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## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Virtual Meeting Via Skype on Wednesday, 17 November 2021 from 7.00 pm - 8.15 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Cameron Beart (Substitute for Councillor Ken Pugh), Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), Steve Davey, Mike Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Oliver Eakin, Tim Gibson, James Hall, Mike Henderson, Denise Knights, Pete Neal, Ken Rowles (Substitute for Councillor Carole Jackson) and Bill Tatton.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Billy Attaway, David Clifford, Kellie MacKenzie and Tony Potter.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Alan Horton and Roger Truelove.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Carole Jackson and Ken Pugh.

### 436 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2021 (Minute Nos. 317 – 323) and the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 21 October 2021 (Minutes Nos. 394 – 397) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 437 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 438 2021-22 Q2 SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which presented the year-to-date quarterly performance management report for the second quarter of 2021/2022 (July – September 2021) as previously reported to the Strategic Management Team and Informal Cabinet. He drew attention to page 7, the list of red indicators, and explained that the number of missed refuse and recycling bins met short term targets, but the annual target would be missed, due to previous lower performance. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance explained that the Planning Enforcement and Land Charges teams had staffing issues, and that was the reason why targets were not being met. He drew Members' attention to the 100% fly-tipping incidents attended to within three days and the increase in number of affordable homes in the Borough.

The Chairman went through Appendix I, with Members.

#### Table 1

A Member was disappointed to see the percentage of Planning Enforcement complaints being dealt within the targeted 21 days. He acknowledged that this was because of staffing issues in Planning Enforcement, but questioned whether

reporting on the number of complaints responded to within the 21 days was the correct indicator to report on, as the Enforcement Officers were sometimes waiting for the Planning Officers to give their recommendations on how to deal with the complaint.

A Member highlighted that problems recruiting Planning Enforcement officers were countrywide, not just within the Borough, and this also extended to Planning Officers, due to private housing companies paying higher salaries. This was a real problem that needed to be fixed as people knew we had a shortage and might try to 'cheat the system'.

The Committee were invited to debate on other possible indicators that could be reviewed, and the points raised included:

- The new committee system set-up could be an opportunity to reconsider performance objectives and reporting; and
- Cabinet should review and look at possible changes to the reporting indicators before the committee system was implemented.

The Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services said that this report was a summary of all the indicators that individual teams reported on, but agreed that the new committee structure, that would come into place in May 2022, created an opportunity to change and improve the reporting process.

Councillor Mike Dendor proposed that Cabinet reviewed the monitoring system to make the reporting indicators contain more qualitative information and come back with some suggestions to the Scrutiny Committee for them to progress and establish before the new committee system was in place. This was seconded by Councillor Ken Rowles and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

The Chairman welcomed the improvement in the collection of refuse and recycling bins but wanted to see what impact the brown bin collection had. The Policy and Performance Business Improvement Officer agreed to find out the figures for brown bin collections and circulate to Members.

### **Table 3**

A Member congratulated the Housing Officer, Cabinet Member for Housing and their Deputy, and the Leader, for the progress and success with the increased number of affordable homes. The Member was concerned with the percentage of staff that were trained in safeguarding and thought that the figure should be 100%. Another Member shared the same concerns and asked whether the Leader could work with the Chief Executive to get the percentage of staff trained higher by using online training facilities.

In response, the Policy and Performance Business Improvement Officer advised that the safeguarding training was separated into different levels and modules and explained that the level of training required depended on grade and/or job role. The Chairman asked the Policy and Performance Business Improvement Officer to share the break-down of the different levels and percentage of staff that had completed that level of training, so the Committee could see what roles had a lack

of trained staff. The officer agreed to share this information with Members in an update after the meeting.

Councillor Mike Henderson proposed that safeguarding training be pushed forward to cover all staff to achieve 100% as soon as possible. This was seconded by Councillor Tim Gibson and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

A Member said that the Enforcement Team were doing a great job in reaching 100% fly-tipping cases within 3 days but felt that this was not a true representation of fly-tipping being dealt with properly. He added that sometimes the fly-tipping would not be removed until several weeks later, causing disruption to residents. In response, the Leader recognised that the information did not show a clear picture of how quickly fly-tipping cases were being dealt with and said this would be looked at in more detail in future reports.

A Member sought information on the amount of temporary accommodation the Council used inside and also outside of the Borough. He also sought clarification on the number of stage two complaints and what made a complaint a stage two? The Policy and Performance Business Improvement Officer agreed to share this information in an update to Members. With regard to the stage two complaints, he explained that when a complaint had been followed-up after a response had been provided, it would then become a stage two complaint.

The Chairman said the percentage of visits to a Council-owned or supported leisure centre was good to see and thought the lifting of restrictions from the Covid-19 Pandemic had helped this. He asked the Policy and Performance Business Improvement Officer to give a comparison between the figures last year during the lockdown restrictions and this year.

#### **Table 4**

A Member sought clarification on the percentage of applications that were determined within the 13-week deadline as some residents had said their applications had taken longer than this deadline and asked if the 13-week deadline was from date of submission or date of validation. The Policy and Performance Business Improvement Officer said the 13-week deadline started from the date of validation.

#### **Appendix I**

A Member commented that the number of missed bins was disappointing, but understood some of the reasons for this. He said that issues with cars parking either side of roads made it difficult for refuse lorries to access some areas. He asked if the Council could send information to residents to be mindful about parking in residential areas?

Another Member questioned the website figures and the feasibility of the website as residents found it hard to use and difficult to find the information they were looking for. In response, the Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services said that the team were undergoing a review of the website and a survey would be

circulated to Members for their comments and suggestions on how the Council could improve the website for residents.

The Chairman thanked the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, the Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services, and the Policy and Performance Business Improvement Officer for their attendance.

***Resolved: That the report be noted.***

#### **439 CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Chairman noticed that the Fees & Charges report was scheduled to be considered at the January 2022 Full Council meeting, before going to the Scrutiny Committee and asked officers to review this to ensure that the Fees & Charges report, as well as the Budget was considered by the Scrutiny Committee before it went to Full Council.

The Chairman said that he would like to see a report provided to the Committee on an update on progress on the Masters House, Swale Rainbow Homes and the greening of Swale House.

***Resolved: That the report be noted.***

#### Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel