

**NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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

**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**

A meeting of the Housing, Environment and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel was held on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 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), S. Harbison, K. Kondakor and B. Pandher.

Apologies: Councillors C. Cape and T. Cooper.

**PART I – PUBLIC BUSINESS**

HEH22 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair.

HEH23 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor K. Evans declared that in November 2023 he attended the Commonwealth Local Government Conference in Kigali, Rwanda. His flights, accommodation, and expenses were covered by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, and he wished for it to be recorded that his attendance was at no expense to Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

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

HEH24 **Questions to Cabinet**

The portfolio holder for Health and Environment (Councillor J. Gutteridge) and the portfolio holder for Housing and Communities (Councillor C. Golby) were in attendance to answer questions from the Panel.

**Councillor Evans asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities:**

It was widely reported in February, following our budget process, that as part of the Housing Revenue Account we had to make amendments to our charges with respect to garages in the HR Account. I just wondered, is retention in garages an issue to the Housing Department and what is the demand? Has that demand reduced since the amendments to the charges?

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:**

I'll give you actually a broader overview, so it provides a bit of context to the background as well as the 'yes no' because it's not necessarily a binary answer. So there was a question raised, I believe at Cabinet, about terminations, of how many people have handed keys back effectively, how has the increase in charges affected the retention like you say. So we've got 135 terminations since April and juxtapose that against the fact that we have 319 applicants on the waiting list, it's actually quite positive. 205 of those tenants are private tenants, so will pay the top rate should we give them tenancy in the garage. We've also recently carried out a waiting list review, and all of those applicants still want to rent a garage off us, so again that is a real positive. So we're working through the list and we're going to allocate the garages that we've got accordingly. But in total we've got 1,300 garages, there or there thereabouts. We've got 640 that are currently void, 709

that are occupied and we're working through the applications as I've said for any that we've got, that we can fill. So the increase in charges hasn't actually really adversely affected what we're doing, in fact quite the opposite. The increase in charges has actually seen that we've gone from a weekly charge rate for garages round about £7,500 and it's now consistently between £11,500 and £12,500 per week. So we're looking at around an increase of just short of £4,000 per week, based on the numbers, and that is from the point of when we increased the charges. So I hope that provides a bit of context and clarity.

**Councillor Evans followed up with:**

So any commentary that we've lost money as a result of these changes, that is clearly not the case.

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:**

Absolutely, any claims made to that effect are totally false and completely demonstrably false also.

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

Thank you very much. Can I start with a couple questions to Councillor Gutteridge? The first one I sort of gave a bit of pre-warning to him. I was interested in flooding in Whittleford Park, where there's potential to have a flood scheme. I know several of his Officers went to the Stakeholder event a year ago, so I just wanted to ask Councillor Gutteridge's views on what we know about existing flooding in the park over the last, like there was a big rainfall event a month ago. And if the Officers have briefed him on the possibilities of having some flood schemes to keep the flood water in the park, rather than let it go into the industrial estate or on to Queen Elizabeth Road. Thank you.

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

Thank you Councillor Kondakor, I think you've pre-empted yourself because I believe you've got it on item 13 of this agenda for the Work Programme for the flood alleviation, so I'll leave it until item 13.

**Councillor Kondakor then asked:**

Thank you Chair. The reason I ask now is we're not supposed to ask Cabinet Members questions necessarily later on, but if Council Gutteridge is staying that'll be great.

My second question was about Bermuda Physical Activity Centre which is being built on Miners Welfare Park. I believe that's got the go-ahead effectively, almost now, bar sorting out Planning. But what I wanted to check was, were plans being progressed to plant new trees for the ones that we lost, because obviously the first thing we need to do is remove trees to allow the centre to be built. And the second thing was is there any progress on the time scales for the new skate park? Thank you.

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

Thank you Councillor Kondakor. I think I just have to start with that I think Bermuda is in Nuneaton, and Bedworth is in Bedworth, and I think the project you're on about is in Bedworth, the Physical Activity Hub, is that correct? Thank you Bermuda is Councillor Golby's. Yes we will be removing some trees unfortunately, but we will be planting more than we are taking out eventually. We are looking at that. We might start to look to take the trees out early part of next year before bird nesting season, if we're going to take them out. Going on to the

skate park, yes the skate park is progressing nicely and that will be all intertwined with the Physical Activity Hub in Bedworth.

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

The third area I wanted to just ask you about was the adoption of outdoor areas on the new estates in Weddington. I believe Matt Crosby and his team keep working with developers, but we seem to get very little progress on those adoptions of the open spaces by the Borough Council, so I wanted to just check we had the capacity in the team to be progressing those, and if there's any news.

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

Thank you Councillor Kondakor. Yes we are progressing. If you'd like to put your full question on Customer Services we can get one of our Officers to come back with notification, and I do have capacity to do the snagging lists and looking at various sites across the Borough.

**Councillor Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities:**

I've now got two questions for Councillor Golby. The first one is about people presenting as homeless, because obviously it's an ongoing battle this Council has, to obviously keep housing these people. So I was hoping we could have a quick update on how the process is going in terms of our temporary accommodation, and what the size of people, the effective numbers of families we've got currently being housed in our accommodation and Bed and Breakfast.

My second question was just related to the empty garages. If we've got over 640 empty I wondered what the hold-up has been in refilling them and if we're doing any refurbishment to make them rentable? Thank you.

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:**

I can answer the garage one off the top of my head. I mean that that has been well documented that we're actually reviewing what we've got, to see what we need to refurbish, what we need to demolish, and what we can use for other things. That has been said time and time and time again. We are under the process of doing a capital project review, and we are reviewing our estate, which again has been mentioned time and time again. It's all part of the overall housing review that's currently taking place, which I believe you asked me for an end date for last time I was here, or was it in Cabinet, and which I said measure twice, cut once, was my response. So that's again, I can't really offer you any more on that other than it's an ongoing situation that we're reviewing.

**It was agreed that Councillor Golby would respond to the question relating to Homelessness under Any Other Business, to allow her time to gather the information in order to provide a more comprehensive answer.**

**Councillor Evans asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities:**

We've done a lot of work on this Committee around Antisocial Behaviour and the impact that has on the Housing Revenue Account. I just wondered if there was any data within the Council or perhaps data that's collected nationally, around the correlation between ASB that is reported to us in the Housing Department, and evictions that we are successful in carrying out.

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:**

Yes actually, though we were mentioned in a news article not that long ago, and that was off the back of a nationwide, or certainly in England FoI that was sent out

to all Councils asking for some information, and the response that we gave back actually pitched us in, basically the FoI was based around how many complaints of ASB do we have within our Council housing stock, what were our responses, and how many evictions came off the back of it. The purpose of the article was to try and see who's dealing with ASB in the strictest manner, and out of 78 Councils, and that includes some of the really large Councils as well like Birmingham, we are number five in performance nationally for dealing with ASB. So the numbers are aren't massive, we've got 414 as of, this is up to June this year, so it's 22-23. We got 414 ASB complaints, we dealt with them in the best way possible and seven of those complaints led to a complete eviction of trouble causing tenants. So, and I hope this actually, so we were fifth in numbers, we were also fifth in per complaint evictions per complaint as well. And that pitches us again against the same bigger Councils like Birmingham and, you know Sandwell. I'm looking down the list that I was sent. Actually Sandwell got 7,500 complaints and evicted one person. We are punching well above our weight and it's testament to the changes that we've implemented in the Housing and Communities team, and the team are working really well, and I can't thank them for the amount of work they're putting in to make communities better.

**Councillor K. Evans responded:**

Well that's incredibly good and if we're top five then we are almost certainly leading the national fight against antisocial behaviour and evicting those housing tenants who wish to cause misery to other housing tenants. And it's obviously the extreme small minority, but it's only a small minority that causes absolute hell for the people, and our Officers in the Housing Department should be commended for their work in making us one of the Country's leading Housing Departments in tackling antisocial behaviour.

HEH25 **Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health Support for Children and Young People in Warwickshire**

A report of the Commissioner for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being to provide the Panel with an update on the Warwickshire Children and Young People's Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Services including the Rise Service.

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- Technology can be an opportunity and a threat – with young people spending more time on technology.
- The need for pro-active approaches to get young people interacting with others, especially outside the house.
- Getting young people to engage with, and feel part of their community – including the proven benefits of physical activity in health and wellbeing.
- Working with Schools and groups, including the voluntary sector. Multi-agency working is important.
- Engaging with parents and providing support to whole family units – giving consideration to home environments (including finances, parents home working etc).
- Self-referrals and wrap around support being available.
- Panel Members felt information around waiting times would be useful, and data around children in crisis (how many are long term, or leave and come back).
- Information relating to staffing can be found in the Local Transformation Plan.

- They are required to keep data on the demographics of those using the service.

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

HEH26 **Petition – Closure of Pool Bank Street Carpark**

A petition was received in relation to the closure of Pool Bank Street carpark.

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- The Panel discussed what had changed since the petition had been started – including the fact certain relevant organisations and groups have access to the carpark whenever required (including the Abbey Theatre, Scouts/Cadets)
- Positive feedback has been received from local residents as ASB has reduced. The Police also supported the scheme.

**RESOLVED** that the petition be noted.

HEH27 **Community and Voluntary Sector (WVACA and CAB) Performance Report**

The Director for Housing and Community Safety provided a report which gave the Panel an opportunity to scrutinise information pertaining to Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA) and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) during the first two quarters of 2023/23.

**Public Speaker: Mr P. Smith**

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- Homeless provision
- Useful to have a timeline over the past few years – now have a bigger workload due to national influences such as fuel and cost of living crisis – to see how this impacts on them.
- The need for education, especially in relation to issues such as the cost of living crisis,
- A request for representatives to attend in person in the future.
- The need for partnership working – such as with Rise.
- Diversifying funding moving forward, to ensure they are sustainable, and meeting the needs of residents.
- A breakdown of the figures was requested – Members were asked to get more information and specific requests to Committee Services so information can be added (where possible) to future reports.
- Members are welcome to visit the organisations by appointment.

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

HEH28 **Damp and Mould Inspection Performance**

The Assistant Director – Social Housing and Community Safety and the Responsive Repairs Manager presented a report which updated the Panel on the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Council's management of damp and mould in their properties.

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

- Staff are being more proactive rather than reactive.
- Structural issues of 1970's buildings and ongoing maintenance programmes.
- Capital programme in line with work relating to repairs.
- The need to look at property types (including age and type of building) as this has an impact on priorities.

- Positive feedback is being received, residents are pleased with responses and action from NBBC.
- The Committee wished for their thanks to be passed onto staff members.

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

#### HEH29 **Tenant Satisfaction Measures**

A report of The Assistant Director – Social Housing and Community Safety provided the Panel with information relating to the outcome of the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, required as part of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

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

- Improvement of the complaints process.
- ASB – NBBC have, and will continue to evict residents if required. Positive work is taking place in the department.
- Suggestion to look at ensuring digital responses can be received.
- An external company was commissioned to carry out the work, and collate the data. In future keeping the work inhouse will be considered, but factors such as capacity and cost benefits will be taken into account. Lots of learning has taken place this year.
- The Communications Team can be used to promote their work.
- Resident engagement is one area that is being looked at to improve, including the use of a van to allow Officers to be more visible.

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

#### HEH30 **Forward Plan**

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

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

#### HEH31 **Work Programme Suggestion Form**

Councillor Kondakor submitted a Work Programme Suggestion Form relating to Flood Alleviation - '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'.

The Panel discussed a variety of issues including:

- Nuneaton's history in relation to flooding.
- Floodplains and flood relief initiatives.
- Areas that cause issues, and areas that are at risk.
- Suggestions to reduce risk, including delaying the speed water travels from certain areas, such as Camp Hill. Looking at options where water can be held back.
- The possibility of getting WCC to attend a meeting and form a Working Group to look at long term options and solutions.
- Money is a factor, WCC is the responsible authority and the Environment Agency could be a funding provider.
- The Scrutiny Panel at WCC was suggested as an appropriate avenue to pursue as NBBC has no authority in relation to some of the suggestions.
- Members requested more information in relation to funding, budgeting and the Capital Programme. Once this additional information is received, it was

generally agreed that Members would be happy to invite representatives from the WCC Flood Team to a future Scrutiny Meeting to discuss generic concerns across the Borough.

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the Leader of the Green Party be invited to present a Capital Programme during the 2024 Budget setting process, detailing how such a project could come to fruition, taking into account the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy; and
- b) the Work Programme Suggestion Form not be reviewed or approved until this additional information be received.

HEH32 **Work Programme**

The Panel were presented with the Work Programme for the municipal year 2023-2024.

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

HEH33 **Any Other Items**

Councillor K. Kondakor repeated the question he had asked under Questions to Cabinet, which had been deferred:

**Councillor Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities:**

Can we have an update on the current people becoming homeless and how many are in B&B and how many are in our various bits of temporary accommodation?

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:**

I'm not going to break it down too much because I don't want to give away who's staying where, because some people are there because of domestic abuse etc. So we've got 103 households in temporary accommodation at the moment, three of those have been decanted because of repairs to their homes so are not actually homeless. The breakdown out of that, we've got 43 who are single families so, consisting of one person. We've got a total of 16 pets that we are currently looking after. Out of all the people who are currently in in our properties 20 have got offers of housing. We've got 85 void properties, of that 48 of them are ready to let, and in total we only have five houses in bed and breakfast accommodation, the rest is being accommodated internally by the Council.

It was agreed that the process to recruit a new independent Co-Opted Member of the Scrutiny Panel should begin.

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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.		