

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillor J C Patrick, Chair

Councillors: S Easom
P J Owen
C M Tideswell
I L Tyler
D Grindell (Substitute)
H Land (Substitute)
J M Owen (Substitute)
S Paterson (Substitute)
D D Pringle (Substitute)
P Roberts-Thomson (Substitute)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D K Watts, L Ellis, M J Crow, S Dannheimer, L Fletcher, M Hannah, E Kerry and R S Robinson.

Officers in attendance were: K Powell, S Hickey, R Shaw, A Gidney, R Ayoub, P Sudlow, R Dawson, J Little, J Ward and L Evans.

48 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors D Grindell and S Paterson declared other registerable interests in agenda item 3 due to their roles as Members of the Stapleford Executive Board, minute number 49 refers. Councillors D Grindell, S Easom and S Paterson all declared other registerable interests in agenda item 5 as they were Members on the Liberty Leisure Board, minute number 51 refers.

49 **BUSINESS PLANS AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2023/24 - 2025/26 - BUSINESS GROWTH**

The Committee considered proposals for business plans, detailed revenue budget estimates for 2023/24, capital programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26 and proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 in respect of the Council's priority areas.

Comments included the following:

- Members noted that Beeston was easier to achieve occupancy rates than other Town Centres in the Borough. More land was owned by the Council for investment in this area than in Kimberley, Stapleford and Eastwood.
- A query was raised that the 2021/22 achieved target for planning applications had gone down from the previous year. With all the targets the planning department was exceeding the Government target of 70%.
- Confirmation was provided to the Committee that Eastwood Town Deal and Kimberley Town Deal were the Levelling Up Funds. The Kimberley Levelling Up Fund had been successful in the funding bid. An explanation that the additional

- funding was money borrowed and this explained why Eastwood allocation would not be reallocated to Kimberley.
- Markets had not had the success at Stapleford and Kimberley in the same way that Beeston had. The locations of the markets in the Town Centres had caused some of the issues. Eastwood market was not a regular event. Lessons had been learnt and frequencies of events and locations would be programmed for the year. A concern was raised with the lack of evidence produced when markets were on and additional footfall to the town centres had occurred.
 - Members were disappointed with the progress being made on Neighbourhood Plans. Further engagement with Parish and Town Councils was required to progress the plans forward to create, develop and review the Neighbourhood Plans. Resource issues within the Planning Policy team had caused some delays. Members would like to see the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plans a priority in the areas identified.
 - Eastwood Craft Centre base budget for 2023/24 had increased to allow for repairs to the industrial units. The figure had also included the pay award and associated costs with inflation. Members raised a query regarding which businesses were operating from the Craft Centres and income received.
 - Economic Development budget for 2022/23 included a one-off additional budget in relation to consultancy costs and the levelling up agenda. Recruitment issues and large infrastructure projects meant in the short term it was beneficial to use consultancies to fill the gap.
 - The Stapleford Town Centre Enterprise Management would be run by Inspire within the Stapleford Library.
 - The Community hub would be looked at being run by a professional organisation. Funding was being sourced and included a Football Foundation bid. The Community Hub and pavilion on the Hickings Lane site would facilitate a range of services and community activities in one location. The current facilities were tired and in need of renovation. The new facilities would replace the existing smaller local community centres and free up sites for future development.
 - Members welcomed the surface refurbishment. Some concern was raised whether the budget was sufficient to cover all the repairs. The current service was over 20 years old and its condition was deteriorating. Health and Safety issues had been raised due to the uneven and deteriorating paving surfaces.
 - Some concern was raised with the investment to support the cycle trail to connect the town with major employment centres like Panattoni Park. Road safety concerns had been raised as road users were dropping off passengers to access the retail areas from the A610. The footpath had been recognised by Nottinghamshire County Council.
 - It was noted that the review of fees and charges for Beeston, Eastwood and Stapleford Squares had not incurred increases for 2023/24.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1. Cabinet approves the Business Growth Business Plan**
- 2. Cabinet recommends to Council that the following be approved:**
 - a) The detailed revenue budget estimates for 20-23/24(base)**
 - b) The capital programme for 2023/24 to 205/26**
 - c) The fees and charges for 2023/24**

(Having declared other-registerable interests in the item, Councillors D Grindell and S Paterson did not vote thereon.)

50 BUSINESS PLANS AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2023/24 - 2025/26 - HOUSING

Members considered proposals for business plans, detailed revenue budget estimates for 2023/24, capital programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26 and proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 in respect of the Council's priority areas.

Comments included the following:

- An explanation was provided to the Committee as to how the Housing service was assessed. The assessments would no longer be undertaken by transactional surveys. From April 2023 feedback would consist of a random selection of surveys from telephone, online, and paper this would form part of the assessment. The Housing Service currently was in the upper quartile of more than 87.85% satisfaction.
- The average re-let time for both General Needs and Independent Living had not achieved the target for 2022/23. The Head of Housing assured the Committee that the targets would be met for 2023/24. A new Key Performance Indicator had been set up to measure when loss of income occurred with delays to re letting properties.
- The electrical compliancy was not on target. There was a planned catch-up programme currently being worked on to achieve the targets going forward. There were no regulations and legislations to adhere to with electrical compliancy Broxtowe set the targets through their own policies.
- A number of reports had been identified with tenants experiencing damp and mould within their properties. There was a need to be proactive, look at patterns and complete an audit with stock. There was a need to assess data up to three years ago to consider potential problems.
- There had been a restructure within Housing recently and this had included a new post to work on voids. The Council should be in a better position for next year. Issues with voids with chasing tenants for costs associated with damage to the property. A third of the voids was because tenants had died, and tenants providing no forwarding address. A change with the sign up process would help the housing team going forward. Evidence to be provided at the check in and check out stage when letting the property.
- Support was offered to prevent homelessness. The Strategy focused on prevention by working with other agencies in the first instance.
- It was noted that the rent increase was proposed at 7%.
- Concern was raised as to why the Fishpond Cottage scheme was on hold. Members were informed that this was due to costs incurred with the application and design issues.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1. Cabinet approved the Housing Business Plan**
- 2. Cabinet recommends to Council that the following be approved:**
 - a) The detailed revenue budget estimates for 2023/24 (base)**
 - b) The capital programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26**
 - c) The fees and charges for 2023/24**

BUSINESS PLANS AND FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2023/24 - 2025/26 - RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICE AREAS

A ten-minute comfort break was put to the committee and when put to the vote the meeting was adjourned.

Members considered proposals for business plans, detailed revenue budget estimates for 2023/24; capital programme for 2023/24 to 205/26; and proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 in respect of the Council's priority areas.

Comments included the following:

- Long term sickness had affected the working days lost due to sickness absence. The sickness was down to physical ailments rather than Mental Health being the cause.
- Confirmation was provided to the Committee that requests under Freedom of Information was being achieved and that the National target set from the Information Commissioners Office was 85%.
- A new performance Indicator for 2022/23 for Members attending training opportunities as a percentage of the whole. It was further explained to the Committee how the percentage would be calculated and that currently Member training was not compulsory unless it was a requirement of the Committee appointed to.
- Industrial Units had an increase in tenancy arrears to due repairs required to the units and some tenancy changes.
- The Email Me Subscription had achieved 26,343 to date. The bulletins had been key methods of communication to residents across the Authority. The electronic service provided data and an understanding of reach. Proposed changes to the paper version of Broxtowe Matters distribution was the reason for the increased target to the email me subscribers in future years.
- Concern was raised with the vacancies within Beeston Square. Two units were vacant out of 12 ground floor shops in phase one. Refurbishment should create an additional shop unit for completion. Phase two comprised of five food and beverage units. This left one vacant unit. Refurbishment of the former Argos unit had been completed. The space would be marketed for letting. A percentage void was desirable to offer space to newly developed businesses whilst other growing businesses moved out.
- The Committee raised concern with the achieved target for how employees felt informed and residents who felt the Council listened to. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been presented with performance data in relation to the agile working report at previous meetings and the recent budget consultation had provided 1,210 responses. This was significantly higher than the submissions received in 2021 (660) and 2020 (277). The Committee suggested that the Council had less engagement with residents overall.
- Parish boundaries were causing an issue in the north of the borough with new developments and already existing anomalies. The Community Governance Review (Phase 2) was expected to commence work in June 2023 focusing on Parishes in the north of the borough. Any changes to boundaries would be effective for the elections in May 2027.
- Members welcomed the review to streamline and simplify the application to the recruitment process this would help to increase numbers of applications for vacant posts within the Council.

- Concern was raised with the development costs of Beeston Square against the income received. The Council would look to ensure the development income exceeded borrowing costs and to provide a revenue income stream. Some expenditure costs were required for external advice.
- Confirmation was provided to Members that commercial properties would meet the targets for the Council to be carbon neutral for 2027 with offsets. A feasibility study on the Council's four principle assets would be carried out by an external consultant. Grant opportunities would also be explored.

RECOMMEND that:

- 1. Cabinet approved the Business Plans for the support service areas.**
- 2. Cabinet recommends to Council that the following be approved:**
 - a)The detailed revenue budget estimates for 2023/24 (base)including any revenue development submissions.**
 - b)The capital programme for 2023/24 to 2025/26**
 - c)The fees and charges for 2023/24.**

(Having declared other-registerable interests in the item, Councillors S Easom, D Grindell and S Paterson did not vote thereon.)

52 WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that the work programme, with the additional item, how does the Council engage with the community be added to the topics within the Scrutiny work programme.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Work programme, as amended, be approved.