

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

MONDAY, 21 JANUARY 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A Banks (Chair)

Councillors B A Hughes, K J Jackson, L D Lea, M A Lovatt,
L A Malyon, T McNicol, J Redfern, T Riley and P Wood.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor C J S Atkins, M Bowen, B Johnson and D Ogden.

APOLOGIES: Councillors M M Lovatt and C Pearce.

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

DECIDED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Panel held on the 26th November 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

There were no substitute members.

126 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:**

No declarations of interests were made.

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

There were none.

128 **CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU MERGER BUSINESS CASE.**

The Panel had the opportunity to give its consideration to the Citizens Advice Bureau merger business case.

Both Citizen Advice services had identified long term financial challenges that required urgent action to ensure that high quality advice services continued to be provided to the citizens of Leek, Cheadle and their surrounding areas. A number of options had been considered and Leek and Cheadle CABs had decided to explore merging with the aim of improving financial sustainability by at least 18 months.

Although the financial position of both centres had improved over recent months due to additional income from a number of funding streams, the Boards believed that the merged organisation still offered significant benefits.

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It was proposed that such a merged organisation be called “Citizens Advice Staffordshire Moorlands” to better describe the area that the new organisation would serve. Following legal and contractual advice it was proposed that the new merged organisation would be formed from Cheadle Citizen Advice Centre, with all Leek staff TUPE’d into the new organisation.

The discussions on merger were completed by 31st December 2018 and the new organisation would be set up and running by 1st April 2019. The key milestones leading to the setting up of a merged organisation were set out in a Merger Project Planning Checklist put together by the Cheadle/Leek Merger Group. Results of consultation with stakeholders were included in the Business Plan.

DECIDED: That the business case be noted.

129 **STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ANNUAL UPDATE.**

The Panel received a presentation introduced by Brian Moss - Head of Northern Service Delivery Group, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, which covered the following subject areas:-

- Services carried out by the Fire and Rescue Service
- Prevention and Protection Work
- Staffordshire Moorlands Fire Stations
- Response Arrangements
- Incidents Attended (included comparable statistics to the previous year)
- Multi Agency Response/Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles
- Challenge Leading to Opportunity
- The Service and the Future
- Community Room Use

The Officers explained how working with key partners helped with the significant demand on resources. The incredible effort from staff and support from neighbouring crews for the fire at The Roaches was referred to along with the revenue from the government being reduced.

Carl Mason – Station Manager (Biddulph & Leek), explained how dedicated community use rooms were located within the stations and encouraged Councillors to make enquiries and make use of these facilities.

Members passed on their thanks to the Officers for the excellent service provided, particularly over the summer months during which a number of moorland fires had occurred.

Questions were asked in relation to recruitment, finances, sky lanterns and the usage of the community space at the fire station in Ipstones. In response, the Officers advised that the Fire and Rescue Service continually tried to recruit and two new members of staff were due to commence their employment in February this year. Training courses were now delivered locally and at the Head Quarters. Crews were not aware of sky lanterns being a significant concern. A decline in the usage of the community space at Ipstones Fire Station had been noticed and they were working with the Property Team to improve the use of the facilities.

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Discussion also took place around shared facilities for the emergency services at Biddulph and the different techniques required to deal with accidents which involved electric cars.

The Chair passed on his thanks to the Officers for attending the meeting.

DECIDED: That the presentation be received.

130 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP 6 MONTHLY UPDATE.**

Each representative from Your Housing Group (YHG) was introduced to the Panel.

Members considered a briefing paper introduced by Sharon Wheeler – Property Manager, which provided a performance and development update on YHG business areas identified in the legacy agreement and related to business activity between April 2018 and December 2018.

YHG had recognised the need to enhance customer experience and take steps to reconnect with its customers and neighbourhoods. A new project to enhance customer engagement was being rolled out in the Moorlands from the beginning of February along with a programme of tenancy visits. These visits would include meeting with customers, collection of key personal data, property inspections, establishing concerns and identifying issues which may put a customer's tenancy at risk. Appropriate action would then be taken such as a referral to another YHG team or an external agency.

Property Agents would carry out regular neighbourhood inspections to check on cleaning and grounds maintenance of communal areas and to better identify and deal with nuisance such as fly-tipping or vandalism. Property Agents would maintain regular contact with Neighbourhood Champions (to be recruited) and they and other customers would be invited to join the Property Agents in doing their inspections.

Customers would also be provided with Neighbourhood plans which were specific local plans which contained key information.

Staff continued to work agilely, used hubs in Leek and Biddulph, along with a weekly surgery.

YHG continued to be 100% compliant in terms of domestic gas servicing, asbestos checks, electrical safety and legionella testing in flatted blocks.

The Development Team were currently looking at the development of two sites in the Staffordshire Moorlands area. This included a site at Cheadle, for shared ownership and affordable rent and a site in Leek which would be split into a number of phases. Further information on this scheme would be provided at the next meeting that YHG were due to attend.

Further detail on the amount to be spent on repairs would be circulated to the Panel after the meeting.

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All tenancy sign ups to general needs housing in the Moorlands area were now digital except where this posed specific challenges for the customer due to disability or vulnerability. A new digital portal had also been rolled out across the Group.

YHG continued to run 3 weekly workclubs in the area, which were held in Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle.

The Officers also informed the Panel of regeneration and land use initiatives which included improvements to commercial units.

Panel members described the different levels of customer service received in relation to housing repairs and it was felt that it was difficult for tenants and non tenants to make a complaint to YHG. A case of a property being unfit to live in was reported along with a broken light on Hencroft in Leek which had not been repaired, despite numerous requests for this to be rectified.

Members were advised that there was a free all purpose telephone line for customers to use and the YHG website. All complaints were dealt with by a dedicated complaints team which reported to the Chief Executive. Face to face appointments were also available on Mondays at Moorlands House and the Neighbourhood Inspections/Walk-a-bouts would start to take place. Members were asked to give details of individual cases to Sharon Wheeler at the end of the meeting and apologies were given for the incidents described to the Officers. Members also asked to be notified of the dates the Walk-a-bouts would take place.

Members raised the outstanding issue with the lease for the Haregate Community Centre and it was confirmed that this was being addressed.

Detailed discussion took place around the potential sites for development, right to buy, further rent level constraints, staffing numbers and the likelihood of the mill on Station Road in Biddulph being developed.

The representatives were asked how realistic the recruitment of the Neighbourhood Champions would be and in response, the Panel was advised that smaller focus groups would be more productive than the previous arrangements for customer involvement. Property Agents had been asked to recruit 5 Neighbourhood Champions each and it was hoped that there would be a total of 100 Neighbourhood Champions across the YHG.

A member of the Panel was concerned about the former Lightwood Home site in Cheadle as it had not been developed for a number of years. Brian Cronin - Chief Executive YHG, explained that more funding was required and as Ascent was a for profit organisation it hadn't been possible to receive grant funding. Going forward, YHG would be able to apply for Homes and Communities Agency grant funding and hopefully be in position to land bank in the Moorlands area. The Development Director would be invited to attend the meeting in 6 months time when there should be more clarity around this matter.

Members requested an update on the property in Leek which Borderland Voices had previously occupied and Sharon Wheeler agreed to look into this matter and report back to the Panel.

The Chair passed on thanks to the YHG representatives for attending the meeting.

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DECIDED: That the update be noted.

131 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered its Work Programme and a request was made for an item on On-Street Pay and Display Parking being added.

DECIDED: That the Panel's Work Programme for 2018/19 be agreed, subject to an item on On-Street Pay and Display Parking being added.

132 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.**

133 **REVIEW OF PUBLIC REALM CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM.**

The Panel considered a report which outlined the findings of a review of the Council's public realm CCTV system.

The meeting closed at 4.15 pm

_____Chairman _____Date