

# Minutes of the Services and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel



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

**Date:** 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 commencing at 18:30

## **Present:**

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

**Guest Cllrs:** Knight (Portfolio Holder Wellbeing) and Woodiwiss (Portfolio Holder Environmental & Climate Change).

**Officers:** E. Bird – Head of Regulatory Services  
C. Hartley – Director of Communities & Wellbeing  
S. Hamilton – Senior Democratic Services Officer  
& Deputy Monitoring Officer  
S. Pickering – Community Safety Manager

**Guests:** Sgt P. Jelbert – Market Harborough Police  
D. Thornton – Harborough District Manager for Fire

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mahal and Sarfas. Councillor King substituted for Councillor Mahal, and Councillor Gair substituted for Councillor Sarfas.

## **2. Introductions**

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

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

Councillor King reported that he was also a Member of the County Council.

### **4. Draft Community Scrutiny Panel Minutes – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

The minutes of the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman. This was proposed by Cllr James and seconded by Cllr Taylor.

Councillor James raised a question about the emerging Economic Development Strategy. The Director of Communities & Wellbeing explained how this would be compiled in discussion with other partners and would include a Community Health and Wellbeing Plan.

### **5. Draft Extraordinary Services & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel Minutes – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024**

The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman. This was proposed by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr James.

### **6. Portfolio Holder Updates**

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Climate Change provided an update to the Panel. The groundworks for the new Friendship Park have started; the estimated completion date will be within the next few months. The Council has secured funding towards two Tiny Forests. Along with other partners, the Council is running a litter campaign along the A5. The intention is to roll this approach out to other main roads within the District. Lighting in some carparks is being upgraded to LEDs, starting next month. Procurement for new parking machines is underway. Free parking on Saturdays during December will return this year. A Flood Drop-in session, organised by Leicestershire County Council, was held in the Symington Building on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

The Chair invited questions on the update. Councillor Nunn asked about the Litter Campaign and noted that laybys between Market Harborough and Lutterworth experienced litter problems, but did not have bins. The Portfolio Holder reported that the location of bins would be reviewed before the new waste contract was awarded and there would be potential to add new locations. The Director of Communities & Wellbeing said that officers will have a conversation with Leicestershire County Council, who are responsible for roadside bins, about provision along this road.

Councillor King asked for an update on the costs of development of the Friendship Park and also for more details on the District Council's contribution towards the two Tiny Forests.

Regarding the A5 litter campaign, Councillor King was pleased to see a co-ordinated approach between authorities and suggested that the A6 between Kibworth and Great Glen would benefit from a similar campaign.

In relation to the LED lighting improvements, Councillor King asked for information on the cost of the project and what would be achieved. He also remarked that there would be a cost, through lost revenue, attached to the decision to provide free weekend parking and asked that information on the benefits of this scheme be provided. The Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities & Wellbeing agreed to provide Councillor King with a written response on these points.

Councillor Whelband asked what the Council's strategy would be towards ASB issues within the new Friendship Park. The Director of Communities & Wellbeing stated that there were a number of open spaces within the District that could not be locked at night. The Council would closely monitor issues that were brought to its attention and work with partners to address these.

The Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing provided an update to the Panel. Preparations are being made for the Council's Community Awards evening, which is to be held on 5<sup>th</sup> December. A new e-newsletter is being launched; all Councillors will receive a copy of this. A new site for temporary accommodation has been acquired, however as of the end of September there were 703 live applications, including 132 new applications. The Parish Liaison Meeting will now be held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

The Chair invited questions on the update. Councillor King asked whether all Councillors would be invited to the Community Awards event.

Councillor King also asked whether the e-newsletter would replicate information that was already contained in similar newsletters produced by other bodies – for example, the County Council. The Director of Communities & Wellbeing reported that the newsletter was aimed at residents and focussed on community information and would not replicate information that was already being provided by other bodies.

In terms of housing, Councillor King felt that there was a lack of detail. For example, what was the breakdown in prioritisation and how long had the processing of applications taken? Also, he would welcome seeing figures for the availability of affordable housing over the past five years and a forward projection. The Portfolio Holder agreed to provide the information requested.

Councillor King asked whether there was a plan to provide detailed feedback from the Parish Liaison Meeting to all Councillors. The Portfolio Holder responded that all Councillors are invited to two Parish Liaison meetings each year. The Director of Communities & Wellbeing noted that feedback was sought from Parish Councils attending the meetings and that these could form the basis of feedback on themes

and key issues that could be shared with Members. Councillor Nunn felt that the Parish Liaison Meeting, now that it had been moved to January, might be able to feed into the consultation on the Local Plan. Officers agreed to look into this.

## 7. Harborough District Council Community Safety Action Plan 2024-2025

The report was presented by the Community Safety Manager. The Chair invited comments and questions on the report and the Panel made the following comments:

<p><u>Solon</u>: What is this system that was purchased for £10,000?</p>	<p>This is a company that provides target hardening equipment, in this case video doorbells and CCTV cameras. These are given to victims of burglaries throughout the District.</p>
<p><u>Business Watch scheme</u>: is this for the whole of Harborough District?</p>	<p>Yes, it for the whole District.</p>
<p><u>Priorities 2023-2026</u>: the statistics on change are appreciated, but are the starting positions measured?</p>	<p>Quarterly reports are used to identify trends emerging year on year. These figures could be used for material to include in future reports.</p>
<p><u>Fire &amp; Rescue Service involvement in RTAs</u>: are the statistics used to identify dangerous points on the road system?</p>	<p>All incidents provide data that can be used to identify high-risk areas that can then be targeted.</p>
<p><u>Youth Leisure Card</u>: what is this scheme? Is there a risk of it being seen as a reward for poor behaviour?</p>	<p>The Violence Reduction Network has identified sports activity as a successful way of reducing violent crime. The passes are only given in particular circumstances, usually for vulnerable individuals who could not otherwise access sports facilities.</p>
<p><u>A6 car cruising</u>: what is being done to stop car racing and highlight what happens to those that are caught breaking the law in this way?</p>	<p>For the next 18 months a camera will be in position on the A6 in Kibworth. In April owners of 15 different vehicles were written to by the police stating that the car would be seized if the behaviour happened again. Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are being investigated as another way forward.</p>

**It was RESOLVED:**

- **To review and note the current Action Plan 2024-2025; and**
- **To review the ASB Policy and make recommendations to Cabinet for consideration in January 2025.**

**8. Car Parking Strategy Review**

The report was presented by the Head of Regulatory Services. The Chair invited comments and questions on the report and the Panel made the following comments:

<u>Parking spaces for disabled people and parent/family spaces</u> : should consideration be given to these as part of the review?	The Implementation Plan will stem from the Strategy and will look at these and other issues – for example whether parking bays should be made larger.
<u>Reduction in transactions</u> : it should be noted that charges were increased in 2021. This has masked the effects on income caused by an overall reduction in the number of transactions.	
<u>Move away from pay &amp; display</u> : does the strategy look at other approaches to pay & display (e.g. tickets & pay points)?	This hasn't been taken forward as it was not cost-effective.
<u>Consideration of a low-emission vehicle tariff</u> : this would be difficult to apply without ANPR.	
<u>Rural Carparks</u> : Some Parish Councils are unlikely to opt to take on responsibility for these, as there would be a financial cost to them and there could be legal issues that would complicate a transfer.	All Parish Council's will be consulted with as part of the review.
<u>Permits</u> : permits for schools and residents do not appear in the Strategy at the moment. Also, the approach for multiday permits at carparks should be flexible enough to allow the user to choose the length of permit that they wanted.	These issues will be considered as part of the Permit Review, alongside the County Council's approach to on-street residents' permits.

<p><u>Maintenance and landscaping liability:</u> does the financial side of the strategy consider the maintenance of the car parks? Have all car parks been surveyed to establish likely capital requirements over the period of the Strategy? Who is responsible for the maintenance of the Sainsburys car park?</p>	<p>The surplus from car parking is included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and used to off-set the cost of other services. Expenditure on car parks is on average around £400K pa, which includes general maintenance. The Strategy aims to develop a Car-parking Asset Management Plan which will sit alongside the Strategy. This will feed into bids for capital funding for large-scale works. The Sainsbury's car park is leased to Sainsbury's and another asset management company who have the responsibility for repairs. The concern about the condition of the car park will be reported back.</p>
<p><u>Consultation:</u> traders should be consulted as part of the review of the Strategy.</p>	
<p><u>Future development on car parks:</u> are there any timescales for considering the possibility of development on, or disposal of, car parks?</p>	<p>This will link into the overall review of the Council's assets, for which there is currently no firm timeline.</p>
<p><u>Standards:</u> could new standards be developed for such issues as charging for EVs, wider spaces and cycle parking?</p>	<p>Yes, this could be looked into as part of the Strategy.</p>

**It was RESOLVED:**

- That the Panel consider and comment on the draft Car Parking Strategy as set out in appendix A prior to the strategy going to public consultation; and
- That the Panel discuss the questions set out in the report before the public consultation process.

## 9. Services and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel Draft Workplan

The report was presented by the Senior Democratic Services Officer & Deputy Monitoring Officer. The Chair invited comments and questions on the report and the Panel made the following comments:

<p><u>Platform Housing</u>: the entry for the proposed item to be considered at the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December did not contain any detail of the reasons why it had been included on the Workplan. Why was this item included? Does this item merit a full report being brought to the full Panel, or would it be more appropriate for it to be dealt with by a Task &amp; Finish Group?</p>	<p>Some Members had been contacted with issues relating to Platform Housing. The Director of Communities &amp; Wellbeing asked Members not to raise individual issues at this time, but to wait until the report was available for the December meeting. A meeting has already been held between the Portfolio Holder, and Officers, and representatives of Platform Housing on a number of strategic issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• response times</li> <li>• communication</li> <li>• channels for raising issues</li> </ul> <p>Following this, officers felt it would be useful if this Panel could consider some of these strategic issues.</p>
<p><u>Forward Plan - Playing Pitch Strategy Stage E Review</u>: what is this? Would it be appropriate to bring this to the Panel for Scrutiny before it is considered by Cabinet?</p>	
<p><u>Destination of the District's recycling materials</u>: could this be considered by the Panel (perhaps in the February 2025 meeting, or later), so that there is a better understanding of where within the world recycling materials were sent and how they were processed?</p>	<p>The Director of Communities &amp; Wellbeing advised that in 2025 a number of reports will be brought to Scrutiny relating to the Council's new Environmental Services contract and service. This would provide the best opportunity to look into the issues raised, so that any requirements could be built into the new contract from 2027 onwards.</p>

**It was RESOLVED:**

- **That a Task & Finish Group be set up to consider Platform Housing; and**
- **That the existing Workplan did not require any other adjustments to be made.**

**10. Any Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 21:03