



Minutes of the Services and Communities

Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Location: The Council Chamber, The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, LE16 7AG

Date: 6th February 2025 commencing at 18:30

Present:

Councillors: Anderson (Chair), Finan, Gair, King, Nunn, Taylor and Whelband.

Guest Cllrs: Cllr Graves

Officers: N. Barnard – Head of Democratic Services and Elections Services and Monitoring Officer

C. Hartley – Director of Communities & Wellbeing

R. Attwell- Interim Democratic Services Officer

Guests:

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Johnson. Councillor Finan substituted for Councillor Johnson.

2. Introductions

At the Chairman's invitation, Panel Members, Officers and Guests introduced themselves.

3. Declaration of Members' Interests

None received.

4. Minutes of the last meeting.

The minutes of the meeting on 31st October 2024 were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair. They were proposed by Cllr Whelband and seconded by Cllr Nunn.

Cllr James asked about questions raised by Cllr King at the 31st October 2024 meeting regarding the cost of friendship park. The Head of Democratic Services and Elections Services and Monitoring Officer responded that they would ask for this information to be provided.

Cllr James asked a question regarding affordable housing figures, wishing to receive information on it. The Director of Communications and Wellbeing stated that they had provided information to the Portfolio Holder and would be able to send a briefing note out to all Members.

Cllr James stated that Parking and disability scooters had been discussed at the previous meeting. wishing for this to be reflected in the minutes, with the Head of Democratic Services and Elections Services and Monitoring Officer stating that discussed topics could be included in the minutes.

5. Playing Pitch Strategy Stage E Review

This item was deferred to enable further work to take place before being received by the Panel.

A vote took place with unanimous approval to defer the item.

The decision to defer the item was Proposed by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr Finan.

6. Scrutiny Workplan

The Scrutiny Workplan was presented to the Panel by Nancy Barnard (Head of Democratic and Elections Services and Monitoring Officer). The purpose of the report was for the Panel to review the workplan adopted in accordance with its terms of reference and note the outlines of the plan for the remainder of the year. It was proposed that the review of Platform, previously intended to be carried out in a Task and Finish Panel, be brought to the next item of this Committee instead.

The Chair Invited Comments and questions on the report and the Panel made the following comments:

Time Scale on CCTV Monitoring update report, and background on company providing provisions.	It was noted that it was very early days on the project scope for the CCTV Monitoring Update with a report expected at Corporate Management Team in February. The matter will be brought back to the committee at the appropriate time.
What Items will be brought forward to the 8 th May 2025 meeting?	The Platform review and financial penalties relating to animal welfare will be brought to the May meeting potentially with the deferred playing pitch strategy review.
Is there enough information to bring the Playing Pitch Strategy to the Panel in May?	This will be reviewed and the item will be brought at the appropriate time.
Should consideration be given to inviting other housing providers alongside Platform?	It was noted that Platform are the district's biggest housing provider, and the one that the Authority and some issues have been raised. Should similar

	issues be raised about other housing providers the same protocol would be followed.
Some Councillors wished to write to all Members of the authority to get their view on “Platform” ahead of the report being brought to Panel.	The Chair noted that he would work with Officers on ensuring that this would happen.

Cllr Nunn proposed the Scrutiny work programme as amended, and Cllr Taylor seconded it.

It was RESOLVED:

- 1) To note the Scrutiny Work programme for the remainder of the year subject to the following amendments:**
 - a) That Platform, animal welfare penalties and the playing pitch strategy (if ready) be brought to the May meeting of the Committee.**
 - b) That UKSPF, Special Expenses and CCTV be brought to a future appropriate meeting.**

7. Harborough District Leisure Trust

The Director for Community and Wellbeing presented the Harborough District Leisure Trust report, and explained why it was brought to Services and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, explaining that the report provided an update in respect of the closure of the Harborough District Leisure Trust Limited (the Trust), in response to a member request for transparency on where funds had been distributed to.

The following comments were received by the Portfolio holder for Finance.

Concerns had been raised with him by a resident about the trust’s arrangements for the distribution of remaining funds following the winding up of the Trust. It was noted that the Trust offered these funds to Harborough District Council to distribute but that this offer was not taken up.

A letter, received from one of the former Trustees, was circulated to the Panel which outlined the process followed by the Trust when distributing the remaining funding and confirming that this had been done in accordance with the Trust’s articles. It was also noted that the Trust was established as a separate legal entity from the Council and was under no obligation to provide the Council with information regarding the distribution of funding.

Some Members of the Panel questioned why this item had been brought to this panel for scrutiny.	It was noted that the topic was a difficult one for Scrutiny to review, and that the Trust was not accountable to the authority instead being accountable to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).
When was the trust set up and closed down?	The Trust was set up in 2008 and closed down in 2019.
Was there a Council report on it closing down in 2019.	It was wound down in 2019, the Council would not have had any involvement with this.
Is there anything the Authority could have done differently?	The Council held a commercial contract with the Trust. Once the contract had expired and the opportunity to distribute the funds itself had not been taken up the Council's formal role in relation to the Trust ended. The Trust was not accountable to the Council for the way the remaining funds were distributed.
How many trustees were there and were any of them officers?	Do not believe that any Officers were directly involved with the Trust. There was a total of five Trustees.
Regarding 3.3 in the report, concerning the Council expending a large number of resources on reviewing the Trust's activity in relation to these funds. How much was spent and who commissioned it and was the level of resource appropriate?	An appropriate level of resources had been applied. However, it would be difficult to provide a cost of the work due to time spent on a topic or project not recorded separately from other work.

Cllr Mahal, Cllr Nunn, and Cllr Whelband left the meeting at this point.

The meeting entered an exempt session after a vote, where all remaining members voted in favor.

It was agreed that the public and press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the matters yet to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and five of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972". The public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it because it contains information relating to a third party and information subject to legal privilege.

Following a discussion in an exempt session the Panel re-entered public session and Members of the Panel voted upon the recommendations.

The recommendations were proposed by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr James.

It was resolved that:

- 1.) To write to all of the former Trustees of the Harborough District Leisure Trust, to request further information on the 22 grants recipients referred to in the letter received dated the 5th February.**
- 2.) To ensure that any lessons learnt from the Harborough District Leisure Trust are carried forward into any future Trust arrangements.**
- 3.) To receive a further report at the Services and Communities Overview Scrutiny Panel on the 8th May.**

8. Any Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at: 20:10pm.