

NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

1st February 2024

A meeting of the Housing, Environment and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel was held on Thursday, 1st February 2024 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, T. Cooper, S. Harbison, K. Kondakor, J. Singh and J. Hartshorn (substituting for Councillor B. Beetham).

Apologies: Councillors B. Pandher and B. Beetham

PART I – PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEH34 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 23rd November 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair.

HEH35 **Declarations of Interest**

As Councillor J. Hartshorn was a substitute Councillor for this meeting, his declarations were not listed in the schedule attached to the agenda.

RESOLVED that the declarations of interest are as set out in the Schedule attached to these Minutes, with the addition of the declarations of interest for Councillor J. Hartshorn.

HEH36 **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 Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities:

The housing budget and the medium-term housing plan we had a Forward Plan updated today, when the housing strategies slipped back from March to June. So your policy of measuring twice and cut once is taking an awfully long while. So can we have an indication of what's happening with the housing strategy and the business case obviously that goes alongside that? Thank you.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:

The strategy of measuring twice and cutting once does take quite a while, and I've been very open in this Council about when we've been looking into everything that's going on in housing, everything that's going on in the finance of housing, we are finding historic things that need correcting. And before those things are corrected we have to sort those out before we can move on. I cannot and will not put a strategy together until I have all the information that I am comfortable with in order to build a long-term sustainable plan for the housing, the social housing in this Borough, and I don't think that should be a bone of contention. I think it's actually prudent, which wasn't done previously. We know it wasn't done previously because we've we found out all the finances for the houses that were, we've had to refinance some of the stock. We brought all that information to the Council, it's

in the public domain and it will take as long as it takes for us to get a plan together that is thorough, fully funded and sustainable.

Councillor Kondakor followed up with:

Following up on that a fairly short while, you keep blaming the last Administration but you've been in charge for three years now, so is there interim plans going on as to what to do until you make up your mind, or your successor makes up their mind what's going on. You've been in charge three years, we've got hundreds and hundreds of empty garages, we've got housing projects that need some idea of where they're going, we need more housing. So is there any interim measures in place until you produce your plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:

There is no change to what we've already put out there in previous strategies from last year. That is the interim measure. You keep going on about the garages and I keep telling you about the garages, and you keep going on about housing and I keep telling you about housing, this is literally a circular conversation and I've told you time and time again, you keep asking the same questions you will get the same answer. I am not going to budge on this and if you think that's irresponsible, if you think being fiscally responsible to be able to put a sustainable long-term plan together. If you think that's irresponsible, I don't. I think that's what has what has been needed to happen for a long time. Yes we've been in charge for three years and the amount of stuff we've had to unpick in those three years is unbelievable. I have said publicly, and more than once, had we not taken over this Council when we did, we would be bankrupt. One hundred percent convinced this Council would have gone bankrupt had we not taken over and taken some of the interim measures that we've done to change the financial direction, and if you want to carry on with that conversation take it to the Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but as far as housing is concerned, until I am satisfied that I have a way forward that is fully fundable and sustainable, we won't be moving forwards. I don't think that's an issue.

Councillor K. Evans asked:

Were does it say that's miscellaneous expenditure?

Councillor K. Kondakor stated:

On page 95, it says HRA total, and it's got budget, a quarter of a billion pounds which I think is wrong. Second quarter spending 8.9 billion pound. I'd just like a nice table of what the position is.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:

It's quite clearly not billion, if it was then we'd be all right wouldn't we. I mean all I can say is welcome to my world, because this is what I've been dealing with for the last three years, and it's unpicking stuff. If you want a table that's different, put a request in through the Chair. The Chair can sort that out, but you know you're misleading in what you're saying there. I don't really know how to answer that.

Councillor K. Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities:

The Right to Buy Policy, which is a policy that I absolutely support and I think it's important that we try and get people onto the property ladder. As per the policy of right to buy, when we sell a property we retain a receipt but under normal circumstances we only retain a small percentage of that. Over the last two years Councils have been able to temporarily retain 100% of that receipt, but unfortunately that is coming to an end. Would you, on behalf of the Council

consider writing to the Secretary of State to request that 100% right to buy receipts is maintained, so that we have the financial ability in our HRA to continue building more social housing.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities replied:

I will. I haven't got a problem with that because the 100% receipts of right to buy is a big help when we sell the properties, and right to buy is a big help to people that are buying properties who maybe not ordinarily, or wouldn't ordinarily be able to afford the house prices that we've got currently. So yeah, I'd be happy to write to the Secretary of State on that.

Councillor K. Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment:

In the paperwork it mentions how much, or how tiny amount we're spending on environmental sustainability, and that we're underspending that by £15,000. We also have all the cycling projects stalled in Nuneaton and Bedworth, and last year the flood alleviation project for Camp Hill was sabotaged and scrapped with the money being reallocated, as is the cycling money being reallocated to other stuff. Considering the floods on the 2nd January, how are we getting on with the Warwickshire Climate Change Committees you go to in terms of getting some decent mitigation funding for Nuneaton and Bedworth, and particularly for the flooding, because we were due quite significant flood alleviation works. We were due quite significant cycle improvements, and Warwickshire is slowly moving ahead and there's obviously this climate change meeting you go to hopefully, where are we with getting these adaptations in Nuneaton and Bedworth.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment replied:

Thank you. Yes I have attended the Climate Change Committee and we are looking at getting a substantial grant for the EV charges in the Borough, which I have, working with County, and it will be many charges put across the centre of both towns. Going back to the flood alleviation system, I believe that is County Councils, so that's that thank you.

Councillor K. Evans added:

We had a long discussion last time about who's got responsibility for flooding and I don't see it as a difficult subject, so can we try and move on to something else.

Councillor K. Kondakor followed up with:

EV charging points will help rich people, poor people will use cycle lanes, they'll want their houses not flooded. We are not getting our share of the climate change mitigation funding, we're not getting our share of the flood alleviation projects, and as we've got a Cabinet Member who sits on these Committees and attends them, he should be shouting hopefully, to get some of the flood alleviation projects. Not just for my part of the Borough, but also in Bedworth. There are areas where a lot more work needs doing on maintenance and mitigation to cope with increasingly wet winters. So I think it is fair to ask Councillor Gutteridge what's happening about the funding for flood alleviation. I know we don't fund it, but we are the Planning Authority, and we attend these meetings hopefully standing up for our Borough and the residents to risk from flooding.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment replied:

Thank you, I don't know whether he understands, but we have Warwickshire County Council who have responsibilities, and there's Nuneaton and Bedworth, we don't have that. Right, going back to your cycle lane, yes we are looking at cycle lanes. In fact at this present time we have a new cycle lane in a park, not far

from yourselves, which when we are ready to open it, we will open it. So there is a new cycle lane going in there in the parks, and we are looking to put cycle lanes across most of our parks eventually when I have the funding.

Councillor K. Evans asked the Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment:

I have a very arcane subject around drainage ditches. Now I know that in the vast majority of cases we're not responsible for the maintenance of them, but is the Park Department putting any pressure on the Environment Agency and also Warwickshire County Council, where they hold responsibility to clear out drainage ditches, some of which haven't been maintained for quite some time now.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment replied:

We are putting pressure on the Environment Agency to clean out their ditches, but probably a lot of the ditches that you refer to are probably owned by the County Council and we are putting pressure on the County Council. And where we have problems with our ditches we look at cleaning them. In fact we only just cleaned out a ditch last year that was, well back end of last year, which was very severe, and we will keep them clean where we can and when we've got costs effectively.

Councillor K. Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment:

Thank you, its the cemeteries, but obviously you get water coming on from other land. Did we have a better drainage of our cemeteries during the 2nd January flooding, because I didn't get any reports, so hopefully that is getting better. Thank you.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Environment replied:

We do have a problem in certain cemeteries with drainage, and in fact we have spoken with the land owner who adjoins us, where the water is coming from. In fact we've also had a meeting with our MP and briefed him about it, and we are looking at taking this further. He's asking questions down at Westminster about certain areas that we are having problems with water.

Councillor Golby then provided an update on the Communities Team, which is now an 'award winning' team. Congratulations were given to Officers who won awards, and thanks were given for their efforts.

HEH37 Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) – Resourcing to Risk

A presentation of the Chief Fire Officer (WFRS) to outline the consultation on a proposed new delivery model which aligns to risk. The consultation started in December and closes on the 10th March 2024, and the Panel Members were given an opportunity to learn more about the proposals and ask any questions.

Public Speaker: Michele Kondakor

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- The planned changes to resourcing the service within the Borough, including the difference between the current and proposed appliances and operational times within each area.
- Response times, on call facilities and challenges to the shift systems.
- The aim of reconfiguring of resources to try and have the best impact and response.
- The impact the proposed changes will have on local residents.

- The times when the service is most in demand, and how the demand is currently covered, and will change under the proposals (including response times).
- The issues and challenges the service have with resourcing appliances, including on-call requirements.
- Concerns over resourcing incidents where more than once appliance is required, and response times associated with this.
- Contingencies when there is more than one incident, including calling back resources, moving resources around and backfilling. Resource configuration is important.
- The number of appliances that are required at different types of incidents, and the number of firefighters that are required on each appliance – and concerns over the number required to use certain equipment/deal with certain incidents (including breathing apparatus policy).
- Dealing with road traffic accidents and responding effectively.
- Fire and rescue – including floods and fires – and the capacity of the service to be able to cope under the new proposals.
- Concerns certain services may be lost due to proposals. It was confirmed all resources will still belong to Warwickshire, there will be reconfiguration rather than cuts (putting the right resources in the right place and the right time – looking at demand). Concerns included the reconfiguration would lead to less resources being based in the Borough which may impact response times.
- Different options including alternative crewing models have been considered.
- Retention issues relating to on-call firefighters and what is being done to try and retain them. There are no issues relating to the recruitment and retention of fulltime firefighters.
- The new hotel being built in Nuneaton – will be built to building regulations, but there is no sprinkler system.
- Resources from the whole County can be called on if required for a major incident, and even other Fire and Rescue services if required.
- Coventry Airport – have their own Fire and Rescue services, but WFRS can support them.
- Fire Station locations, and a review of locations.
- Blue light collaboration with Police and Ambulance services.
- The service and resources are under constant review, and things will never be ‘set in stone’ so they can be flexible and respond to changes in demand.
- Panel Members and all residents are encouraged to respond to the consultation, and individual suggestions can be put forward as part of the consultation.

RESOLVED that the presentation and report be noted.

HEH38 **Air Quality Management - Monitoring of the Two Current Air Quality Management Areas and What is Being Done to Mitigate These**

A report of the Safety and Environmental Health Manager gave the Panel the opportunity to scrutinise the Air Quality Management at NBBC, including monitoring and mitigation as set out in the most recent Annual Status Report (2023).

Public Speaker: Michele Kondakor

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- DEFRA monitoring and World Health Organisation recommendations.

- The need to watch/monitor sites where levels have increased.
- Emission levels impacted by congestion and rush hour – the need to test at different times. Highways do regularly review but this can be put forward to the Steering Group.
- Traffic lights that hold traffic, technology can be used to spread traffic. Stop and start traffic can have a negative impact on air quality. There are lots of pedestrian crossings in certain areas, and it was felt syncing traffic lights may assist with keeping traffic moving. These queries can be put to Steering Group (WCC are responsible for traffic lights).
- Need monitoring points in Nuneaton and Bedworth to measure trends.
- Health impact of children walking near roads to Schools.
- The impact of electric buses and insulation in homes.

RESOLVED that

- a) the report be noted;
- b) any recommendations or suggestions given at this meeting be considered at the next meeting of the Air Quality Steering Group;
- c) In light of the evidence provided to the Committee that Nitrogen Dioxide concentrations have not passed the objective threshold in the last ten years, the revocation of Air Quality Management Area 1 be endorsed by the Panel. Further, the continuation of Air Quality Monitoring in the areas of new and proposed housing be supported by the Panel.

Councillor Kondakor asked for his vote against resolution C) to be recorded.

HEH39 **Integrated Performance Report – Second 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.

Public Speaker: Michele Kondakor

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

- FOI requests – comparisons to see if the figures are good or bad would be useful.
- The figures in the report will be amended and corrected to be consistent throughout.
- Health and environment clarifications (under finance) would be useful to see a breakdown of what comes under each item.
- Occupancy data would be useful to see any shortfalls.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

HEH40 **Housing Environment and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 2023-24**

The Panel were presented with an annual report, which set out the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in 2023-24.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

HEH41 **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan showing the key decisions that will be made in the four months commencing 1st February 2024, was provided to the Panel for information.

RESOLVED: that the Forward Plan be noted.

HEH42 **Work Programme**

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

RESOLVED that

- a) the Work Programme be noted; and
- b) a meeting be arranged between the relevant Director and Councillors Evans, Shiers and Cooper in relation to Pride in Camp Hill.

HEH43 **Any Other Items**

The Briefing Update Report from the NHS relating to Primary Care/General Practice which was emailed to Panel Members on 31st January 2024 be noted.

Housing, Environment and Health OSP Members were reminded that they are welcome to attend the Business, Regeneration and Planning OSP which is being held on 8th February 2024, to take part in the discussion relating to S.106.

Thanks were given to the Housing Officers for their work in relation to the flooding on 2nd January 2024.

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"> - Housing matters - Statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 - An allowance, payment given to members - An indemnity given to members - Any ceremonial honour given to members - Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 - Planning and Licensing matters - Allotments - Local Enterprise Partnership |
| | 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"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground | |
| | C. Cape | Director of Capability Coaching and Consultancy Ltd. | Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed Forces Covenant Meeting | |
| | T. Cooper | None | Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp Hill Urban Village: Pride in Camp Hill Board • Committee of Management of Hartshill and Nuneaton Recreation Ground | |
| | 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"> • Substitute Member of the West Midlands Combined Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee | |

| | 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"> • Astley Charity | |
| | 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 President & Trustee of Nanaksar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple Coventry; 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foleshill Charity Trustee – Proffitt's Charity • Conservative Party | |
| | 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 Director Community Interest Company Chill (alternative education provision for young people) | |
| | J. Singh | Self-employed at Sedgie's News Agents. | | |