

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

8 February 2022

7.30 - 8.43 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair)
Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Eugenie Harvey
Councillor Matthew Siggers

Officers

Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration
Hannah Criddle, Governance Support Officer
Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support

41. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Churchill, Shona Johnson and Gareth Williams.

42. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor David Carter declared a non-pecuniary interest as a site rep for Harlow Allotment Association.

43. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

44. **MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Carter advised the committee that the Allotment Task and Finish group hadn't met due to changes to officer structure, however, it would arrange to meet before the next Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15 March 2022.

Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support, advised that the report on the review of turnout in local elections was under active consideration by the Returning Officer. Communications planning for May had been adjusted accordingly to also include the postal vote form in Harlow Times.

45. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

46. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

47. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

48. **DELIVERY OF COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update report on the delivery of the Council house building programme.

Councillor Dan Swords, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, provided progress updates on the 20 recommendations that the Scrutiny Committee made to Cabinet in March 2021. Councillor Swords also confirmed that the programme of schemes would be going to Cabinet in March 2022.

The Committee requested that all Councillors be invited to awareness sessions to ensure that the house building process is understood by all.

The Committee also discussed the objective apolitical approach to be adopted when considering matters at the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee also agreed that it would be useful to invite Councillors Simon Carter and Dan Swords back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee once the programme of schemes had gone to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- A Noted the progress made on delivering the recommendations of the Scrutiny report on Council house building.

49. **POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY ANNUAL REVIEW - AGREEMENT OF QUESTIONS**

The Committee received the list of questions submitted by Councillors and members of the public to ask in the question and answering session to Essex Police on 15 March 2022. The Committee also received a copy of the Essex Police district data for Harlow from December 2021.

Councillor Matthew Saggars noted that there weren't any statistics on cyber crime such as online grooming, cyber bullying and phishing emails. The Committee agreed to add a question on cyber crime. The committee

also noted its concerns on the use of e-scooters and increase in racial hate crimes alongside the overall crime rates and low “solved” rates.

The Committee agreed that the questions under the “high level” section and an additional question on cyber crime would be the focus of the question and answer session with Essex Police. The questions under the sections “police approach to work” and “site specific neighbourhood issues” would be submitted to Essex Police for full written responses to be provided. The Committee agreed that it would also ensure that the answers provided by Essex Police are sent to the members of the public who submitted the questions.

50. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

51. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

52. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

Scrutiny Committee – 8

February 2022

Questions from the Public

1 David Forman to Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee):

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting of 7 December 2021 a supplementary report titled 'Review of Allotments - Initial Report' was approved and it was resolved that a Councillor Task and Finish group would review existing allotment provision.

The report stated a list of considerations at paragraph 6, with my interest being sub paragraph (f) which reads: "In Equalities issues including provision for residents with disabilities;"

Would the Chair please assure me:

- a) That the provision of toilets, either composting or septic tank, would be closely examined so as to ensure people with urinary incontinence or those who take prescription medication that increases micturition (such as Dapagliflozin for diabetes) are catered for;
- b) That the review includes full observance of the Council's obligation under the Public Sector Equality Duty, section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 with particular regard to paragraph (1), sub paragraph (b) which reads: "advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;"

Reply from Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee):

Thank you Mr Forman for bringing this issue to the attention of the Scrutiny Committee. Your questions will be referred to the allotment working group and council officers for their consideration.