

# **STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING**

### **Minutes**

**MONDAY, 11 JULY 2022**

PRESENT: Councillor D Shaw (Chair)

Councillors A Hart, I Herdman, T Holmes, K Hoptroff, B A Hughes,  
B Johnson, J Jones, T Riley, Routledge, P Routledge,  
L Swindlehurst and P Taylor

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor C Atkins, M Gledhill, J Porter, P Roberts, S Scalise and  
R Ward

IN ATTENDANCE:

APOLOGIES: Councillors N Yates

10 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY.**

Councillor Atkins was substitute member for Councillor Yates.

11 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

**DECIDED** – That the minutes of the meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 13 June 2022 be **APPROVED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

Although the Chair had not received prior notification of any urgent items, Councillor Atkins requested an update on the travellers currently onsite at Brough Park.

The Leader confirmed that this matter was being looked into and the relevant ward councillors would be kept informed.

13 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:**

<b>Agenda No.</b>	<b>Member Declaring Interest</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
Agenda Item 8 - Your Housing Group Performance Update	Cllr A Hart	Other – Is a relative of the YHG Customer Representative present at the meeting.

14 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.**

Question received from Councillor Hoptroff:

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Q1. "SMDC's Tree Strategy was due for renewal at the start of this year (it lapsed at the end of last year and the last promised delivery date was March of this year (*section 5.4 of Climate Change Plan*). The Green Infrastructure Plan has not been put before Scrutiny since January 2021. When will there be further discussion of the strategy?"

### **Response from Councillor Porter – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change:**

The Council has an existing Tree Strategy, which is perhaps somewhat of a misnomer in that it is an operational policy that sets out how the Council manages trees. The existing "Tree Strategy" will be refreshed in the next 12 months in the light of a wider review of the tree service, at which point it will be more appropriately re-titled.

As Councillor Hoptroff points out, our Climate Change Plan includes a commitment to encourage tree planting and create a framework for the planting of new trees. At the time of writing the report, our approach was to have a separate Tree Strategy to deliver that commitment. However, following further consultation with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, we now believe that the tree strategy should form part of an overall biodiversity strategy that emphasises the importance of all habitats. We are in the process of commissioning development of the biodiversity strategy – which we are going to call A Plan for Nature - with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and they have promised a detailed, costed proposal by the end of July.

## 15 **WORK PROGRAMME (6.10PM)**

Councillor Swindlehurst – Vice-Chair, updated the Panel on the initial work carried out by A E Donate in relation to defibrillators in the District. An accurate list was being collated which would include whether the defibrillator was registered with the WMAS, any maintenance requirements and if funding could be sought from SMDC.

Due to the cost of living crisis, Councillor Gledhill requested that an item on food banks was added to the Work Programme.

The Chair was keen for members to hear from local groups to provide an interchange of ideas to help stimulate the voluntary sector. A suggestion was made for a representative from Werrington Community Library and Wellbeing Centre to attend the meeting scheduled for 12 September 2022 and for a representative from the Auctioneers Arms in Caverswall to attend a future meeting.

The Democratic Services Team would contact Support Staffordshire to liaise with local groups to establish which organisations would like to attend a meeting of the Panel. For those that wished to attend, meetings would be organised around themes such as; Health and Wellbeing, Art and Culture etc.

### **DECIDED:**

- 1) That the Work Programme be agreed, subject to an item on the foodbanks being added;
- 2) For voluntary groups to be invited to attend future meetings of the Panel.

## 16 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP 6 MONTH PERFORMANCE UPDATE - AARON HAMMERSLEY, HEAD OF HOUSING. (6.15PM)**

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Members considered a briefing paper introduced by Dave Lovatt - Regional Housing Manager, which provided a performance and development update on YHG business areas identified in the legacy agreement and related to business activity between October 2021 and May 2022. Aaron Hamersley – Head of Housing , Paula Marshall Director of Housing and Customer Service and Conan McKinley - Director of Asset Strategy were present at the meeting. A customer representative was also present - Andrea Hampton.

Topics covered within the report included:

- Your Housing Group Response to Covid 19
- Housing Management
- Neighbourhood inspection and Customer Engagement Events
- Money Advice Support
- Lettings
- Compliance
- Development
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Asset improvement
- Digital Engagement
- Community Regeneration
- Commercial update

Members had the opportunity to ask questions and comment as follows:-

*Mill Street* – It was reported that there was on an ongoing issue with fly-tipping at this site and the refuse bins needed to be made secure as non-residents were leaving waste there. Fly-tipped waste had recently been removed and as part of priority neighbourhood work, the issue around the bins was being looked at in conjunction with the Belle Vue Flats. Councillors were welcome to attend a meeting on 14 July 2022 on site with the contractor to look at designs and listen to the view of residents.

*Money advice support* – Members were pleased this service was provided given little-face-to face advice was available.

*Well Street, Cheadle* – At present YHG were still exploring options for this site and the Panel would be kept informed when further details had been confirmed.

*Hammersley Haye Garages* –. Further work was required in relation to the garages, a steering group had been set up and it was anticipated that further information would be available to Panel next time YHG were in attendance.

As part of the legacy agreement, members were keen to see some new properties built in the District. Colleagues in the Development Team at YHG would be able to provide this information after the meeting.

*Shops on Mill Street* – Works had ceased but assurance was given that the work would be completed by the end of July 2022. In particular concerns were raised in relation to the dropped kerbs and raised man holes.

*Average re-let time of 44 days* – In response to query around staffing issues, it was explained that not enough resource was allocated to emergency repairs to keep up with the demand for service. Therefore 12 staff were redeployed from the Void Team to the Repairs Team. The staff had now returned to their usual employment.

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There was still a backlog but it was decided that customers currently residing in properties which required repairs were a priority to the organisation.

*Response times for emergency repairs* – A councillor had previously been assured the response time was 4 hours and gave an example of a vulnerable customer that had experienced reoccurring issues with heating and hot water which had not been resolved within the given time. Due to this, written clarification of the response time was requested and for this information to be distributed to the YHG call handlers

In addition to this, a case which involved an issue with a serious water leak was described to the Panel. YHG were aware of this particular case and advised that the customer would receive a welfare check. Any details in relation to specific cases would be provided to YHG after the meeting.

*Customer satisfaction* – Although 92% satisfaction was considered to be good across the industry, a member of the Panel was of the opinion that this should be higher a rate.

*Looked after children aged 16* – It was confirmed that the allocations policy included special criteria for young people and they were not limited to be housed in one property in the area. The Officer offered to provide more insight into this directly with the Councillor at a convenient time.

The Chair thanked the representatives for attending the meeting.

**DECIDED:** That the performance update be noted.

### 17 **SMDC CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE. (6:45PM)**

Councillor Porter – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, introduced a report which updated Members on the progress towards meeting the Council's Climate Change targets and to provided detail of next steps.

Following the declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019, the Council had developed action plans to deliver an ambition for the district to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The final part of the plan was agreed in December 2021. This set out an approach following seven strategic themes. The Annual Report appended to the report communicated the development so far and future steps to achieve the ambitions.

The highlights included:

- Introduction of Moorlands Green Network, Parish Council Climate Change Forum, developing a youth engagement strategy.
- Climate Change Fund
- Established a Climate Change and Biodiversity Delivery Group
- Employed a dedicated Climate Change and Biodiversity Officer, shared across the Alliance.
- Planted 22 community orchards.
- Trialled and subsequently introduced using waste hydrogenated vegetable oil in Council fleet vehicles.
- Trained Heads of Service and Climate Champions in Carbon Literacy, resulting in Bronze Carbon Literacy accreditation for the Council.

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- Completed energy and water reviews of all Council buildings to identify improvements to performance

Members were pleased to receive a written report but there was uncertainty around the Council meeting its targets due to a lack of milestones. The Panel was advised that it wasn't always possible to measure the specific impact of measures put in place. A few omissions were highlighted by members such as; renewable energy generation by the Council, retro-fitting of houses, assistance with the cost of living and the lack of a supplementary planning document regarding sustainable housing. The adoption of a supplementary planning document would be included in the next climate change update to the Panel.

Discussion took place around the possibility of the Climate Change Sub-Groups to be re-convened and a request was made for the actual numbers of trees planted rather than a percentage.

In response to a query in relation to the outcomes of the Energy Audit of the Council's buildings, members were assured that key findings had been established and the Head of the Assets Team would be asked to provide a report on the Asset Management Plan at the next meeting of the Panel. Members were particularly interested to hear about the installation of LED lightbulbs, solar panels and EV charging points.

A member of the Panel asked for the Council to be mindful of the amount of money it spent to achieve its ambitions around climate change.

To conclude, as part of the regular Climate Change Update, members wished to see figures and timescales on matters which were within the Council's control.

**DECIDED:** The update be received.

### 18 **SMDC REFRESHED ENVIRONMENT ENFORCEMENT POLICY. (7:15PM)**

David Smith – Head of Communities and Climate Change, presented a report on an updated Corporate Enforcement Policy which set out the Council's general approach to enforcement. It also included a revised policy on enforcement of environmental crimes.

The Council engaged in regulatory enforcement when delivering certain functions including environmental health, environmental crime, licensing, development control, housing and finance.

The Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy was intended to be an over-arching document which can be supplemented by enforcement policies specific to each area of the Council's enforcement activity.

As a whole, the Council's enforcement policies were a guide for businesses and individuals who may be subject to regulation. The documents set out what can be expected from the Council's regulatory services, as well as providing the public with a statement of the Council's intent on enforcement. To this end the policies, once approved, would be publicised on the Council's website and elsewhere as appropriate.

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The Council had reviewed and updated its Corporate Enforcement Policy, to reflect revised regulatory guidance, and a copy could be found at Appendix A to the report.

The Council's Environmental Enforcement Policy was adopted in 2017. The Corporate Plan 2019-2023 committed to reviewing the policy as a means of taking steps to further reduce dog fouling and littering.

The revised Alliance wide policy, which could be found at Appendix B, confirmed the Council's triple-track approach to responding to environmental crimes that consists of Education, Enforcement and Cleansing. The policy recognised the Council's changed operating model following the creation of Alliance Environmental Services (AES) and the role of Council services in delivering the policy following internal restructuring.

A member of the Panel commented on the excellent level of service they had received from the Enforcement Officers at the Council.

### **DECIDED:**

- 1) The Panel **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet **APPROVED** the revised Corporate Enforcement Policy at Appendix A;
- 2) The Panel **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet **APPROVED** the revised Policy on Enforcement of Environmental Crimes provided at Appendix B.

The meeting closed at 8.03 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Date