

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Monday, 6 June 2022 at 5.20 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Stephen Drew – Chair
Councillor Graham Cone – Vice-Chair

Councillors:	Anna Bradnam	Dr. Martin Cahn
	Sue Ellington	Sunita Hansraj
	Sally Ann Hart	Helene Leeming
	John Loveluck	Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Anne Ainsworth (Chief Operating Officer), Peter Campbell (Head of Housing), Aaron Clarke (Democratic Services Technical Officer), Bode Esan (Head of Climate, Environment & Waste), Stephen Kelly (Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development), Peter Maddock (Head of Finance), Rory McKenna (Monitoring Officer), Richard Medley (Consultant for Item 9), Jeff Membery (Head of Transformation), Sean Missin (Procurement Officer), Ian Senior (Scrutiny and Governance Adviser), Eddie Spicer (Service Manager – Housing Assets) and Liz Watts (Chief Executive)

Councillors James Hobro and Richard Stobart (Committee members), John Batchelor, Bill Handley, Judith Rippeth and Bridget Smith were in attendance remotely.

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair made several brief housekeeping announcements.

2. Apologies for absence

Councillor Libby Earle sent apologies.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Those Members present, who were present at the previous meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 3 March 2022, authorised the Chair to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of that meeting subject to noting that Councillor Dr. Martin Cahn attended part of the meeting (the latter part) remotely.

5. Public Questions

The Chair invited Daniel Fulton of the Few's Lane Consortium to make a statement about the scope of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's work programme.

Following a short introduction, Mr. Fulton said that South Cambridgeshire District Council's

Scrutiny and Overview Committee should focus on matters where it could best impact the Council's decision-making process. He encouraged those present, and especially the committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Scrutiny and Governance Adviser, to consider attending the meeting of Cambridge City Council's scrutiny committee later in June. Mr. Fulton explained that the City Council had a very different approach to scrutiny and a very different approach to public engagement within the scrutiny process.

Mr. Fulton observed that the work programme attached to the current agenda was largely empty. He said that there had been a tendency in the past to fill up the work programme with matters where the Executive was unlikely to change course regardless of feedback from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee. The Committee might want to consider revising the Scrutiny prioritisation tool and focus its attention on matters where it could most clearly have an impact. Mr. Fulton said that scrutiny was not limited to Executive decisions but also applied to operational matters.

The Chair thanked Mr. Fulton for his presentation and assured him that the work programme would be kept under constant review.

6. Quarter 4 Performance report

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report about the Council's Quarter 4 position regarding its operational Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and 2020-25 Business Plan actions.

Noting the Committee's role as a 'critical friend', Councillor Sue Ellington said that the Cabinet should monitor the effectiveness of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and, where necessary, modify them so that they provide more information and greater explanation, and identify in a more transparent way those issues that need to be addressed.

At Councillor Ellington's request, Stephen Kelly, Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, added some explanation of PN511 (percentage of non-major applications determined within eight weeks or agreed timeline (two-year reporting period cumulative)). Councillor Ellington said that consideration should be given to reallocating resources so as to improve this KPI to the benefit of residents.

In response to a question from Councillor Anna Bradnam about AH212 (Bed and Breakfast costs), Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, informed the Committee that a substantial part of the increased expenditure necessary during the past two years had been met by benefits received and by Covid grants made by Central Government.

Councillor Graham Cone referred to AH204 (percentage of tenants satisfied with responsive repairs) and urged Cabinet to make sure that the KPI was not just a quantitative data set, but gathered information so that the Council could identify why tenants were either satisfied or dissatisfied.

Referring to SF786a (staff sickness), Councillor Cone hoped that the concept of health care 'MOTs' would become firmly embedded and that more staff would be encouraged to take advantage of them. Moving on, he noted the improved record in resolving complaints across the Authority.

Turning to CC307 (Average call answer time), Councillor Ellington observed that callers to the Contact Centre whose queries had to be transferred to the 'back office' sometimes

found themselves talking to an answering machine. In reply, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, referred to CC302 and CC303 which showed that the proportion of calls answered first time and resolved by the Contact Centre was in excess of 80%.

Councillor Dr. Martin Cahn asked whether there was a particular reason for the improvement in FS125 (staff sickness). The Leader of the Council suggested one reason might be the rapid increase in the number of people working from home meaning they were less likely to catch infections or pass them on to others.

Councillor Stephen Drew asked what kind of external factors might impact on FS104 (percentage National Non-Domestic Rates collected). Peter Maddock, Head of Finance, said that the main challenges were inflation and the cost of living.

Councillor Drew also wanted to know what the reason was for AH211 (average days to relet) falling short of target. Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, explained that the KPI was based on 'key to key' and, with an increase in first-time refusals, delays were inevitable for example because of the need to re-advertise.

Referring to the Business Plan and D2 (Review recruitment processes to attract and retain the best talent and ensure that we are an employer of choice), Councillor Anna Bradnam emphasised the importance of measures aimed at retaining staff once they had been recruited and trained. Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, highlighted a number of financial and other measures on offer, but conceded that it was expensive living in South Cambridgeshire.

In respect of D7 (ensuring homes are safe spaces), Councillor Helene Leeming prompted officers to explain their responsibilities and constraints in terms of gas and electricity testing and fire safety.

Councillor Stephen Drew asked about C8 (Improve recycling and reduce waste sat community events). Bode Esan, Head of Climate, Environment and Waste, referred to the toolkit aimed at addressing this issue.

On D4 (make it easier for customers to access and carry out transactions online), Councillor Drew was keen to make sure that those residents not confident with Information Technology were not disadvantaged. The Leader of the Council assured him that the emphasis on self-service was intended to create more capacity in the Contact Centre where staff could use online options to help customers contacting the Council by telephone.

Having reviewed the KPI results and comments at Appendix A to the report and progress against Business Plan actions at Appendix B, and considering the comments referred to above, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee **affirmed its support** for the report and appendices being presented to the Cabinet on 13 June 2022.

7. **Work Programme**

Members engaged in a brief discussion and noted that the Chair and Vice-Chair would be discussing the early development of a work programme on 8 June 2022.

8. **To note the dates of future meetings**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted that its next two scheduled meetings were on

- Thursday 23 June 2022 at 5.20pm
- Tuesday 26 July 2022 at 5.20pm

9. Award of Contract for Responsive & Void Repairs, Heating Servicing & Maintenance, Cyclical and Planned Works

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered the draft Cabinet report detailing the process followed in re-procure the contract for the Responsive and Void Repairs, Heating Servicing and Maintenance, Cyclical and Planned Works.

Councillor Anna Bradnam was pleased to note that there was a commitment to recognise the Council's 'Green to our Core' objective by transitioning towards the installation of environmentally friendly energy facilities in new-build properties.

Members explored in detail the nature of the scoring process and were satisfied that it had been fair and thorough.

The Committee noted that the aspiration was to conduct a comprehensive stock condition survey in due course, and that Members would be involved as appropriate. Members noted that improvements would not usually affect rent levels but were reminded that a higher rent would be charged where properties so improved achieved an Energy Performance Certificate of Bands A or B (that is, the two highest energy efficiency ratings). However, the higher rent would only be charged when properties were relet, and would not apply to existing tenants.

10. Confidential Appendix to item 9: Award of Contract for Responsive & Void Repairs, Heating Servicing & Maintenance, Cyclical and Planned Works

Members noted the contents of this document without debate.

The Meeting ended at 7.11 p.m.
