

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission

At 7.00 pm on Tuesday 6th September, 2022

In the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby

Present:

Members

Councillor Wendy Brackenbury (Chair)	Councillor Kevin Watt (Vice Chair)
Councillor Valerie Anslow	Councillor Zoe McGhee
Councillor John Currall	Councillor Andy Mercer
Councillor Mark Dearing	Councillor Gill Mercer
Councillor Jim Hakewill	Councillor Lee Wilkes
Councillor Philip Irwin	

Officers

Adele Wylie – Director of Governance and HR (Monitoring Officer)
David Watts – Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Guy Holloway – Assistant Chief Executive
Louise Tyers – Senior Democratic Services Officer

25 Apologies for non-attendance

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Robin Carter and Geoff Shacklock.

26 Members' Declarations of Interest

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

No declarations of interest were made.

27 Notifications of requests to address the meeting

There were no requests to address the meeting.

28 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed, subject to Councillor Geoff Shacklock's name being removed from the list of those present and included in the apologies for non-attendance.

29 Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2020-21

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Executive Director of Adults, Communities and Wellbeing which presented the Northamptonshire Safeguarding

Adults Board Annual Report 2020/21. The report outlined the Board and statutory partner achievements during the year. The Annual report had been received by the Executive at their meeting of 25 August 2022 and the report for 2021/22 would be received later this year.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. Safeguarding Adults Reviews were undertaken following a death due to abuse or neglect. They looked at where actions had not gone as planned, however they were not about blame but about learning. The aim was to learn and embed those lessons into the system.
- ii. In response to a question as to why the report was only being received now as it related to the former County Council, the Executive Director advised that following local government reorganisation there were questions about where it needed to be reported to for consideration. As it related to the shadow year, it was felt appropriate to bring it to NNC to review. It was expected that future reports would be reported in the third quarter of the following year.
- iii. It was noted that some people did not meet the criteria for adult social care but NNC were committed to supporting them. Some people did not want their own accommodation as they found running a house very stressful. There was a need to build relationships to encourage engagement.
- iv. When it came to safeguarding it was important to be aware of who was also housed in temporary accommodation such as the Euro Hotel, as living with other people who may have multiple needs may not be the safest place. In response, the Executive Director stated that the pandemic had led to a large amount of learning around wraparound support and hopefully we had now improved the approach around support.
- v. One issue missing from the report was around how learning was cascaded down to other organisations. It would be welcomed if the next report included what learning there had been from government and how that had been passed down to other bodies. In response, the Executive Director advised that unless there was a high-profile case, often there was not any learning from government. Learning was from regional networks and moving forward, national benchmarking.
- vi. A question was asked why the reports would only be published in the third quarter and not earlier. The Executive Director explained the process that returns were submitted to the government in June, which was then followed by a qualification period. Benchmarking then took place during September/October.
- vii. There was a role of Independent Scrutineer who undertook a challenge role for the Board. The Executive Director was the independent Chair of the Board and this had enabled that allowance to be invested into the Independent Scrutineer role. There had also been approval for some additional staffing to support the team. In response to a request for the Independent Scrutineer to come to future meetings when the Annual Report was presented, the Executive Director undertook to see if this was possible.
- viii. It was noted that the age range in the report relating to 18-64 was very wide and was that a standard range or could it be broken down to smaller ranges. In

response, the Executive Director advised that younger adults were 18-64 and older adults were 65 and over and that was how adult social care was reported. He would feed the comment back to the performance work stream to help identify trends.

RESOLVED:

To note the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2020 – 2021.

30 Performance Indicators Report 2022/23 (Period 3)

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 provided a summary of the performance of Council services and further detail including trend lines and exception reports.

Comments on several specific indicators were made, including:

- Net Promotor Score - Leisure (AFL11) – Members asked for an explanation as to what this measure meant, and it was also noted that not all of the leisure providers had provided the required information. In response, the Assistant Chief Executive advised that the indicator measured customer loyalty by asking whether users would recommend the service. Customers were categorised as either being a promotor, passive or detractor and all contractors were asked to measure this indicator.
- Percentage of planning applications determined (STP15-19) – the loss of key officers was concerning and was there any concerns that we could enter special measures due to the level of performance. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that retaining staff was important, but planning was a particularly difficult area in which to recruit and retain staff. There had also been an increase in the number of major applications submitted. The Executive Director for Place and Economy and Assistant Director of Growth and Regeneration were developing a strategy to attract staff and the Future Ways of Working Strategy would also be looking at developing flexible working as a way of attracting staff. The Assistant Chief Executive was not aware of there being a risk of being put into special measures or the loss of planning powers but would make enquiries.
- Voids (STP36) – it was noted that the number of voids in Corby was up but was down in Kettering, but the turnaround figures were the same. It was suggested that it may be helpful to separate out minor and major voids and it was also suggested that it may be helpful to report on the median as well as the mean about how long it took to turnaround a property. The Executive Director advised that often tenants had refused to have planned capital works undertaken on their homes and that could cause delays when a house became vacant. There were approximately 8000 properties in the housing stock and about 1% of those were out of action at any one time. There was also a difference in the maintenance regimes in Kettering and Corby with Kettering having its own stores and Corby having a call-off system in place. A proposal was now being developed for Corby to also have its own stores.
- Number of Rough Sleepers (AFL12) – it was noted that a 10% increase in the number of rough sleepers equated to one person.
- Fly tipping: number of fly tips reported (GSE06) – Members enquired as to how many prosecutions had been undertaken for fly tipping and how many had been

successful. Also, how often had covert cameras been deployed to detect fly tipping and how much was spent clearing up fly tipping. The Director of Governance and HR advised that prosecutions were just one option open to the Council and there were a range of other actions which could take place. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that he would look at what information was available. It was also noted that the Police and Fire Commissioner's Office had a fund to help remove fly tips from private land. It was noted that a fly tipping strategy had been agreed a year ago and it would be helpful to receive a report on the first year of that strategy.

- Vacancies – It was suggested that it may be more helpful to receive the data relating to the amount spent on agency staff on a month by month basis. The Executive Director advised that within Adults Services not all the vacant posts were full time and could be, for example, care staff where they may only be required for a small number of shifts to meet staffing requirements. Lifeguards at the swimming pools was another example of where posts were needed to put staff into when required. Officers undertook to look at how this information was presented in future reports.
- A member clarified that he had found it valuable and more efficient to ask questions in advance to ensure that a response was able to be provided on the night and proposed that all members should endeavour to give questions in advance. In response, the Assistant Chief Executive advised that he would also welcome questions in-between meetings.

RESOLVED:

To note the performance of the Council and its services.

31 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 following comments were made in relation to the Forward Plan:

- Garden Waste: Future Service Provision – the papers for the Executive meeting, including Scrutiny's response, would be published tomorrow.
- Waste Management Three Year Plan – this decision had not been scrutinised but ongoing scrutiny of the progress of the Plan could be included in the work plan.
- Family Hubs – the Senior Democratic Services Officer would liaise with the Executive Director of Children's Services as to when it would be appropriate for a paper to be brought to a future meeting of the Commission.
- In response to a question as to why the Executive Forward Plan was on the Commission's agenda, the Director of Governance and HR advised that it was so the Commission had knowledge of what decisions the Executive would be making over the next few months and it could also drive how the Commission did its business outside of meetings.
- A discussion was had around the Council's Scrutiny process and the role of Executive Advisory Panels (EAP). EAPs were an additional health check within the Council's hybrid arrangements and were able to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of issues prior to them being considered by the Executive.

Following concerns at the delay between the Forward Plan being published and being on Commission's agenda, the Senior Democratic Services Officer undertook to send the Forward Plan to the Commission members once it had been published.

RESOLVED:

To note the Executive Forward Plan.

32 Scrutiny Work Plan and Future Meetings

The Scrutiny Commission received the Scrutiny Work Plan, details of future meetings and other information relevant to the management of the Scrutiny Commission.

The following comments were made in relation to the work plan:

- Knife Crime – the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner had advised that to protect the integrity of the Police and Crime Panel, it was not appropriate for him to attend the Scrutiny Commission. The Senior Democratic Services Officer would contact the Chief Constable to invite him to a future meeting.
- The items on the pending list needed to be programmed into the work plan. The Senior Democratic Services Officer will undertake to get indicative timings from officers.
- Updates to be requested on S106, adoptable roads and affordable housing.
- Homelessness and Social Housing – the Executive Director advised he would be happy to bring a paper on homelessness to a future meeting. Briefings on homelessness and the work with social landlords had been undertaken.
- Children’s Trust Annual Report – this should be brought to Scrutiny. The Director of Governance and HR advised that she would liaise with the Executive Director of Children’s Services about the process of presenting the report to the Council.

It was moved that an item on Scrutiny of the library service and how we manage community libraries should be added to the list of pending items. On being put to the vote, it was resolved not to include this item on the work plan.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the Scrutiny Work Plan and items for future consideration.
- (ii) To note the items being brought to future meetings.
- (iii) To note the progress of the Task and Finish Groups.

33 Close of Meeting

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

The meeting closed at 10pm.

Chair

Date