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Our Ref
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Date: 06 June 2023

Dear Councillor,

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

A Meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** will be held at **Council Chamber**, Civic Offices, Civic Way, Swadlincote, DE11 0AH on **Wednesday, 14 June 2023 at 18:00**. You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Executive

To: **Labour Group**
Councillor Bambrick (Chair), Councillor Gee (Vice-Chair)
Councillors A Jones, G Jones and L Mulgrew.

Conservative Group
Councillors Atkin and Lowe.



AGENDA

Open to Public and Press

- 1** Apologies.
- 2** To receive the Open Minutes of the Meetings held on:

31 August 2022 **3 - 5**

12 October 2022 **6 - 8**

04 January 2023 **9 - 12**

08 February 2023 **13 - 15**
- 3** To note any declarations of interest arising from any items on the Agenda
- 4** To receive any questions by members of the public pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 10.
- 5** To receive any questions by Members of the Council pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 11.
- 6** Overview and Scrutiny Scoping

Exclusion of the Public and Press:

- 7** The Chairman may therefore move:-
That in accordance with Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part I of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in the header to each report on the Agenda.
- 8** To receive any exempt questions by Members of the Council pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 11.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

31 August 2022

PRESENT: -

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick (Chair) and
Councillors Gee and Stuart

Conservative Group

Councillors Hewlett and Muller

Independent Group

Councillor MacPherson

OS/11 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillors Atkin and Smith (Conservative Group).

OS/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM ITEMS ON AGENDA**

The Committee was informed that no Declarations of Interest had been received.

OS/13 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the Public had been received.

OS/14 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**OS/15 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) REPORT ON USAGE**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report the Committee summarising the key points and sought approval for the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Committee noted the internal report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

OS/16 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive addressed the Committee regarding updates on Land Charges and the Redevelopment of Swadlincote Town Centre. It was noted that funding had been received to assist with recruitment and that a task force would be put in place to complete the work required for the transfer of Land Charges.

The Committee was informed that work on Delph was due to commence the following day and that Local Members had been on a visit and made suggestions to improve visibility of bollards.

Phase 1 works in relation to Bank House were outlined and it was noted that with Phase 2 which was the lighting for the outdoor space / parking area there was a sewer that needed to be diverted.

Members raised queries regarding work specifications, materials to be used – and drainage in relation to the Delph.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee the tender packs which would give information requested would be completed by the end of the week and once received specifications would be shared with Members. It was also noted that Chinese granite would be used due to its availability.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) addressed the Committee updating on other Work Programme items and advised the Committee that the Council had been unable to arrange for representation from the GP Service to attend the Committee which was due to a shortage of resources.

Members raised their concerns and frustrations regarding the shortage of doctors in the district. The Chair of the Committee proposed to write a letter to the Leader of the Council requesting an update on the situation and informing them that this was something that Overview and Scrutiny Committee was keen to move forward with.

Councillor MacPherson sought an update on staff working from home position and the current increase in energy prices.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) that there was plan for staff to return to the offices.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.

OS/17 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

OS/18 **EXEMPT QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 19:05 hours

COUNCILLOR S BAMBRICK

CHAIR

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 October 2022

PRESENT: -

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick (Chair) and Stuart (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Gee and L Mulgrew

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin and Hewlett

In Attendance

Councillor Wheelton

OS/19 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillors Corbin and Muller (Conservative Group).

OS/20 **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of Meetings held on 09 February 2022 and 15 June 2022 were noted and signed by the Chair of the Committee.

OS/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM ITEMS ON AGENDA**

The Committee was informed that no Declarations of Interest had been received.

OS/22 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the Public had been received.

OS/23 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**OS/24 NOVUS PRESENTATION**

The Novus representatives made a presentation to the Committee on performance, contract information and customer satisfaction reports. The Committee received the information and followed up with questions to the visitors.

Members requested further information about complaints received by Novus; the current contract and any financial changes; training of sub-contractors; the relationship between Novus and the Council; certification for electrical installation works and traceability; statistics; householder reports and communication.

The Head of Housing informed the Committee that the contract was three plus two years ending July 2024 and confirmed no financial changes had been made due to rising inflation. The partnering between Novus and the Council was robust with both sides understanding each other's challenges. A report of complaints was provided by Novus on a regular basis and the Head of Housing asked Members for copies of specific householder comments which would be investigated. Members praised the communication between the customers and the contractors.

OS/25 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the Work Programme to the Committee and noted that the East Midlands Airport representative would attend the next Committee. It was noted that Parish Councils would be invited and could submit questions with the Chair's permission. The update from Planning would be deferred to a future Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.

OS/26 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**RESOLVED:**

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

OS/27 **EXEMPT QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 19:45 hours

COUNCILLOR S BAMBRICK

CHAIR

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

04 January 2023

PRESENT:

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick (Chair) and Stuart (Vice-Chair)
and Councillors Gee and L Mulgrew.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Hewlett and Muller.

In Attendance

Councillor

OS/36 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillor Ackroyd.

OS/37 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM ITEMS ON AGENDA**

The Committee was informed that no Declarations of Interest had been received.

OS/38 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the Public had been received.

OS/39 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE**OS/40 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) – REPORT ON USAGE**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to the Committee and informed Members no covert surveillance had been arranged during the period covered by the report.

RESOLVED:

To note the internal report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

OS/41 COUNCIL HOUSE LETTINGS AND VOID PROPERTIES

The Head of Housing presented the report highlighting the forward plan for empty properties and the targets for re-letting each property. The Committee was informed that recruitment of qualified electrical and gas safety engineers had been difficult and that agency workers were covering those tasks.

Members enquired about common reasons why tenancies were terminated, waiting list times, the demand for each type of property and alternative housing available for people on the waiting list. The Head of Housing informed the Committee that the main reasons tenancies were terminated were due to the death of the occupant, downsizing and tenants moving into alternative supported accommodation. It was noted that waiting list were being managed in accordance with preference of housing type and location.

Members sought clarity about the re-letting plan and how the Council compared with other authorities, the Right to Buy scheme and valuations, staffing levels in the Housing team and energy saving improvements.

The Head of Housing advised the Committee that the re-letting plan would be shared with Members. It was noted that other authorities had better results, however, circumstances were different and in the case of North-West Leicestershire, for example, the skillset of their in-house team was far greater than the local authorities within South Derbyshire. The Head of Housing informed the Committee that properties sold through the Right to Buy scheme were valued by independent Estate Agents and that there were approximately 20 applications per year. The Committee was also advised that the staffing situation was improving with project inspectors and a Fire and Building Safety person being recruited for the Repairs team and that energy saving improvements were undertaken whilst the tenant was in-situ.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the contents of the report and the Improvement Plan are noted by the committee.

1.2 That a progress report be brought back to the Housing and Community Services committee on 25 April 2023.

OS/42 **VACANT POSTS AND AGENCY COSTS**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to the Committee indicating that the position shown was in September 2022 and that the latest figures for December 2022 were that vacant posts had reduced from 70 to 61 and the number of agency staff was down from 57 to 55.

Members queried if any posts were shared with other authorities and if there was a general trend in staffing levels among other authorities, and if salary levels were benchmarked with other councils and the private sector.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) informed the Committee that a shared service existed with Lichfield District Council for Land Charges, that there was a general shortage of personnel in the public sector and that salary levels were compared with other authorities including unitary authorities, private companies and housing associations, noting that other terms and conditions were also taken into consideration such as flexible working.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the analysis of vacant posts and agency costs as detailed in the report is considered and any recommendations referred back to Finance and Management Committee.

OS/43 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the Work Programme to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.

OS/44 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

OS/45 **EXEMPT QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 19:15 hours

COUNCILLOR S BAMBRICK

CHAIR

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

08 February 2023

PRESENT:

Labour Group

Councillor Bambrick (Chair) and Stuart (Vice-Chair)
and Councillors Gee and L Mulgrew.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Hewlett and Muller.

OS/46 **APOLOGIES**

The Committee was informed that apologies had been received from Councillor Ackroyd.

OS/47 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM ITEMS ON AGENDA**

The Committee was informed that no Declarations of Interest had been received.

OS/48 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Committee was informed that no questions from members of the Public had been received.

OS/49 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

The Committee was informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

OS/50 **BUDGET SCRUTINY 2023-24**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to the Committee giving an overview of the budgets for 2023-24, noting that following consultation with local businesses no questions had been raised. The proposed Council Tax levels and rent increase were outlined.

The Committee was informed that reserves were expected to drop below £1.5 million in 2026/27, and that 2023/24 government funding had reduced but would

be compensated by the growth in the Council Tax Base and a guaranteed grant payment from the Government of £1.8 million. It was further noted that earnings from investment interest was higher than projected.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) summarised the current cost pressures and mitigation measures and updated the Committee regarding Medium Term financial Plan noting the projected reserves.

The Housing Revenue Account was outlined highlighting the repayment of the national housing debt and risks and cost pressures, that included voids and relets, council house sales and funding uncertainty.

Members raised queries regarding investments, pension contributions, reserves and asset reduction.

The Strategic Director informed the Committee that interest accrued was used to offset debts and that the Council strived to get the best return on investments and invested as safely as it could. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) explained that the government had made changes to the pension fund which made pensions less attractive and that every 3 years the pension fund was independently revalued and noted the Council was at 100% which meant that currently all pensions could be paid if the Council no longer existed and noted that the Council's contribution had risen up to 20%.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) confirmed that void costs would be covered by reserves. It was explained how some reserves were set aside for specific things such as vehicle replacements, IT and planned maintenance and that some reserves were set aside to protect service provision such as the funding of temporary staff etc. The Committee was informed that asset reduction had been considered and many assets have been passed across to Parishes which reduced liabilities for the Council.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Committee considered the proposed budgets of the Council for 2023/24.

1.2 The Committee considered the medium-term financial plans of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts.

OS/51 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the Work Programme to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered and approved the updated work programme.

OS/52 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

OS/53 **EXEMPT QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11**

The Committee was informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 19:05 hours

COUNCILLOR S BAMBRICK

CHAIR