

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 15 MARCH 2023

PRESENT: Councillor G Heath (Chair)

Councillors C Atkins, E Fallows, M Gledhill, T Hall, N Hawkins,
T Holmes, K J Jackson, T Riley, P Routledge, L Swindlehurst and
N Yates

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor G Bentley, K Hoptroff and P Roberts

APOLOGIES: Councillors M Bowen and P Wilkinson

104 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY**

There were none.

105 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

DECIDED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 be approved.

106 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN)**

There were none.

107 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:**

No interests were declared.

108 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY**

Q1. Question for the Leader of the Council received from Councillor Bentley:

“Can Members conduct a review of the opening times for the Cheadle One-Stop Shop, in order to consider an extension to the availability and accessibility for this service?”

Response:

“Since reopening our receptions in September 2021, the Cheadle one stop shop has opened 9.30-4.30 on Mondays. Footfall has reduced dramatically as, pre-2021, a high proportion of transactions were related to making payments which are now completed successfully via alternative channels.

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We average 10 enquiries each Monday and, outside of the opening hours, customers are accessing services online or via the telephone. Should a customer have an urgent request and wants to see a member of staff face-to-face we offer convenient appointments at the Cheadle or Leek offices.

We have five vacancies in the customer services team currently. Whilst we recruited two new members of staff in January this year, two other members of the customer services team transferred out to other service areas, so we are now advertising again, and to date we have not received any suitable applications.

With the resource available currently, extending the hours at the Cheadle one stop shop would extend the call answer times on the phones*. We continually monitor demand and direct resource as necessary. We are now preparing for our busiest periods with council tax bills going out during w/c 13 March followed by the elections in May where we expect an increase in enquiries.

*Due to booked leave and unexpected absence we saw an increase in call answer times last week – averaging 8 minutes. If we were to redirect resource from call-handling to reception duties then this would become a regular issue until we recruit to the vacant posts.”

It was agreed that a written response would be provided to Councillor Bentley in relation to the long-term plans and potential alternative use of the Council Offices in Cheadle.

109 **WORK PROGRAMME**

DECIDED:

That the Work Programme be approved.

110 **ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT - DAVID OWEN, CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY MANAGER**

The Panel considered the annual health and safety report as required by the Council's assurance framework.

The Council and its strategic alliance partner High Peak Borough Council recognise their obligations under health and safety legislation and had declared their commitment to improving the health, safety, and welfare of their employees, as detailed in the corporate health and safety policy, and accompanying policies.

The annual health and safety report provided an update for councillors of the key aspects of health and safety which occurred across the two councils during the period from April 2021 to March 2022. The annual report was the twelfth such report for the two Councils making up the Alliance.

Over the last fourteen years a lot of effort had gone into strengthening the Council's position in relation to health and safety management. This had been a process of gradually tightening up on our policies and procedures and ensuring that these remained relevant and up to date.

The detail of such actions were provided in the report. The annual report also provided, detail on training information, emerging risks and supporting statistical information as shown in the appendices.

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Members debated unannounced health and visits, whistleblowing and channels for frontline AES and Norse employees to raise issues with the Council.

In response to a query in relation to removal of asbestos and improved energy performance, members were assured that an annual survey was conducted at all properties within the Council's ownership and that carbon reduction would be looked at as part of the wider review of the Council's assets.

A member of the Panel suggested that the report could include more emphasis around mental health issues and ongoing support for mental health first aiders.

A member enquired about the frequency of appraisals, terms and conditions of AES staff and publicity of vacancies. It was confirmed that the Council was introducing a new staff appraisal process and as part of the transfer arrangements, staff employed by AES or Norse should receive an annual appraisal.

The Health and Safety Manager was thanked for the support he had provided to Biddulph Town Council.

DECIDED:

- 1) The Resources Overview & Scrutiny Panel NOTED the 2019/20 Health and Safety Annual Report;
- 2) For the Council's Health and Safety Manager to liaise with AES and Norse in relation to a formal process for staff to report issues;
- 3) Rates of pay, frequency of appraisals and advertisement of staff vacancies to be raised at the Board meetings of AES and Norse;
- 4) For the benefits of teckal companies to be provided to Councillor Bentley.

111 **ANNUAL REPORT - TANYA COOPER, HEAD OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRANSFORMATION**

The Panel received the Council's Annual Report for 2021/22. This was a core document which compared Staffordshire Moorlands' performance and costs with Councils in the West Midlands region and nationally.

The Annual Report established the context for the Council in planning its performance delivery. This included both the financial backdrop against which the Council must deliver its services, the risk profile and also the local place context of the area and how it compared against a range of socio-demographic measures.

The report looked back over the Council's achievements in 2021/22 and used national benchmarking data 2020/21 to assess value for money.

The analysis was built around the Corporate Plan priorities.

Members thanked the Head of Organisation Development and Transformation for a comprehensive report.

The following matters were discussed by the Panel:-

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- Single person households
- Quality of housing in the area, improvements to housing including the provision of suitable housing for older people
- The elderly population and concern that the 25-44 year age profile had decreased.
- Increased supply of commercial land and businesses to encourage young people to stay in the area
- Low average earnings of residents
- Comparatively low spend of the Council and the requirement for investment in facilities and the environment
- The amount of contracts awarded to local business
- CCTV coverage and antisocial behaviour in Leek
- Lack of public toilet facilities in Leek town centre and Brough Park
- Possible use of Disabled Facilities Grant funding for a Changing Place facility in Brough Park
- Improved tourism offer in Cheadle
- Cleanliness of public toilets and upkeep of signage and pay and display machines.
- The recent visit to the CCTV control centre and accessibility of the footage by the Police
- The report being the best basis to move forward and improve the growth of the area.

The Vice-Chair of the Panel, Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group gave thanks to Councillors Heath, Jackson, Hall, Hawkins and Riley due to this being their last meeting as they were not standing for election in May 2023.

DECIDED:

- 1) The Panel NOTED the findings of the benchmarking exercises;
- 2) For the percentage of staff employed with disabilities to be provided after the meeting;
- 3) For an update on the Changing Places Facility at Brough Park to be supplied after the meeting.

112 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair moved:-

“That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated.”

113 **EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

DECIDED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 February 2023 be approved.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm

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_____ Chairman _____ Date