

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

31 MARCH 2022 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr MR Lay - Chairman
Cllr C Ladkin and Cllr P Williams – Vice-Chairman
Cllr RG Allen (for Cllr JMT Collett), Cllr MA Cook (for Cllr K Morrell),
Cllr MJ Crooks, Cllr A Pendlebury, Cllr MC Sheppard-Bools and Cllr R Webber-Jones

Also in attendance: Councillor HG Williams

Officers in attendance: Matthew Bowers, Valerie Bunting, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen, Caroline Roffey, Paul Scragg, Madeline Shellard and Sharon Stacey

371. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Collett, Gibbens & Morrell, with the following substitutions authorised in accordance with council procedure rule 10:

Councillor R Allen for Councillor Collett
Councillor Cook for Councillor Morrell.

372. **Minutes**

It was moved by Councillor P Williams, seconded by Councillor Pendlebury and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the previous meetings be approved as a correct record.

373. **Declarations of interest**

Councillors Crooks, Sheppard-Bools and P Williams declared personal interests in agenda item 6 (Parish & Hinckley Community Initiative Funds – allocation of grants) as parish councillors.

374. **Parish & Hinckley Community Initiative Fund - allocation of grants 2022-23**

Members received a report which recommended allocation of the Parish & Community Initiative Fund and the Hinckley Community Initiative Fund for 2022/23.

Members expressed concern about the outstanding funding for the projects that had not been completed during 2021/22 being taken from the 2022/23 budget rather than the allocated funding being carried forward from the 2021/22 budget. In response, it was explained that there was funding which was not recommended for allocation in 2022/23 which would cover the funding of the outstanding 2021/22 projects and the budget for future years would not be

affected. Members, however, felt that this would set a precedent and requested that the funding be carried forward from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

Officers agreed to discuss the accounting process with the Head of Finance and circulate a note to members but highlighted that carry forwards were not approved until Council in July so this way of managing the budgets would be more expedient.

A member thanked officers for their support for parish councils in this process.

The reason for a lower amount of allocations was queried. In response it was noted that there were a similar number of applications to previous years, but that some of the amounts applied for were lower. It was reported that parish councils had been contacted to invite applications in particular for climate change projects and officers had spoken at the parish forum, but no such applications had been received.

375. Affordable housing delivery - annual update

The Scrutiny Commission was informed of the delivery of affordable housing in the borough. Members welcomed the report and were pleased that the minimum numbers in the core strategy had been met.

Discussion ensued on the opportunities for the council to acquire some of the properties coming forward and ongoing discussions with registered providers about taking on some of the properties. It was noted that around 100 properties had been acquired since 2017 and officers kept abreast of such opportunities.

With regard to types of properties, it was noted that the Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer worked closely with the housing allocations team to ensure affordable housing coming forward met the requirement in terms of property type. It was noted that developers weren't keen on building bungalows on S106 sites so these were in shorter supply.

376. Council Housing Asset Management Strategy

Consideration was given to the housing asset management strategy. It was noted that this would sit alongside the investment strategy which would be brought to a future meeting. During discussion, reference was made to:

- The cost of getting housing to the EPC C rating, particularly in relation to insulation
- Installation of electric vehicle charging points
- External cladding of properties, which whilst not attractive, was the best way of insulating some houses without cavity walls
- The costs of running and maintaining air source heat pumps and delays in obtaining replacement parts, meaning that residents were without heating and hot water for longer periods of time
- The possibility of installing solar panels on council properties
- The hope that the decent homes standard would soon be extended to the private rented sector.

In relation to energy efficiency, it was hoped that the decarbonisation fund would be available later in 2022 and officers would ensure they were ready to take advantage of funding opportunities when they became available. A member asked whether rent increases would be considered to cover costs of energy saving measures which would lower costs to residents in the longer term. In response, it was stated that rent increases were not planned and residents were provided with support where necessary. It was noted that a report would be brought to the Scrutiny Commission on the cost of living crisis and its impact on residents which would look at areas where the council could help.

377. Scrutiny Commission Work Programme

The draft work programme was presented to the commission following consultation with members and senior officers. It was noted that scheduled meetings would follow a theme. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The item raised at a previous meeting which was listed as ‘SUDs and management companies’ should be expanded to cover transfer of assets, management of open spaces and how parish councils could get involved, with SUDs as a separate entry. It was noted that a lot of work was underway nationally in relation to transfer of assets
- There were outstanding reports agreed as part of motions to Council that needed to be scheduled including a report on drainage problems at Ashby Road cemetery
- The work undertaken on Young People’s Voice would be scheduled for a future meeting
- The need for a briefing on legislation relating to removal of hedges and trees along verges.

378. Minutes of Finance & Performance Scrutiny

The minutes of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny were noted.

(The Meeting closed at 7.48 pm)

CHAIRMAN