

**NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH OVERVIEW  
AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**5<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

A meeting of the Housing, Environment and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel was held on Thursday, 5 October 2023 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall Nuneaton, the meeting was recorded for publication on the Council's website.

**Present**

Councillor K. Evans (Chair)

Councillors: E. Shiers (Vice-Chair), C. Cape, K. Kondakor, B. Pandher and J. Singh.

Apologies: Councillors S. Harbison, B. Beetham, T. Cooper, C. Golby and Mr Paul Coopey.

**PART I – PUBLIC BUSINESS**

HEH12 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023 be deferred until the next meeting, to allow for responses received from Cabinet Members to queries raised at the meeting to be added to the minutes.

The Work Programme suggestion form submitted by Councillor Cape will be on the February agenda of the Business, Regeneration and Planning OSP. Members of this Panel are welcome to attend the meeting.

HEH13 **Declarations of Interest**

**RESOLVED** that the declarations of interest are as set out in the Schedule attached to these Minutes.

HEH14 **Questions to Cabinet**

The portfolio holder for Health and Environment (Councillor J. Gutteridge) was in attendance to answer questions from the Panel. The portfolio holder for Housing and Communities (Councillor C. Golby) was unavailable, and it was agreed that she would be contacted with any questions and asked to submit a written response to the Panel where appropriate.

**Councillor Kondakor asked a question for the attention of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities:**

A refresh of the housing business case, so if we could ask for the time scales of that and if it can be brought to this OSP. I don't know if Jane Grant might know the answer to that even, but I say, when we talk about finance and things they keep saying that the housing business case, or business plan whatever you call it, is being redone. So an update of that would be useful from Councillor Golby or Officers.

**Councillor Evans responded:**

It would have to come to the OSP for discussion. So you would like to know the time scales for when that will be presented to the OSP? Yes. Can that be followed up, and could I be copied into the response thank you.

**Councillor Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment:**

We are getting better at cutting back shrubs, bushes and things, and a lot of work's been going on, but can we as a Council put out a plea to residents to report stuff that needs cutting back now, because with the bird nesting season just

ending this is the time to. Can Councillor Gutteridge try to work with comms or whatever and get the message out that if people have an issue with things that are overgrown on Council land, or, it needs people telling the Council now. The second issue I had is with the Change Brook. At the top end he's got a lot of trees and things starting to grow in the brook, and that's not on the maintenance Contract. So one of my residents told me about it today, but can Councillor Gutteridge see how we clear the bits of Change Brook that are too high up to the Environment Agency's responsibility. Thank you.

**The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment replied:**

Yes, you know the system, put it on Customer Services and I will follow it up. If you would like to send me an email concerning your concerns about the area with the shrub beds we will look at that. I will look possibly to do a video with the comms team and go from that. Your third question was?

**Councillor Kondakor followed up with:**

It was just because clearing a brook isn't really our parks job effectively, but it's part of a wider thing of making sure it doesn't flood. Where does that fit? Does that still sit with you or do we somehow have to get County to pay for it, to chivvy up. Because basically if the trees start growing in the brook it will eventually fail as a flood alleviation measure.

**The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment replied:**

Put that on Customer Services and when I'm next in the Parks Office we'll have a look, and then decide from there, thank you.

**Councillor Evans then added:**

Building on that, I would also point out that where there are rivers and brooks that fall on Council land and are within our responsibility, we have the river clearance team that are continuing to do a great job, particularly on the River Anker clearing out litter and trolley and bikes and all sorts of rubbish, and that is great for the wildlife and for the local scene.

**Councillor Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment:**

I assume you're still in charge of our climate change mitigation. Can we have an update if we've been going to the Warwickshire climate change meetings and where we are with that? Thank you.

**The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment replied:**

Publication of the Borough Plan review is an important step forward in the climate change. Sustainability is the golden thread running through the all policies looking to submit to the Planning Inspectorate before the end of 2023, with adoption late 2024. New strategic flood risk assessments undertaken at level one and two and fed into the Borough Plan Review, EV charging in all new developments - I'd like to come back to that when I've gone through my list because I'd like to talk a bit more about EV charging, - draft sustainable strategy ready and be in process for adoption in 2024, parks and greenspace strategy being produced for adoption in early 2024, wildlife planting introduced and tried at locations across the Borough, review and signed off Sport England New Play Pitch Strategy in 2023, Waste Management Strategy adopted including the management of single use plastics, waste management plus plan for all new builds and contracts. I believe you've been same as I have for the trip round. Private sector energy strategy being delivered with the intention to expand into all buildings, successful bid for green homes grant Local Authority to improve EPC ratings and we are targeting low income families, working with Warwickshire County Council on providing advice to residents on low cost of living crisis, hydrogen ready boiler installed into

two communal district heating systems, keep partner in Warwickshire North Place Group looking at how health inequalities can be reduced, and that is about all I've got to say but I'd like to say a bit about EV charges. We need more EV charges in our Borough. I went to a meeting the other day, climate change meeting, but I had to leave early because I was called away to the hospital. In the south of the County they've got 110 charges, that's Stratford and Warwick, there is 19 in Rugby and North Warwickshire and ourselves have got 22 and 20, and I don't think it's enough. So, I've instigated a meeting that we will sit down and look and talk to County because there is a large grant there that we ought to tap into, and I want to think outside the box of where we position charges. Thank you.

**Councillor Evans then added:**

The Council was successful in receiving funding from the Government's social housing decarbonisation fund that will go towards retrofitting our housing stock. So we are one of the leading Councils in the Country for tackling climate change as you will well know, and I think Council Gutteridge has pointed out extensively what we're doing on this subject.

**Councillor Gutteridge followed up with:**

A planning permission for an 88 acre solar farm on the outskirts of Bulkington, which I think is a very good position, it is on agricultural land but the farmer will still be farming the land with sheep, so it's a win-win situation for us.

**Councillor Kondakor then asked:**

For these meetings, one thing that's particularly annoying about the EV charging is that the two at the front are in disabled parking bays and the two at the back are nonfunctioning, and that bizarrely creates parking spaces that no one's allowed to park in, because you're only allowed to park if you're charging, and you can't charge because they're broke. I have talked to the County about this, and they were looking at getting some of the BP charging points in. Can you assist in actually getting that to happen, because most of the districts in Warwickshire, the District Councils allow the charges to be put in the public car parks. We have put our aspirations in the Abbey Street car park which obviously will be a year or two before it gets wired, so can I just chivvy you on that? Thank you Chair.

**The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment responded:**

I could talk for a long time about different charging facilities. I've looked at the pop-up charges, the ones that come out of street lights, various charges, various positions. I want to broaden the horizons. I don't want to have charges in car parks, well I do want so many, but I would like to position them elsewhere. What about in the park? When you go to play, charge your car at the park. What about on the outskirts of our cemeteries, that's the sort of thing we're going to talk about. I want to open it up so I've got no blinkers. I'm looking for ideas.

**Councillor Evans asked the Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment:**

It was in one of the local government magazines several weeks ago, that some should say "crazy councils" are taking the decision to ban the use of pesticides in their Grounds Maintenance departments, which has resulted in basically just weeds being out of control, and basically contractors not being able to essentially remove weeds. Can you assure the Committee that you won't take any, you know, crazy decisions like that that will see this Borough basically overgrown with weeds and all sorts of unwanted plants should we say.

**The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment responded:**

When we use the use of pesticides they meet all the relevant specifications, Defra, and the chemicals are proven.

HEH15 **Monitoring of the Grounds Maintenance Contract.**

A report and presentation of the Parks and Greenspace Manager and Glendale Grounds Management Ltd.

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- It has been a very wet season, resulting in increased growth rates.
- Enquires are up on last year, but response times have improved.
- Resourcing has a direct impact on response times, feedback has been generally improved.
- It was acknowledged that there has been an overall improvement this year.
- Strimming is carried out after grass cutting, to get the most out of the large cutting machines and an effective use of time management.
- Member reporting data – includes reports made via Customer Services.
- Bedding plants in Bedworth – scheduling was down to Contractor, and delivery can be down to availability of materials, weather, the seasons etc. They plan 6 months ahead, but work can be weather dependent.
- Trees and shrubbery on private (non Council) land – the Council may take action if there is ‘imminent danger’ to make safe, and recover costs if the landowner is identified.
- Residents have been pleased the embankments on Queen Elizabeth Road have been cut
- Consideration must be given to the bird nesting periods, which includes hedge and bramble management.
- Resident raising queries relating to issues not managed by the Council/Glendale are given advice, including details of what action they can take and Land Registry details etc.
- Housing land being cutback/trimmed from the Highway – procedural issues but it is nice to keep areas looking neat.
- It was noted that bins can be full and under strain, especially at busy periods including bank holidays.
- It was noted that a comparison of information/data against the previous year would be useful.
- The Chair and Panel expressed that their thanks be passed onto staff and Glendale operatives for the substantial improvements and hoped it continues.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

HEH16 **NABSCOP Community Safety Report – Quarter One (2023/24)**

A report of the Head of Economic Development and Communities provided an opportunity for the Panel to scrutinise the Community Safety information provided for Quarter one (2023/24). Police Inspector K. Shore was also in attendance.

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- The link between school exclusions and ASB figures.
- How Covid may have impacted on children being ‘lost’ from education, especially those ‘at risk’ and vulnerable. Home environments can be a factor, and how Schools deal with issues.
- The Police are spending money and resources on reducing ASB.
- Partnership working between the Police, NBBC, WCC and Youth Services – trying to engage and identify areas that can be worked on.
- Alcohol related crime is down whereas drug related crimes remains at a consistent level – stop and searches have increased and the Police continue

to make referrals where possible. An increase in night time economy due to shift changes means Police can be more proactive.

- E-scooters and motorised vehicles/bikes being ridden dangerously and on pavements can be classed as ASB, falling under Safer Roads and Safer Streets. Discussions about the Town Centre becoming fully pedestrianised – whilst recognising that some residents use pedal bikes to get into town and need safe and secure cycle parking.
- The use of PSPO's in relation to alcohol use, and how prolific offenders are dealt with.
- The of CCTV and the need for people and victims to make statements and follow up on complaints made to the Police.
- Business Crime Week (October 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 2023) – there will be proactive patrols and preventative initiatives are ongoing.
- There is a national initiative ongoing in relation to the illegal selling of vapes. The Police are supporting Trading Standards around enforcement and engagement.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

#### HEH17 **Empty Property Update – Private Sector**

A report of the Head of Home Environment Services presented by the Assistant Director for Strategic Housing, provided an update following the June 2022 report, allowing Panel Members an opportunity to scrutinise the information provided.

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- This is not a statutory service, but NBBC has a 0.5 post covering the service.
- The Panel were please to see the amount of grants/loans, and the Council being proactive where possible.
- Benchmarking data against other Councils was requested, to see how NBBC compares against others.
- It was noted empty homes are part of the housing supply.
- The numbers of those who have re-paid. Information will be sought on the data relating to loans.
- NBBC provide advice where necessary, but don't have the resources to do everything, and have to prioritise statutory and regulatory services.
- Council Tax is still payable on empty properties – the longer a property is empty the more that is paid.
- Reasons properties remain empty range include probate and personal choice – NBBC can advise but private property owners may have their own reasons they do not wish to disclose.
- The number of 'hard to let' properties have reduced significantly.
- Compulsory Purchase Orders in the private sector is a lengthy and time consuming legal process which is very resource intensive. Most empty homes are not in a dangerous or poor state to instigate any proceedings.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

#### HEH18 **Integrated Performance Report – First Quarter 2023-24**

A report of the Risk Management and Performance Officer. The Panel were presented with a report which seeks to provide appropriate performance measures, budget information and risk data for service areas within the scope of the Panel. The report has been adapted to reduce the volume of data (as previously reported under the former scrutiny panel arrangements), whilst still

providing the Panel with sufficient information to monitor results to address issues arising.

The Panel asked a number of questions and discussed a variety of issues including:

- Member enquiry information – none are related to Fol's.
- Freedom of Information requests – can get a number of requests from the same people.
- Satisfaction figures on p63 of the report are high – the number of responses/percentage of return rate will be provided in the next report.
- Sickness and return to work data – levels are similar to last year.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

HEH19 **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan showing the key decisions that will be made in the four months commencing 1st July 2023, was provided to the Panel for information.

**RESOLVED:** that the Forward Plan be noted.

HEH20 **Work Programme**

The Panel were presented with the Work Programme for the municipal year 2023-2024. There is likely to be a joint OSP item relating to S. 106 payments at the February Business, Regeneration and Planning Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme be approved.

HEH21 **Any Other Items**

Councillor K. Kondakor submitted a Work Programme Suggestion Form relating to 'We need urgently to look at the new flood risks to Nuneaton town centre, Abbey, Camp Hill and Weddington Wards as a result of cancellation of Flood alleviation project'

**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme Suggestion Form be on the agenda of the next Housing, Environment and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel, with information about funding.

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Chair

## Housing, Environment and Health Overview And Scrutiny Panel - Schedule of Declarations of Interests – 2023/2024

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
	General dispensations granted to all members under s.33 of the Localism Act 2011			Granted to all members of the Council in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housing matters</li> <li>- Statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992</li> <li>- An allowance, payment given to members</li> <li>- An indemnity given to members</li> <li>- Any ceremonial honour given to members</li> <li>- Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992</li> <li>- Planning and Licensing matters</li> <li>- Allotments</li> <li>- Local Enterprise Partnership</li> </ul>
	B. Beetham	Senior PowerBi Lead at Wye Valley Hospital Trust; Warwickshire County Council – Camp Hill	Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board</li> <li>• Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground</li> </ul>	
	C. Cape	Director of Capability Coaching and Consultancy Ltd.	Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armed Forces Covenant Meeting</li> </ul>	
	T. Cooper	None	Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board</li> <li>• Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground</li> </ul>	
	K. Evans (Chair)	Employed the Local Government Association	Sponsorship: Election Expenses – North Warwickshire Conservative Association  Membership of Other Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substitute Member of the West Midlands Combined Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee</li> </ul>	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
			Member of the Bedworth Conservative Club Member of the Conservative Party.	
	S. Harbison	Self-employed	Member of Conservative and Unionist Party. Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Astley Charity</li> </ul>	
	K.A. Kondakor	Electronic and Embedded Software Design Engineer (self-employed)	Unpaid Director of 100% Renewables UK Ltd  Green Party (E&W)	
	B. Pandher		Member of Warwickshire County Council  Treasurer & Trustee of Nanaksar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple; Coordinator of Council of Sikh Temples in Coventry; Secretary of Coventry Indian Community; Trustee of Sikh Monument Trust Vice Chair Exhall Multicultural Group  Member of the following Outside Bodies: Foleshill Charity Trustee – Proffitt's Charity	
	E. Shiers (Vice-Chair)	Employed by and Director of Cannon Enterprise Ltd. Director of The Fresh Dessert Company	The Labour Party Coventry East Credit Union  Member of the Pride in Camp Hill Board.  Member of the governing board for Camp Hill Primary School.  Member of the Board of Trustees of Camp Hill Community Association  Volunteer for the Coventry and Warwickshire district RSPCA	
	J. Singh	Self-employed at Sedgie's News Agents.		