

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Offices, Narborough

WEDNESDAY, 17 JULY 2024

Present:-

Cllr. Nick Brown (Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)
Cllr. Neil Wright (Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny Commissioner)

Cllr. Janet Forey

Cllr. Antony Moseley

Cllr. Tracey Shepherd

Officers present:-

Julie Hutchinson	- Communications, Consultation and Digital Services Manager
Karen Almond	- Communications and Consultation Officer
Sandeep Tiensa	- Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer
Isaac Thomas	- Democracy Support Officer

Apologies:-

Cllr. Royston Bayliss, Cllr. Adrian Clifford, Cllr. Luke Cousin, Cllr. Roy Denney,
Cllr. Susan Findlay and Cllr. Matt Tomeo

48. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

No disclosures were received.

49. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2024, as circulated, were approved and signed as a correct record.

50. UPDATE/RESULTS OF RESIDENTS SURVEY

Considered – Presentation from the Communications, Consultation and Digital Services Manager (CCDSM) and the Communications and Consultation Officer (CCO).

The CCDSM and the CCO provided an update on the results of the Residents' Survey which was carried out earlier in 2024.

The CCDSM explained that the Resident's Survey is carried out once every two years and provides a valuable insight into how the Council and its services are perceived by the community. The CCDSM explained that 1000 survey responses were needed for the results to be deemed 'statistically significant.' As 1680 surveys were returned, the CCDSM explained that the team were 99% confident that the results were representative of the District's population as a whole.

Members were invited to ask questions throughout the presentation.

- 1) The Chair, Cllr. Nick Brown queried whether there may be an element of bias in the results as participants were self-selected (voluntarily chose to participate) and therefore the results would invariably represent the opinions of residents who are more engaged with the Council? The CCDSM explained that social media has expanded the Council's reach and audience, giving a better view of opinions than in previous years as residents who are unhappy with services are now given more opportunity to respond. However, the CCDSM acknowledged that it ultimately comes down to resident's willingness to respond.
- 2) The Vice-Chair, Cllr. Neil Wright asked whether there were the same number of questions as the 2022 survey? The CCDSM explained that only minor amendments were made to the questions from the 2022 survey as this allows officers to benchmark the data, enabling them to examine which areas have improved and which areas need improving. The CCDSM added that there would be a full review of the questions next year to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- 3) Cllr. Nick Brown requested a breakdown of the response rate by village showing the percentage of respondents in relation to their village's population size. The CCO agreed to circulate this information after the meeting.
- 4) Members discussed the reasons why young people are less likely to respond to the survey than older generations and discussed methods of overcoming the challenges around engaging younger generations, particularly the younger renting sector. Cllr. Tracey Shepherd highlighted the benefits of using social media to engage with the younger demographic. The CCDSM explained that the team would be doing more to engage with the Youth Council and Higher Education establishments leading up to the next Residents Survey.
- 5) The CCO presented a word cloud showing resident's comments on services. Cllr. Nick Brown queried whether the presence of Glenfield

and Enderby on the word cloud was related to issues with developments in those areas? The CCO explained that none of these responses specified developmental issues.

- 6) While general satisfaction levels were high (in line with LGA survey data), the CCO informed Members that only 57% of respondents agreed that different ethnicities get along in their area. The CCO added that respondents in Thorpe Astley were particularly dissatisfied in relation to this question and also scored lower in the question, 'How strongly do you feel you belong?'. Members discussed the possible reasons for these divisions, such as international conflicts, and discussed the high number of rental properties and transient population in Thorpe Astley, as a possible reason that why these residents feel less pride in their local area.
- 7) Members discussed the possible reasons for Lubbesthorpe's low satisfaction rates in all aspects of the data and queried whether this related to the lack of community facilities in place. Cllr. Nick Brown highlighted the importance of learning lessons from Lubbesthorpe residents as their concerns can help to shape future developments elsewhere.
- 8) Cllr. Nick Brown added that Ward Councillors in Lubbesthorpe would be interested in this data and requested that this information be circulated to them. The Senior Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer (SDSSO) asked whether there were any other areas of concern that needed to be relayed to Ward Councillors. The CCO responded that there were not.
- 9) Cllr. Janet Forey requested that Scrutiny be given early sight of the questions for the next survey in 2026.

51. **FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2023/24**

Considered – report of the Accountancy Services Manager.

Members considered the report and commented that the detail was excellent. Members requested that the following queries be sent to the Finance Officers:

1. Pay award not yet agreed – what will be the impact on the budget/establishment if agreed?
2. Please clarify what the Levy Account Surplus Grant is at Appendix A.
3. Is there 2 budgets for homelessness (one is showing an underspend and an overspend on the other).
4. Ref. 4.3 of the report, Council tax. Please explain the deficit? How is it filled? What impact does it have on financial planning?
5. Why is there so much underspend? What impact does this have on service planning?
6. Housing benefit recovery – how much is likely to be recovered? How are overpayments made? How often?

It was agreed that the response to the above questions be considered at the next Scrutiny Commissioners meeting.

DECISION

That the financial performance for 2023/24 be accepted.

Reason:

It is appropriate that Scrutiny regularly considers financial performance updates.

52. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Considered – report of the Scrutiny Commissioners.

The Chairman presented the 2024/25 Scrutiny Work Programme, which had been put together following a Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop in late May, where all non-executive Members had been invited to take part. The draft programme has also been circulated to the Senior Leadership Team, to assign their teams suitable dates for work items.

The Chairman reflected on low attendance at recent scrutiny task and finish meetings and urged Members to attend to ensure that vital scrutiny work is undertaken. The Chairman requested that invitations be sent to all non-executive Members of all planned scrutiny meetings being held in the autumn months.

DECISION

1. That the 2024/25 Scrutiny Work Programme be approved.
2. That details of the work programme are communicated with all Councillors and Senior Officers.

Reason:

As set out in the Council's Constitution, Part 4, Section 5, paragraph 7 it is a responsibility of the Scrutiny Commission to agree its work programme for the next municipal year.

53. CONSIDERATION OF FORWARD PLAN ITEMS

No items were raised for further information or examination.

54. FURTHER ACTIONS FOR SCRUTINY ARISING FROM MEETING

1. Circulate questions arising from the Financial Performance report to officers for a response.
2. Circulate the Scrutiny Work Programme to all Members and Senior Officers.
3. Invitations to scrutiny meetings being held in the autumn to be sent to all non-executive Members.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6.35 P.M.