

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission

At 7.00 pm on Tuesday 25th January, 2022

Held in the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering

Present:-

Members

Councillor Wendy Brackenbury (Chair)	Councillor Kevin Watt (Vice Chair)
Councillor Matt Binley	Councillor Philip Irwin
Councillor Robin Carter	Councillor John McGhee
Councillor John Currall	Councillor Gill Mercer
Councillor Jim Hakewill	Councillor Simon Rielly
Councillor Ken Harrington	

Officers

George Candler – Executive Director of Place & Economy
 David Watts – Executive Director of Adults, Communities & Wellbeing
 Adele Wylie – Director of Governance and HR
 Guy Holloway – Assistant Chief Executive
 Louise Tyers – Senior Democratic Services Officer

In attendance:

Councillor Graham Lawman - Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets
 Councillor Zoe McGhee – Chair, Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review Group

24 Apologies for non-attendance

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Mark Dearing, Geoff Shacklock and Lee Wilkes. Councillor Ken Harrington attended as a substitute member.

Apologies were also received from Jonathan Waterworth, Assistant Director for Assets and Environment.

25 Members' Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare interests in respect of items on the agenda.

Councillors	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
John McGhee	Item 7 – Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review Update	Was related to the Chair of the Scrutiny Review Group for whom a possible payment of an	Yes (left meeting when the issue of a possible SRA was	

		SRA was discussed	discussed)	
Zoe McGhee	Item 7 – Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review Update	Was Chair of the Scrutiny Review Group for whom possible payment of an SRA was discussed	Yes (left meeting when the issue of a possible SRA was discussed)	

26 Notification of requests to address the meeting

There were no requests to address the meeting.

27 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed.

With reference to the S106 Internal Audit Report, the Executive Director of Place and Economy advised that the report had now been concluded and would be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on Monday and would include a number of recommendations. A follow up report was likely to follow in 12 months. An update would be provided to a future meeting on the new approach around S106 agreements.

With reference to the former County Council CMIS website, the Director of Governance and HR advised that the issue was still be examined but a temporary solution for members was being looked at very soon with a solution for the wider public in the longer term.

28 Scrutiny Review into Asset Rationalisation and Use

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Lawman, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to the meeting. The Assistant Director of Assets and Environment was unable to attend the meeting and the Executive Director of Place and Economy presented the report.

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Assistant Director of Assets and Environment which provided an initial scoping document to set the terms of a possible scrutiny review into Asset Realisation and Use which had been identified as part of the Scrutiny Workplan. The report was marked as item 5 on the agenda.

The purpose of a scrutiny review was:

- To understand the Council's assets and ensure that they were being utilised appropriately.
- To develop methodologies around the use and cost of assets against the value those assets brought to the community.
- To understand how cost efficient the Council's buildings were.

- To provide recommendations on the commercial use of our assets and opportunities.
- To understand whether buildings should be rationalised.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. It was noted that the asset list was a vast document which only included general fund assets and not Housing Revenue Account assets. It only covered those assets NNC owned and those buildings that we had control over, such as through a lease with a third party.
- ii. With regard to our commercial buildings, it was explained that the carbon footprint fell to the tenant as they had responsibility for the fixture and fittings and utilities used. However, NNC had an aim to make those buildings as energy efficient as possible.
- iii. It was acknowledged that home working and the Future Ways of Working Strategy may have an impact on our future use of assets.
- iv. It was noted that NCALC was undertaking a project around asset mapping for town and parish councils through the government's Community Renewal Fund Programme and had been awarded a grant to take this work forward.
- v. The proposed review was welcomed by Members who believed that the outcome could be used in a positive way for the community. The review would need to factor in the community benefit of our assets, and this was an area Members would have a key role in with their local knowledge.
- vi. The Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets stated that he welcomed the proposed review, especially the opportunity to bring in social value and local knowledge. He explained that condition surveys of assets were underway and that the costs to bring them up to date may influence future views. There were also cost implications as some buildings did not hold EPC certificates. The asset mapping by NCALC would be beneficial as we would be able to see what assets were in an area that the town or parish council may wish to manage in the future. There was also a need to relocate some NNC staff out of One Angel Square by the end of the financial year. Policies for Assets of Community Value and Community Asset Transfer were currently being developed.
- vii. It was noted that a lot of work was already being undertaken by officers and the Scrutiny Commission would add more value with a Scrutiny Panel being established to meet as and when needed to support this work. It was proposed that a Scrutiny Panel of five members, including a member from each of the four previous sovereign authority areas, should be established.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) To establish a Scrutiny Panel consisting of five elected members, from which there will be at least one member from each of the previous sovereign council areas.
- (ii) To note the draft Asset Realisation and Use scoping paper and that it will be reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel at its first meeting.

- (iii) That the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel be appointed at its first meeting.
- (iv) That the Assistant Director of Assets and Environment be appointed as the officer lead for the Scrutiny Panel.

29 Integrated Care System

This item was deferred.

30 Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review Update

The Chair welcomed Councillor Zoe McGhee, Chair of the Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review Group to the meeting.

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing which provided an update on the progress to date with the Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review. The report was marked as item 7 on the agenda.

Since the last meeting of the Commission, there had been three walks and community meetings in each of the three neighbourhoods identified as left behind, Avondale Grange (Kettering), Kingswood & Hazel Leys (Corby) and Queensway (Wellingborough). Themed meetings of the Scrutiny Review Group were also held on anti-social behaviour and knife crime; and exclusion from education, skills and employment, with possible future meetings themed around the built environment and access to services.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. Councillor Zoe McGhee, Chair of the Scrutiny Review Group, wished to thank everyone who had helped to set up the workshops. These had been well attended and the outcomes from those had help to direct the topics now being looked at. One of the key outcomes was looking at how could we work together to deliver positive change and not just leaving it to the Council.
- ii. The need for groups and organisations being supported to access external funding was highlighted. This could be by helping help them to write up bids for funding, seeing if those processes could be simplified and upskilling people who are already part of those groups to write bids themselves.
- iii. The built environment in which people lived was a key area because if an area was brought up, people would be more likely to want to stay there rather than move away.
- iv. It was essential that the lessons learnt from this review went across other areas of North Northamptonshire.
- v. It was noted that Scrutiny had a pot of money for its work and it was proposed that we looked at giving a special responsibility allowance to the Chair of the Scrutiny Review Group to acknowledge all of the work she had put into the review.

At this point, Councillors John and Zoe McGhee, declared an interest and left the meeting.

- vi. The Director of Governance and HR confirmed that a total allowance of £40,000 had been allocated to the Scrutiny function, however consideration needed to be given to how and when special responsibility allowances would be paid. It was also suggested that this issue could be fed into the Independent Remuneration Panel's review of Members' allowances.
- vii. It was noted that during the last round of levelling up funding bids, no bid had been submitted by the Council, however we were keen to make a bid this time around. Councillor Graham Lawman advised that a shortlist for funding bids was currently being developed for North Northamptonshire.

It was moved by Councillor Matt Binley and seconded by Councillor Jim Hakewill that the Director of Governance and HR bring a report back to the next meeting on a process to pay allowances to the Chairs of task and finish groups. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Director of Governance and HR bring a report to the next meeting on how and when to pay allowances for the Chairs of task and finish groups, with any allowance for the Chair of the Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review Group being backdated to today's meeting.
- (ii) That the progress of the Levelling Up Communities Review Group (SRWG) be noted.

31 Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 9.20pm and reconvened at 9.25pm.

Councillors John and Zoe McGhee returned to the meeting.

Councillor Philip Irwin left the meeting and did not return.

32 Performance Indicator Report 2021/22 (Period 7)

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the Council's performance across a wide range of services, as measured by performance indicators. The report was marked as item 8 on the agenda.

The report provided a summary of the performance of Council services and further detail including trend lines and exception reports. Performance measures were being developed to better reflect the desired outcomes set out at a high level through the Council's recently adopted Corporate Plan.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. There were some concerns that most of the indicators did not have any benchmark information included. Officers clarified that as a new authority, we had not yet been matched to comparative authorities, but we were looking to get benchmarking groups up and running as they would help to provide context to the information.

- ii. Performance reporting of partner organisations was being looked at including health. Members highlighted that performance information on the work of partner organisations, particularly health, was important to the work of the Council.
- iii. Members were aware that the number of home-educated children was an issue, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, and this was an area that Scrutiny may want to look at in the future. More information was also needed on the measures around permanent exclusions from school and the number of looked after children without a school place.
- iv. It was felt that including actual figures would also be helpful, so Members could understand the figures were a percentage of what.
- v. Comments on several specific indicators were made, including:
 - Primary Schools judged as good or outstanding – how far behind were Ofsted on inspections? Did this indicator just include LEA schools or also academies?
 - Waste composting – there should be more emphasis on home composting
 - Suicide rates – what were we doing to put mental health help in place?
 - Planning applications processed in 8 weeks – there were concerns about the shortage of staff as that could have an impact if we did not meet these targets

RESOLVED to note the performance of the Council and its services.

33 Executive Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Commission received the Executive Forward Plan which showed the key and significant decisions the Executive would be making over the next few months. The report was marked as item 9 on the agenda.

RESOLVED to note the Executive Forward Plan.

34 Scrutiny Work Plan and Future Meetings

The Scrutiny Commission received the Scrutiny Workplan and future meetings. The report was marked as item 10 on the agenda.

The following changes were made:

- i. Levelling Up Communities Scrutiny Review – Final Report to be received in May 2022.
- ii. Property Annual Report – defer until next year, following the work of the Assets Rationalisation and Use Scrutiny Panel.
- iii. Integrated Care System – send report outside of the formal meeting.

RESOLVED to note the Scrutiny Workplan and future meetings.

35 Close of meeting

The Chair thanked members and officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 10pm.

Chair

Date