agency staff in the service was submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Planning and Regeneration attended to assist the Panel with the consideration of the item, and in response to issues raised by the Panel, stated that:

- there were currently 54 members of staff in Planning Services, with three vacant posts whose duties were currently being covered by agency staff. The cost of agency staff was off-set from salary savings; however, the cost of agency staff had significantly decreased this financial year, following recruitment to previously vacant posts;
- the service was functioning well and meeting its targets and providing agency staff could be used to cover any staffing shortfalls the service would continue to achieve those targets and standards;
- nationally there was a shortage of qualified planning officers and the Council supported programmes to sponsor officers to gain further qualifications wherever possible.

RESOLVED

1. that the information contained in the report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration be noted;
2. that an update report be submitted to the Panel in six months.

Reason

1. The Panel was satisfied with the information provided.
2. To ensure continuous monitoring of staffing levels and the use of agency staff in Planning Services.

39. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support was submitted to enable the Panel to consider its work programme and to propose to the Scrutiny Management Board any additions, deletions and amendments as appropriate (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Improvement and Organisational Development Manager assisted the Panel with the consideration of the item.

RESOLVED

1. that the issue of Delivery against Target Housing Mix for New Housing (to be set out in Council's Housing Supplementary Planning Document) be included as part of the quarterly Performance Monitoring report as part of its existing monitoring of new housing delivery and be scheduled once the method of monitoring concerned has been developed;
2. to note the current position with the Panel's Work Programme.

Reasons

1. To ensure appropriate scrutiny of delivery against this target once the information is available.
2. To make the Panel aware of the current position with its Work Programme.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel.