



## Minutes of the Corporate and Performance

### Overview & Scrutiny Panel

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

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025 commencing at 18:30

**Present:**

**Councillors:** James (Chair), Dann, Forman, Gair, King, Whitmore and Whelband.

**Officers:** D. Atkinson - Director of Planning  
A. Eastwood - Head of Development Management  
E. Newman - Interim Senior Democratic Services Officer & Team Leader

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rickman, who was substituted by Councillor Whelband. Apologies were also received from Councillor Finan, who was substituted by Councillor Gair

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

Councillor King queried whether Councillor Gair was a permanent replacement for

Councillor Finan on the Overview and Scrutiny Panel or whether he was substituting. The Chair confirmed that he would liaise with Democratic Services to provide clarification on the matter.

## **2. Declaration of Members' Interests**

None received.

## **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

Given the number of questions being asked, it was suggested that questions and answers be separated in future minutes of the Panel for clarity and ease of reference. Councillor King also suggested that specific Councillors be named, rather than anonymizing Members in the minutes.

The Chair raised concerns around the number of unanswered questions, those which were raised at meetings but left unresolved and taken away for follow-up. The Chair called for their responses.

Councillor King expressed concerns around the delay in receiving the draft minutes. For effective scrutiny, Councillor King suggested that the draft minutes be made available prior to the meeting via CMIS and email.

It was agreed that moving forward, the Panel would receive the draft minutes prior to the meeting as suggested by Councillor King. The Chair also agreed to work with Democratic Services on this matter.

The Interim Senior Democratic Services Officer and Team Leader provided clarification on the 10-working day turnaround for council minutes, noting that recent deadlines had been impacted by resourcing issues within Democratic Services. However, the Panel was assured that with additional interim resources now within the team, deadlines would be met moving forward.

Councillor King urged the Cabinet to work with Senior Officers to address the ongoing resourcing issues within Democratic Services.

Councillor James assured the Panel that following recent recruitment to the team, Democratic Services were in a better position compared to December last year.

The minutes of the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair. They were proposed by the Chair.

Before the Development Management Update, the Director of Planning, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Councillor Galton, provided a verbal update on the key actions undertaken in Planning Services.

The Panel was advised that the Local Plan was approved for publication for a period of eight weeks at the Extraordinary Meeting of Council held on 3 March 2025. The Panel was further advised that the Local Plan was published on 10 March 2025 with the consultation period ending on 6 May 2025. Regarding ongoing key actions, the Panel was updated on the drop-in events being held across the Harborough District for the Local Plan and members of the public were encouraged to attend. The Panel was also informed that the next Planning Committee is scheduled for 1 April 2025.

Councillor Whelband inquired about the first drop-in event and whether it was well attended. The Director of Planning confirmed that the event was well received with over 130 people in attendance.

Councillor King sought clarification on the implications of the Government's Infrastructure Bill. The Director of Planning stated that the implications would be best communicated through a briefing for all Members. Additionally, he confirmed that the Chief Executive's advice would be sought on this matter.

Councillor King sought clarification on the implications for local decision-making if the bill were to become law. The Head of Development Management confirmed that he was liaising with the Head of Democratic and Election Services on the internal processes and

the potential for addressing emerging issues through the Constitutional Review Committee.

The Chair inquired about the feedback from the drop-in events and whether the comments were being analyzed. In response, the Director of Planning confirmed that the drop-in events were part of the formal process, providing an opportunity for the public to meet with Officers, it was not a feedback exercise and if the public wished to make comments, they could do so through the formal channels.

Councilor Whitmore inquired about digital barriers and whether individuals without internet access could engage in the consultation process. The Director of Planning confirmed that there were provisions in place including a hard copy of the form which would be made available in exceptional situations. Furthermore, the Panel was reassured that there were no barriers to access.

In response to Councilor King's concerns about the difficulties in accessing the hard copy of the form, the Panel's concerns were acknowledged and the Head of Planning confirmed that the authority was working diligently to enable participation.

#### **4. Development Management Update**

The Head of Development Management presented the report on the Portfolio Holder for Planning's behalf, advising on the performance of the Development Management service in respect of planning applications, appeals and enforcement for the period between 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025.

Members were further advised that planning applications and planning appeal decisions are subject to the performance indicators outlined in Table 1 of the report. The Head of Development Management was pleased to confirm that the service was meeting its targets for this year. The Panel was advised that the data on planning appeal decisions could be made available to non-planning committee members upon request.

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

Councilor Dann sought clarification on the timings for planning appeals. The Head of Development Management confirmed that the timings were determined by the Planning Inspectorate and are available to view online. It was also noted that the buildup of planning appeals cases may have been impacted by work on planning inquiries.

Councilor King inquired about the targets for planning enforcement and the body responsible for setting them. The Head of Development Management confirmed that the targets were local and not measured nationally.

Councilor Dann sought clarification on the increased number of notices in January 2025. The Officers were unable to pinpoint a specific reason, although administrative factors may have contributed to the increase.

Councilor King highlighted that the table on enforcement cases did not specify the opening or closing balance of cases. He also sought clarification on whether the work undertaken provided good value for money and how this was determined.

Councilor James inquired about the planning applications that had been refused at Planning Committee but accepted at the appeals stage. The Head of Development Management confirmed that many of the appeals originated outside the Planning Committee and that there was no obvious pattern. In response to Councilor James' query on learning from planning appeals, the Head of Development Management confirmed that this could be highlighted in a report to the Planning Committee.

Councilor James inquired about the resources required to advance the Local Plan over the next 3-4 years. The Planning Manager confirmed that arrangements were being made for a team to drive strategic growth in the Harborough District.

Councilor Whitmore, seeking a better understanding of planning performance, requested further information on key performance indicators. She also sought clarification on what had improved and why. The Head of Development Management in response highlighted the issues in obtaining and extracting data. Furthermore, the Head of Development recognized the importance of evidencing performance but emphasized that effective resource allocation was key. They believed that prioritizing hands-on work would provide better value for money.

Councillor King, like Councillor Whitmore, raised concerns around the lack of quantitative data within the report. He emphasized that the performance was not sufficiently evidenced and requested information on how the service had improved.

Councillor James queried whether resources were available to address the s106 side of things. The Head of Development Management confirmed that the delivery of the s106 was a legal process, and that strategies were in place to recruit additional officers to the legal team.

**It was RESOLVED:**

**1. To note the information contained in the report.**

## **5. Corporate and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Panel Draft Workplan**

The Scrutiny Workplan was presented to the Panel by the Interim Senior Democratic Services Officer and Team Leader. The purpose of the report was for the Panel to review the scrutiny workplan for 2024/25 adopted in accordance with its terms of reference and note the outlines of the plan for the next municipal year.

The Interim Senior Democratic Services Officer noted that the recommendations had been slightly revised to generate ideas for the upcoming municipal year.

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

Councillor King emphasised that the new calendar of meetings needs to be better organised to ensure full consideration of all reports.

Councillor King noted that the report on Council Complaints remains outstanding and requested that it be included in the Scrutiny Workplan.

Councillor King reiterated his concerns regarding staffing issues within Democratic Services and suggested that the Chair raise these concerns with CMT.

Councillor King also suggested the following items for the Scrutiny Workplan: Local Plan, Planning and the Council's decision to purchase land in Great Bowden. Furthermore, he called for effective scrutiny to be conducted before decisions are made.

Councillor Dann suggested a report on car parking and recommended that historic reports on finance and performance be made available earlier.

Councillor Whelband requested the timescales for the CCTV Monitoring Update Report. It was noted that this had been raised at the previous meeting of the Panel.

Councillor King requested a review of the Local Government Reorganisation proposals at a future meeting of the Panel.

Councillor Whitmore sought clarification on the timescales for scrutiny items and who determines them. Councillor King confirmed that the Constitution outlines how items are commissioned and that they can be brought through various different routes including a committee requesting a report.

Councillor King re-requested a review of the Community Grant Fund.

Councillor Dann called for update reports from the portfolio holders.

Councillor Dann also inquired about the minutes from the previous Community Scrutiny Panel. The Interim Senior Democratic Services confirmed that the minutes were completed and published on the website in draft form, and she would provide the requested information.

Councillor King sought clarification on the items for the forthcoming Joint Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

The Interim Senior Democratic Services Officer explained that it would involve work programming, and Members should expect to develop a document that outlines the items for scrutiny.

**It was RESOLVED:**

- 1) To note the Scrutiny Work Programme for the next municipal year.**

## **6. Any Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

**The meeting ended at: 20:10pm.**

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