

**Report to:** Cabinet 20 March 2023

**Lead Cabinet Members:** All

**From:** Councillor Stephen Drew, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee  
Councillor Graham Cone, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

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## Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee

### Purpose

1. This report is to inform Cabinet about relevant discussion among members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at their meeting on 28 February 2023.

### Investment Strategy

2. Committee members discussed a range of issues recognising the evolving nature of the Investment Strategy, prompted in part by changes in the rules governing the Public Works Loan Board.
3. The Committee expressed concern in the robustness of the risk register for the return for investments, and the ethical framework of the proposed strategy, the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources confirmed all frameworks for investments are based on the Council's Policies and Business Plan.
4. The Committee noted the location and tenancy strength of current and future investments; the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources commented that while local authorities were expected to diversify how they generate income, there is an emphasis on continued commercial regeneration within the district, and support for local businesses through the Business Support Team.
5. The Vice-Chair highlighted Section 5 of the Strategy document about capacity, skills, and use of external advisors. His concern was that those involved in identifying investment opportunities to make the subsequent recommendations and decisions should have received appropriate training to qualify them to do so. The Lead Cabinet Member for Resources welcomed this point and suggested that a similar level of training should be required for those responsible for scrutinising investment proposals and decisions.
6. Committee Members noted the increase in Green Investment projects, the differing rates of return, and the lack of financial support from the Public Works Loan Board for green energy investments to generate income. It was noted

that green projects that positively impact residents would be supported under the new rules.

7. Committee Members commented on the process for determining investments in commercial properties, and the impact that changes to the Public Works Loan Board has on the pipeline of future projects. The Chief Executive and Lead Cabinet Member for Resources commented that these changes had given the Council a renewed focus on supporting local projects, such as the Northstowe Enterprise Zone.
8. There were comments surrounding the prudential indicators and to ensure all data within the strategy is meaningful for Members and Officers to proceed with investments. It was highlighted by the Committee that the investment team should continue to benchmark between other investments, to review against other local authorities, and any impacts due to the changes of the Public Works Loan Board. The Head of Finance confirmed that sections 8.4.1 and 8.4.4 would be amended ahead of the submission for Cabinet.

### **Recommendation**

9. **Having considered the report presented to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and the Investment Strategy attached at Appendix A, Committee members noted the Investment Strategy by affirmation, but recommends that Cabinet asks officers to ensure that training provided is sufficiently robust and offered in future to all Councillors.**

### **2022-23 Quarter Three Performance report**

10. Committee members discussed a range of issues arising from the report.

### **Housing**

11. Regarding AH211 (Housing, average days to re-let all housing stock), the improvement of the performance was noted and commended. Concerns were raised by some over the viability of the target as it stood and if this could be changed. The comments on this Indicator were noted. The Head of Housing and the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Committee that the Indicator was to be broken down into its component parts and that work was ongoing to assess how the re-let time frame could be improved.
12. Regarding AH204 (Housing, % tenants satisfied with responsive repairs), enquiries were made as to if the types of repairs was recorded and if a breakdown of this could be provided to the Committee in future reports. The Head of Housing and the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing informed the Committee that this data was gathered and that a new breakdown of these statistics was to be introduced in the new financial year and a new methodology to gather this data. However, it was stated that it was unlikely that all of the data would be presented in the Performance Reports to the Committee due concerns over the length of the report. A Member request was

raised for a note to be distributed to all Members explaining what changes to the data were being made and why.

13. The Committee also discussed the disparity between the satisfaction on emergency repairs (SH322) and responsive repairs (AH204), with the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing stating that levels of feedback on AH204 were low and that the aforementioned methodology changes sought to rectify this.

### **Shared Waste and Environment**

14. Regarding ES418 (household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (cumulative)) the Committee noted the overall trend between July 2021 appeared to be going down but asked whether the comments regarding December 2021 figures applied to December 2022 and if it was a trend in the wrong direction. The Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment explained there was an increase in the target figures and explained better recycling, an improvement of lack of contamination of black bin waste and behavioural change was needed by residents.
15. The Head of Climate, Environment & Waste informed the Committee that there had been a national downward trend in the UK, noting there were many changes nationally, packaging being one of and then recycling had reduced in 2020/2021. It was emphasised that South Cambridgeshire District Council would collaborate with other District Councils, including Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to look at ways of managing waste and other actions that could help improve figures.
16. There were comments from the Committee an additional Key Performance Indicator could be put in place. In response, the Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for the Environment explained the Shared Waste Service frequently audited the waste collection process which measured what was being put in bins, but a KPI could be considered.
17. The Head of Climate, Environment & Waste explained that although waste as a whole was not tracked, a national target would be coming into force which would help set the target for South Cambridgeshire District Council.
18. The Committee emphasised the subsidised home composting scheme that was available to all residents and requested support from members to make it known to their parishes, the difficulties in obtaining accurate figures for dry recycling and composting and requested feedback from the Food Waste trial.
19. The Chair highlighted the comments on SF786a (Staff sickness days per FTE - Shared Waste Service Only) in how staff were being supported, motivated and cared for.

### **Transformation**

20. The Committee noted the improvement on CC305 (of formal complaints resolved within timescale (all SCDC)) and requested further comments on how

it had been achieved. The Chief Executive explained they had worked extremely hard on resolving complaints and made sure they were responded to in a timely manner and were dealt with by complaints champions in every service.

- 21. Having reviewed the Key Performance Indicator results and narrative at Appendix A and being satisfied with the comments made by Lead Cabinet Members and officers in response to Members' questions, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted the report and by affirmation supports its submission to Cabinet.**

### **Further support for cost-of-living crisis for South Cambridgeshire residents**

22. Committee members discussed a range of issues arising from the report.
23. The Committee discussed the use of warm hubs and the impacts of social isolation.
24. Councillors were encouraged to flag up Parish hardship charities to help stimulate links and information on help and support that is available for residents, even if those organisations may be situated just outside the district in places like Royston and Biggleswade.
25. A Committee member asked that all available data (both internal and external) should be analysed so that the Council could give evidence-based justifications for continuing support and focus such support on those people in greatest need, some preliminary data was provided during the meeting.
26. The Committee queried if residents using warm hub were being monitored on their experience and any further needs. The Communities and Communications Service Manager commented that monitoring had been ongoing, and that more data would be obtained in the coming months.
27. The Committee noted that a report on cost-of-living support for residents was due to be brought to Cabinet every 6 months to inform how it is progressing. It could then be assessed if any more additional support would be required or if something sustainable and self-sufficient could be set-up.
- 28. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered and noted the report and, by affirmation, supported its submission to Cabinet for approval with data-driven and evidence-based justification as indicated in paragraph 8 above. Should such data not be available in time, it is recommended that Cabinet asks officers to continue their analysis and provide an update in due course.**

### **Report Author:**

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