



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 16th March 2023

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

23rd February 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Dawkins (in the Chair)

Councillors Aisthorpe, Batson, Pettigrew, Sandford, Shutt and Westcott.

Officers in attendance:

- Helen Isaacs (Assistant Chief Executive)
- Kath Jickells (Assistant Director, Environment)
- Eve Richardson Smith (Service Manager Consultancy and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
- Guy Lonsdale (Finance Group Manager/Deputy Section 151 Officer)
- Neil Clark (Head of Regulatory and Enforcement Services)
- Lisa Logan (Head of Open Spaces)
- Dee Hitter (Head of Environmental Sustainability)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director Safer and Partnerships)
- Jo Paterson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Victoria Henley (Community Safety Officer)
- Paul Thorpe (Operations Director, Equans)
- Levi Anderson Jordan (Environmental Strategy Officer)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Ron Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)
- Councillor Stewart Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)
- Sophie Pickerden (Scrutiny and Committee Support Officer)

There were no Members of the press present.

SPC.55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Swinburn and M. Sandford. Councillor M. Boyd was duly appointed as substitute for this meeting only.

SPC.56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair wished to declare an interest in SPC.64 as his spouse worked for EQUANS.

SPC.57 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 5th January 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

SPC.58 QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

SPC.59 FORWARD PLAN

The panel received the current forward plan and members were asked to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

SPC.60 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer tracking the recommendations of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Mrs Paterson advised that all actions were now complete.

At SCP. 22 (Registered Housing Provider) Mrs Paterson stated that until the Council became a housing provider this could not be progressed, it was suggested this remain on tracking to monitor progress.

RESOLVED – That the tracking report be noted.

SPC.61 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 – QUARTER 3

The panel received a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets providing key information and analysis of the council's position and performance for the first quarter of the 2022/23 financial year.

This report was referred to scrutiny by Cabinet at its meeting on 15th February 2023.

A member referred to the £16m overspend at year end and asked whether the deficit had reduced the councils' reserves. Mr. Lonsdale referred to the report highlighting that part of the mitigating actions were for the council to

draw upon current sources of funding and this would likely impact reserves going forward.

A member referred to the councils' assets, specifically the savings and efficiencies for different departments and commented on the way in which this had been presented within the report. It was suggested that the projected savings and efficiencies be broken down per asset and presented in one section in future reports.

Mr. Lonsdale explained that the summary page showed the savings by service area and assistant director level in order to provide the detail behind all savings projects.

In response to further queries, Mr. Lonsdale confirmed that property rationalisation and disposals had shown returns had been made.

The Chair referred to the capital programme and asked for clarification around the £109k allocated to the Cleethorpes Public Art Scheme.

Mr. Lonsdale confirmed he would take this away and provide more detail back to the panel around this specific scheme.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a request be made for more information on the Cleethorpes Public Art Scheme allocation within the Capital Programme.

SPC.62 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 – QUARTER 3

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council providing oversight of performance against the council plan for the second quarter of the 2022/23 financial year.

This report was referred to scrutiny by Cabinet at its meeting on 15th February 2023.

A member enquired about the progress with the Smart Energy Programme. Mr. Jordan confirmed this was due to be completed in March this year and more information on this could be provided to the panel in due course.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted
2. That a request be made for further information on the Smart Energy Programme.

SPC.63 PREVENT AND PROTECT REPORT

The panel received a report from the Director of Children's Services which set out the current partnership approach to preventing violent extremism and protecting local communities across North East Lincolnshire.

Mr. Hunt introduced the report and provided an overview of the UK Counter Terrorism Strategy known as 'CONTEST' and the framework around the four "P" work strands namely, Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare as detailed within the report. Mr Hunt also set out the background to the report detailing statutory duties, local arrangements, governance, progress, and next steps.

A member enquired about radicalisation and the far right remaining an issue. Mr Hunt responded that historically this had been an issue however North East Lincolnshire (NEL) had now moved away from right-wing extremism.

A member asked whether the council and multi agencies were working with the local oil refineries as these were a big target within our borough. Mr Hunt advised that areas identified as targets had to be proportionate. Currently, the council had identified the resort of Cleethorpes, Grimsby Town Centre, Freeman Street, Grimsby Town Football Club and also Immingham as five priority areas. Already two of these sites had undertaken an assessment around counter terrorism.

Further work was being undertaken to identify where regeneration was taking place and physical interventions could be incorporated. Mr Thorpe was currently working with ICT colleagues to take this forward in terms of ensuring we had a safer space across the borough.

Ms Henley advised that special sites such as the oil refineries, schools and football grounds were protected separately by the CPNI (Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure).

A member wished to note that both Grimsby and Cleethorpes together were a large populated area. Members were assured that officers were remaining vigilant and taking appropriate advice from the Home Office.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.64 ENFORCEMENT REVIEW

The panel received a report from the Director of Environment, Economy and Infrastructure that provided an update on enforcement arrangements.

The panel noted this report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 8th March and that this was submitted to this panel for pre-decision scrutiny and comment.

A member asked whether any improvements had been made since the Enforcement Scrutiny Working Group had taken place, and whether public perception had improved. Mr. Clark confirmed that there had been improvements to how various teams were forming and improved communications. Mr. Clark further noted that improvements were being made to the customer experience and stated that a new Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) was currently being implemented.

Mr. Thorpe added that further work was underway which included undertaking Days of Action and sharing this information more widely with the public.

A member raised concerns around fly-tipping and asked whether the seizing of vehicles could be used as a deterrent. Mr Clark responded that a Day of Action had taken place which focused on environmental control and waste carrier licences. In terms of seizing vehicles this was an option that could be explored.

Mr Clark confirmed he would share information with the panel on the outcome of this Day of Action.

Further concerns were raised around seizing of vehicles and issuing of fines and the panel asked for more information to be provided on particular incidents and their outcomes. Mr Clark wished to assure members that the council were using the full powers within legislation to enforce this.

A member asked for further details around the integration between litter and parking enforcement, and whether this would be reviewed again when the Equans contract ended.

Mr. Thorpe confirmed that training had commenced last year to support colleagues in parking enforcement which focused on various competencies used to deliver parking enforcement within the current model. Mr. Clark assured members that officers would continue to review the various contractual arrangements.

A member enquired about the new CCTV project and whether there had been any good news stories. Mr. Thorpe advised that Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) enforcement cameras were already in place at two schools within the borough, and a number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN)s had been issued at school sites. Also, funding had been allocated within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Programme for 2023/24 and 2024/25 which would allow for additional purchasing of ANPR cameras thereby ensuring better safety.

A member enquired about 2-hour restrictions on some of the car parks within the borough and how this was being enforced. Mr. Thorpe advised that only those areas where Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) were in place allowed this restriction to be enforced.

A member enquired as to whether the council had considered increasing staff within parking enforcement. Mr Thorpe advised that currently there was no plans to increase staff, however Equans had invested in two additional members of staff within Parking enforcement.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport wished to report that in terms of parking enforcement CCTV, an additional £100k had been allocated within the LTP as a result of the success around enforcement of parking around schools.

A member referred to the other options considered within the report and asked whether Option 3 (Create a cohesive Parking /Litter/Dog Enforcement Team) would have allowed for more scrutiny to take place which proved difficult within the current Equans contract.

Mr Thorpe reported that a monthly performance report around Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) was reported to Portfolio Holders showing how many Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) had been issued and Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Civil Parking Enforcement Statistics were available on the council's website.

A member questioned how successful parking enforcement was particularly around Freeman Street as it appeared restrictions were still being contravened. A member suggested other restrictions to be put in place to ensure our roads were safer and to ensure better value for money.

Mr. Thorpe referred members to paragraph 1.25 within the report and explained that when civil parking enforcement was introduced back in 2010, there was no observation time and subsequently this had led to a high number of complaints and now a 5-minute observation time was introduced to allow for unloading and loading. Reference was made to paragraph 1.30 within the report, which highlighted the introduction of an urban clearway to prevent parking in certain areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities assured members of the support in place for CEO's and Equans in and around the Freeman Street area and gave some examples where enforcement had taken place.

A member highlighted the importance of supporting local businesses to allow customers to legally park for 5 or 10 minutes.

The Chair queried staffing levels and whether there were enough officers to cover the borough. Mr Thorpe explained in detail how the staffing levels worked to provide a better service.

Further concerns were raised around staff availability and appropriate cover within the borough.

Following which it was, proposed and seconded that the panel recommend to Cabinet that the number of Civil Enforcement Officers within North East Lincolnshire be increased.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities explained the difficulties with retention of staff due to various factors and emphasised the importance of use of smarter technology to help protect the council's enforcement officers. Overall, the introduction of the new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)'s, the use of new CCTV and introduction of ANPR would all help assist in making the process quicker.

In response to queries around ANPR recognition Mr Thorpe advised that the control room were able to review and issue PCNs from their site.

Further discussion ensued around enforcement from within the CCTV control room which would identify parking contraventions and the powers that could be used.

Mr. Thorpe advised that the issuing of PCN's had to take place by a trained parking enforcement operative. This meant capturing the vehicles details in the handheld equipment which was used by the CEOs. There were other vehicle technologies which were available for this to be undertaken through a system and these could be explored in the future.

A member suggested the use of body cameras to help protect CEO's where they were at more risk. Mr Thorpe advised that this system already operated, and the CEOs had safe systems of work in place. Mr Thorpe advised of a proposal to have a workshop with the Police to be set up to look at the areas of highest risk, explore opportunities and maximising enforcement through the utilisation of combined resources.

A member referred to a model used in another authority which allowed the public to take photographic evidence of offenders and submit this evidence to the Police resulting in a prosecution. Mr Thorpe advised this was relating to unsafe parking and not contraventions of parking restrictions, and this could be explored however noted that often the Police were required to witness these situations.

Mr Thorpe agreed to share with the panel a breakdown by ward on the number of PCNs issued by the authority.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities advised that the Police did accept dash camera evidence that would identify individuals that were breaking the law.

Another member suggested that the council run a public campaign around the powers that were available to the public. Mr Thorpe confirmed he would look into this as part of the workshop with the Police.

RESOLVED –

1. That the recommendations within the report now submitted be noted.
2. That a request be made for further information on the outcome of a Day of Action relating to environmental control and waste carrier licences and the scope for vehicle seizure
3. That a request be made for further information on a breakdown by ward of the number of PCNs issued.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

That the number of Civil Enforcement Officers within North East Lincolnshire be increased.

SPC.65 REVIEW OF PLAY AREAS

The panel received a report from the Director of Environment, Economy and Infrastructure that outlined the programme of work that would be undertaken in play areas over the next two years.

Members queried why the Barrett's Recreational Ground park was not included on the list of play areas for upgrading and asked what could be done about this and timescales.

Ms. Logan advised that this was due to other ongoing issues at the playground and until this was understood it could not be progressed. Ms. Logan advised that she would find out more information and report back to the panel on progress.

A member understood that some of the playgrounds were not owned by the council and asked for further information on these particular sites. Ms Logan advised that there were two, these being Brigsley and New Waltham.

In terms of timescales, Ms Logan advised that there were other considerations the council had to factor in such as the RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) playground inspections and analysing both public and ward councillor consultation responses.

A member suggested whether community groups could work with EQUANS and NELC to apply for match funding to double the amount of funding received and thereby create better outcomes. Ms Logan was very open to take forward any fundraising suggestions.

A member was concerned around the time taken to get to this stage in the process, it was noted that the capital release was between June 2021-

2023 and there had been very little achieved and now materials and costs had increased.

In response, Ms Logan stated that the delay was not due to officers within her team and further explained that the delay had been due to factors such as legal procedures around procurement and undertaking both public and ward councillor consultations. There were also other projects going on particularly around the Towns Funding that took precedence at that time.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport concurred with the frustrations around time delays but wished to thank all officers involved for their hard work on this programme of work.

Members were further advised that those play areas within the parish's would be progressed very shortly.

In response to queries around consultation, Ms Logan explained the process and timelines that had been followed and next steps which included meeting with all ward councillors to finalise everything.

A member enquired why the consultation results had not been included within the report. Ms Logan advised that the consultation had taken place online.

Another member wished to understand how officers had determined which parks would receive what type of equipment. Ms Logan advised that the council had firstly considered all the main destination parks across the borough and those that received the most footfall followed by play value.

Ms Logan reiterated that new equipment would be provided at the Nunthorpe Recreation Ground.

In response to queries around the £200k cost for repairs highlighted in the report, Ms Logan explained that they had to bring play equipment up to a certain standard before it could be considered for new equipment. In terms of progress, Ms Logan advised that the council were meeting with the companies delivering the projects next week to work out a schedule prior to this being shared more widely.

In response to further concerns Ms Logan advised that weekly inspections took place for all play areas and RoSPA inspected them annually.

A member asked for the number of play areas maintained by the council. Ms Logan would confirm the figure and report back to the panel.

A member queried the £37k already spent on works and asked for more detail on how this had been spent. Ms Logan explained that this was due to the sale of a lodge on People's Park, this scheme was put on hold due to covid, and when works re-commenced materials had increased in price. In terms of plans for People's Park, Ms Logan hoped there would be some

multi use play areas and hoped this would commence around the 18-month mark rather than 2-year mark.

Ms Logan confirmed that only those contractors that had put in a price through the procurement process would have been awarded a contract.

Members suggested that any snagging issues on the playground sites be resolved prior to the contractors leaving in order to save on any additional costs.

The Chair concurred with view of other panel members around the 18-month timescale for the play areas project. Ms Logan reassured the panel that she intended to get the project completed as quickly as possible and reassured members that those parks with highest priority would be dealt with first.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a request be made for further information on the Barrett's Recreational Ground play area.
3. That a request be made for further information on the number of play areas the council maintained.

SPC.66 OUR GREEN FUTURES ANNUAL REPORT

The panel received a report from the Director of Environment, Economy and Infrastructure that provided a progress update on three of the council's strategic plans.

Ms Jickells introduced the report and advised that whilst the report included three strategies: North East Lincolnshire Council's Waste Management Strategy, North East Lincolnshire Council's Carbon Roadmap (2021) and North East Lincolnshire Council's natural Assets Plan (2021) the focus was on the Waste Management Strategy. Furthermore, members were referred to performance information at Appendix 1 which highlighted that the council had seen an overall reduction in kerbside waste within the borough from 41,382 in 2020 to 36,560 tonnes in 2022.

In terms of food waste, it was highlighted that a food waste collection pilot at 5 locations was undertaken which had shown that residual waste in green bins was steadily reducing for those in the pilot with a reduction of 50 tonnes a month year on year.

Members expressed thanks to officers within waste management for excellent progress with this.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport reported that a survey had shown that there had been significant interest in the Food Waste Pilot Scheme, although noted that the government had now pushed back implementation of food waste collections to 2025. Overall, progress on waste collection and recycling was a great achievement for the waste department.

In response to a query around food waste, Ms Jickells explained the national delay to implementation of separate food waste collections and new burdens funding. It was also recognised that running a trial had raised awareness in people around how much waste they were generating. It was about educating people about food waste and sustainability and the benefits of recycling.

A member wished to encourage people to take part in the Food Waste Pilot Scheme.

A member asked whether officers were working with our renewable industry sector. Ms Jickells explained that the main contract was with 'NEWLINCS' and could explore options around energy from waste plants.

A member asked how the council intended to make public buildings more energy efficient. Ms Hitter advised that there would be funding opportunities available through the property rationalisation programme. Ms Hitter added that the council needed to look at this in the wider context in terms of the carbon roadmap workstream and how the council worked to improve its infrastructure.

Mr. Jordan added that in terms of the carbon roadmap for decarbonising, the council envisaged that some buildings may struggle to decarbonise with the current technology, however noted that the council were currently exploring how to deliver this.

A member enquired about tree planting on a national level, it was confirmed that this was being explored and was about planting the right trees in the right places and educating people around the importance of trees. It was noted that there was a new Tree Strategy being developed which would help to address this.

Mr Jordan advised that £220k grant funding had been awarded to secure two tree officers between NELC and Lincolnshire County Council to explore where trees could be planted, and woodlands developed across the borough. The project was due to start this year and would run up to 2025.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport reiterated that it was this council's aspiration to encourage more tree planting in the area.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations within the report now submitted be noted.

SPC.67 COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH

The panel received a report from the Assistant Director Policy Strategy and Resources providing a refresh of the Council Plan adopted in 2022, to reflect new and emerging priorities.

A member referred to the council milestones and in particular referred to the funding secured to deliver outcomes in the Creative Strategy. It was confirmed that the money would be forthcoming to deliver what the council were saying they were going to deliver in next 12 months,

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.68 COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2022/23 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The panel received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Statutory Scrutiny Officer). The report reflected on the 2022/23 municipal year and the work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Panel. The panel also considered within its terms of reference, suggestions to be included in the 2023/24 work programme.

Mrs Paterson advised that the panel had dealt with most of their items for consideration and asked members for suggestions for next years Work Programme.

The panel did not have any specific areas that they wished to be covered.

Mrs Paterson reminded members that there would be a further opportunity at the informal scrutiny workshops in June for members to put forward items for next year's work programme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

SPC.69 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER

There was one question for the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities at this meeting.

Councillor K. Swinburn had put forward the following question:

Question

When I went around the new CCTV control room, I was very impressed, but a little disappointed that Immingham was not connected, I was told that it was imminent and that it was planned to be connected before Christmas, this was delayed because of bad weather, it is now at the end of February and still nothing has happened can you explain why?

Response

In response Councillor Shepherd explained that he had spoken with Mr Thorpe and the original transmission link proposed to be from Ross House had not been progressed due to ongoing challenges. To unlock the link between Immingham and Doughty Road the project team had explored the introduction of a new broadband link, and this was being progressed but taking longer than anticipated. The council were exploring with Immingham Town Council opportunities to link to their existing ICT network to bring imagery back to the control room.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport wished to reiterate that that Immingham was a Town in its own right and was just as important as the Towns of Grimsby and Cleethorpes.

SPC.70 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS

There were no formal requests from members of this panel to call in decisions of recent Cabinet and Portfolio Holder meetings.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 16.00 p.m.