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## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH  
ON TUESDAY, 18TH JANUARY, 2022 AT 7.30 PM

#### MINUTES

**Present:** *Councillors: Councillor David Levett (Chair), Councillor Daniel Allen (Vice-Chair), Mike Hughson, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody and Claire Strong*

**In Attendance:** *William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Nurainatta Katevu (Legal Regulatory Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 1 member of the public, including registered speakers.*

#### 65 WELCOME

*Audio recording – 29 seconds*

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting that was being held in the Council Chamber and advised that the meeting was being streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel and some Officers were joining online.

The Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer to explain how proceedings would work.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call of those officers joining the meeting online to ensure that they could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

- Rules of Debate;
- Voting; and
- Covid Risk Assessment Measures.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor David Levett started the meeting proper.

#### 66 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 16 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kate Aspinwall, Tony Hunter and Carol Stanier.

Councillors Lisa Nash and Terry Tyler were absent.

Having given due notice, Councillor Morgan Derbyshire substituted for Councillor Tony Hunter.

**67 MINUTES - 14 DECEMBER 2021**

*Audio Recording – 2 minutes 53 seconds*

Councillor David Levett, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Morgan Derbyshire seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14 December 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

**68 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 26 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**69 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 30 seconds*

- (1) The Chair advised that the meeting would be audio and video recorded in line with Council policy.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that interests should be declared prior to an item and the detailed explanation of this was included on the agenda.

**70 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 56 seconds*

There was no public participation.

**71 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS**

*Audio recording – 4 minutes 02 seconds*

There were no Urgent or General Exception Items.

The Chair advised that he had agreed to two Delegated Authority decisions owing to urgency. These were the Additional Restrictions Grant and Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant, which required applications by end of February 2022 and grant funds would be awarded by March 2022.

**72 CALLED-IN ITEMS**

*Audio recording – 4 minutes 44 seconds*

There were no Called-In Items.

**73 CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS**

*Audio recording – 4 minutes 50 seconds*

Sarah Pateman, Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), gave a presentation on the work SADA are currently undertaking and how this relates to North Herts. This included:

- The aim of the service was to empower people to make decisions on their own relationships. This meant offering support across various areas, including tailored 1-to-1 support, death and benefits guidance, legal advice and support, housing support, amongst others.
- Around 150 champions had been trained across various partner organisations, including schools, doctors and Housing Associations.
- A forum was held every 3 months, with feedback at these meetings being relayed to the board and used to shape SADA policies and services.
- Schools and nurseries in North Herts had shown an interest in training sessions.
- A referral service working with men and woman affected by Modern Slavery had been established.
- 3 training session on Domestic Abuse had been given to North Herts District Council staff in 2021 and 3 further Modern Slavery training sessions were arranged for 2022.
- Every 6 weeks a panel of internal and external stakeholders and partners would come together to discuss the non “high-risk” cases, in order to identify early intervention strategies to stop them becoming high risk.
- The pandemic had given the opportunity to expand into virtual support, which had helped people engage as service times were better suited around lifestyles and working patterns.
- A newly refurbished refuge was soon to be opened, which would offer 2 family rooms and 2 smaller rooms and this will be available for North Herts residents to use. Food would be provided to residents and, working with food banks, it was hoped this would be fresh produce, not just tinned or frozen.
- There were soon to be 24 safe spaces, with 9 in North Herts, which were homes for those fleeing domestic violence to move into immediately. These were available for dads with children, as well as women.
- An out of hours service was available for around the clock support for service users.
- Detailed referral statistics were provided on the accompanying presentation, including specific data on North Herts.
- SADA also offered a Perpetrator Support Programme, which offered 1 to 1 support to those who had a history or were identified at risk of committing domestic violence.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor David Levett

In response to questions Sarah Pateman advised that:

- The perpetrator scheme was run alongside prison, youth and other services to identify where the perpetrators are and refer them into the scheme.
- Most of the users of this service are referred from other organisations, but some are self-referred.
- Most stay beyond the 8-week programme and some were still involved now having been referred from the start of the scheme in 2013.

Councillor Claire Strong thanked Sarah for her presentation and noted that the work they were doing was vital, albeit disappointing that it was required. She requested that the presentation and contact details for SADA be shared with other Members not on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee via MIS.

Councillor Nigel Mason commented that the presentation was very enlightening and was positive to hear that support services were out there. He also expressed disappointment that this service was required.

## **74 RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

*Audio recording – 26 minutes 02 seconds*

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and drew attention to the following:

- The Task and Finish Group on Community Engagement had been placed under review, owing to the duration of the pandemic and the uncertainty around working from home advice without changes to remote meeting legislation.
- Recommendations on Integrated Performance Management would be taken at Council in January.
- Recommendations around Q2 Performance Indicators on waste communications would be taken at Cabinet in January.
- The environmental concerns at the Harkness Court project would be considered at Cabinet in January. However, decisions regarding commercial viability were taken by the Cabinet Sub Committee in November and this cannot be revisited for 6 months.
- When updates were received on the Local Plan this would be passed onto Members.

Councillor David Levett advised that following the comments on Harkness Court made by the Overview and Scrutiny Members the Service Director – Commercial would explore the heating systems and ways to improve the energy rating. This was currently a work in process and would come back to Members once work had been conducted.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions, the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Planning Team were still working on a relatively open deadline regarding the receipt of the Local Plan.

Councillor Claire Strong proposed and Councillor Nigel Mason seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the report entitled ‘Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’ was noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and comment on actions and feedback received regarding resolutions previously made.

## 75 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

*Audio recording – 30 minutes 15 seconds*

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and drew attention to the following:

- There had been no substantial updates to the report as written.
- Attendance of the Local Enterprise Partnership had not been secured for this year, but would continue to request the attendance of the LEP for the civic year 2022/23.
- Highlighted the Forward Plan included as a supplementary item on this agenda and suggested the Future Waste Infrastructure Report and Greenspace Management Strategy be included as items on future O&S agendas.
- Requested Members advise if there were any further topics they would like to consider.

Councillor David Levett commented that the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan item should be brought to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, but only when this can be brought alongside updates on the Local Plan.

Councillor Claire Strong agreed that the two suggested topics made by the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager should be included, as well as the suggestion made by the Chair.

Councillor David Levett advised that the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in March was fairly full and suggested that the Crime and Disorder item be delayed to a future meeting. Councillor Levett requested Members provide detailed requests for discussion items under this topic to either himself or the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager.

Councillor Claire Strong proposed and Councillor Jim McNally seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Committee prioritises proposed topics for inclusion in the work programmes attached as Appendix A and, where appropriate, determines the high-level form and timing of scrutiny input.
- (2) That the Committee, having considered the most recent iteration of the Forward Plan, suggested the Greenspace Management Strategy, Housing Delivery Test Action Plan and Future Waste Infrastructure items to be considered at its meeting on 15 March 2022 and beyond.
- (3) That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Extract as attached at Appendix B was considered.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focussed Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.

## **76 ANNUAL RIPA REPORT**

*Audio recording – 34 minutes 15 seconds*

The Legal Regulatory Team Manager presented the report entitled Annual RIPA Report and advised of the following:

- There had been little change in the use of RIPA since January 2021 and therefore there was no update on the Council's current policy regarding RIPA.
- There had been a new legal update regarding covert surveillance and details the type of organisations and bodies which can take advantage of these changes, but Local Authorities were not included.
- The policy attached as an appendix to the report would be deleted, as it did not have an impact on the work done by the local authority.

Councillor Mike Hughson proposed and Councillor Claire Strong seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the report entitled 'Annual RIPA Report' was noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To comply with best practice guidance and the Committee's Terms of Reference.

**77 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

*Audio recording – 36 minutes 50 seconds*

No questions had been submitted.

The meeting closed at 8.06 pm

Chair