

Nottingham City Council

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 20 January 2025 from 2:06pm to 3:28pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall
(Chair)
Councillor Michael Savage (Vice Chair)
Councillor Kevin Clarke
Councillor David Mellen
Councillor Samina Riaz

Absent

Councillor Sam Harris
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Adele Williams

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Beverley Gouveia - Interim Director of Economic Development and Property
Sharon Guest - Interim Director of Housing
Councillor Jay Hayes - Executive Member for Housing and Planning
Nicki Jenkins - Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development
Councillor Neghat Khan - Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategic Regeneration, Transport and Communications
Adrian Mann - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
Tony McArdle - Lead Commissioner
Councillor Ethan Radford - Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Skills, Growth and Economic Development
Paul Seddon - Director of Planning and Transport
Damon Stanton - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer

30 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Sam Harris - on leave
Councillor AJ Matsiko - work commitments
Councillor Adele Williams - personal reasons

31 Declarations of Interests

None

32 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

33 Growth and City Development Budget Proposals 2025-26

Councillor Neghat Khan, Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategic Regeneration, Transport and Communications; Councillor Ethan Radford, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Skills, Growth and Economic Development; Nicki Jenkins, Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development; Paul Seddon, Director of Planning and Transport; and Beverley Gouveia, Interim Director of Economic Development and Property, gave a presentation on the potential impacts of the Council's proposed 2025/26 budget savings on the delivery of services within the Growth and City Development directorate. The following points were raised:

- a) The 2025/26 budget focus is on getting the Council's finances in order and putting it on a sustainable financial footing for the long-term. The strategic vision is for achieving a renewed Council that delivers for local people and takes Nottingham forward, provides the best local services that it can afford and is ambitious for the future.
- b) Overall, there are 20 proposals totalling £17.91 million in savings and efficiencies for 2025/26 and then £24.19 million over the four-year period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Of these, 6 proposals (totalling £10.78 million in 2025/26) have been consulted on publicly and related to transformational, cross-cutting actions that would affect the whole Council. Meanwhile, 14 further proposals (with 2 arising from the Growth and City Development directorate) were not consulted on as they focus primarily on internal processes. Work is underway on the cross-cutting proposals to develop detailed business plans, but it is not yet fully known how their delivery will impact on the directorate. Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out for the proposals requiring them.
- c) The net annual core budget of the Growth and City Development directorate is £1.4 million and, overall, the directorate generates £81 million in income, of which £16.1 million is through grant funding. In terms of the budget agreed for delivery in 2024/25, all savings have now either been achieved or are on track to be achieved by the end of the financial year, apart from the installation of the charging system at the Greyhound Street public toilets. This is currently classified as being partially delivery due to delays in installation – the charging system is now in place, but there may now not be enough time for it to generate the original target income for the 2024/25 period.
- d) The directorate's two new savings proposals relate to a review of the contract for free-standing advertising units and a review of Facilities Management and Cleaning services at Loxley House. In respect of advertising, the Council has a contract for the supply and maintenance of bus shelters and free-standing units with advertising. The previous contract came to an end in December 2024 and the Council procured a new contract that achieved an additional £500,000 of income over at least the next two years. There will be a very low impact on service delivery, with the only risk identified being if the contract fails to deliver the income identified. In terms of Facilities Management and Cleaning, it is proposed to remove a management tier and reduce cleaning levels to once each day, saving £80,000. There is a 1.6 full-time equivalent role implication that will be mitigated

by current cleaning vacancies at other Council sites. The potential impact on the cleanliness of Loxley House will continue to be monitored.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- e) The Committee asked if there were any known proposals from other directorates that could negatively impact the ability of the Growth and City Development directorate to deliver its services effectively. It was explained that the directorate is currently working through the full range of proposals to assess any potential indirect impacts, particularly in the context of Adult Social Care.
- f) The Committee queried how it would be ensured that the Council retains a strong corporate memory in the context of management tiers being reduced. It was reported that the Council's overall workforce has been shrinking over the last few years and that the potential to lose corporate memory has been a challenge. However, there has been an effort to ensure that a range of information is stored centrally and is easily accessible. The Council has a relatively larger workforce when benchmarked against other comparable Local Authorities, so the management tiers and spans review will look to assess whether the numbers of staff at the Council is appropriate, particularly in the context of its needing to become financially sustainable. As much as possible must be done to ensure this review is done quickly to avoid long-term uncertainty – but the process must also be done properly, as ensuring effective recruitment and retention is a big part of achieving a sustainable Council.
- g) The Committee asked how the previously-agreed 2024/25 savings had impacted on the experiences of service users. It was set out that the majority of the 2024/25 savings within the directorate had resulted in a fairly low direct impact on Nottingham people, as they largely related to achieving operating efficiencies and best value within contracts. The installation of a charging system at the Greyhound Street public toilets has had a direct impact, with people now having to pay to use the facilities. However, there has been a strong focus on maximising income while minimising impacts as much as possible – particularly in the context of the most vulnerable.
- h) The Committee asked how the real impacts of savings proposals were monitored. It was explained that the anticipated impacts of the new proposals were very low. In respect of advertising, the new contract has been signed and its performance will be monitored actively. In the context of the review of cleaning services, there could be an impact on staff in Loxley House if there is a deterioration of cleanliness, so this will also be monitored closely.
- i) The Committee asked how creative the Council could be in its use of advertising space in prominent areas in the city to generate as much revenue as possible. It was set out that the new contract for advertising on bus shelters and free-standing units had achieved a higher value as it makes the best use of advertising space in the city, with external advice being used to achieve the best return in the context of the current market. However, the Broad Marsh redevelopment may provide additional advertising opportunities in the future, which will be fully taken into account.

- j) The Committee asked how the sale of surplus property assets was being used to support the Council's financial position. It was reported that, in terms of delivering against its current Exceptional Financial Support, the Council is on track to hit its target of £30 million from property asset sales for this financial year. The Council is also halfway through a full property asset review, with its potential sales pipeline currently standing at £160 million. However, a balance must be struck around the future of high-value buildings that are nevertheless providing a revenue stream for the Council, while managing the challenges of achieving sales of lower-value buildings that are otherwise generating costs.

The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, the Director of Planning and Transport, and the Interim Director of Economic Development and Property for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that details are provided if any savings measures implemented in other directorates would have a material impact on the delivery of the Growth and City Development directorate's 2025/26 budget.**
- 2) To request that further information is provided on how the Growth and City Development directorate will set and monitor adaptable outcomes for Nottingham people that are intended to be achieved as a result of the savings and income proposals established within the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan.**
- 3) To recommend that full consideration is given to the options for using all space available to the Council to deliver effective commercial advertising in a creative way, as informed by the current market context.**

34 Decent Neighbourhoods Programme

Councillor Jay Hayes, Executive Member for Housing and Planning; Nicki Jenkins, Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development; and Sharon Guest, Interim Director for Housing, presented a report on the delivery of the Decent Neighbourhoods Programme. The following points were raised:

- a) The Decent Neighbourhoods Programme is designed to improve the places where Council tenants live. There are a number of key priorities around improving health and wellbeing, tackling anti-social behaviour, improving access and purpose to green spaces, linking with other key investments and funding, growing biodiversity and environmental sustainability, and developing ownership and pride in neighbourhoods.
- b) Proposals for delivery under the Programme are invited through engagement with local councillors, tenants and stakeholders. Work is underway to develop much more engagement activity going forward to ensure that tenants have a greater involvement in the services that are delivered to them, which is a key requirement of the Regulator for Social Housing. There have been some previous challenges within the Programme, including the management of contractor delays, but work

has been carried out to resolve these issues. A great deal of activity has also been carried out in respect of the Programme's structure and its reporting and monitoring processes, including the greater involvement of local councillors and Housing Patch Managers as part of feeding back to the Executive Member for Housing and Planning as part of the decision-making process.

- c) The Decent Neighbourhoods webpage provides an overview of the projects completed to March 2024 with 134 schemes broken down by ward area, along with the status of each scheme. Currently, 71 projects have been approved and a further 44 accepted in principle, while 13 have been rejected – often due to their not meeting the strict requirements of the Programme to bring direct benefits specifically to Council tenants. Approved schemes include work on garage refurbishments, drying areas, accessible paths, planting, functional spaces and community hubs. The schemes also have additional benefits such as improving health, reducing anti-social behaviour and giving spaces a greater purpose.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- d) The Committee asked if the Programme had the right level of funding to ensure the maintenance of decent neighbourhoods for all Council tenants. It was explained that there is funding of £1 million each year, which is allocated based on the number of Council houses in each ward. Any money not spent can be rolled over into the following year, while the costs relating to the ongoing maintenance of the projects delivered are factored into the total scheme cost. Assessments have been done for associated garage sites to review their condition and demand, so that they can be either refurbished or developed as required following consultation with the local Council tenant community.
- e) The Committee expressed concern that the opportunities for Ward Councillors to contribute to the identification and development of schemes under the Programme had been low, to date. It was recognised that there needed to be more engagement with Ward Councillor on the delivery of schemes under the Programme, so a great deal of work has been done to improve its oversight and governance, with more inclusion of Ward Councillors and Housing Patch Managers. A new structure will be put in place to ensure that proposals are raised with the relevant Ward Councillors each quarter for their input and views, and progress updates will also be provided once a scheme is approved – particularly if there are any delays or changes to timelines. A new contractor has been appointed and any issues can be escalated to the related Area Housing Manager. A great deal of learning has been taken from the Streets for People Programme, which is now being deployed in the context of delivering Decent Neighbourhoods.
- f) The Committee asked how the outcomes for tenants were being measured. It was reported that the new governance structures have been put in place to increase transparency and communication, with full oversight from the Executive Member for Housing and Planning on progress and current activity. Regular newsletters will be used to outline what projects are in the pipeline and what has been delivered to date. Ultimate success will be measured through seeking tenant feedback on delivered projects and whether the satisfaction levels around living in a given neighbourhood have increased.

- g) The Committee asked how the Programme is being used to tackle anti-social behaviour. It was set out that funding has been used for a variety of measures, including install CCTV cameras as part of projects. This has had a positive impact on neighbourhoods in deterring issues such as anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping.

The Chair thanked the Executive Member for Housing and Planning, the Interim Corporate Director for Growth and City Development, and the Interim Director for Housing for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that an update is provided at an appropriate time to confirm how the quarterly stakeholder engagement meetings for each ward area have been implemented, and the outcomes that these meetings have had in ensuring an effective decision-making process for the delivery of the Decent Neighbourhoods programme.**
- 2) To recommend that the planning and delivery of Decent Neighbourhoods projects is fully informed by the best practice of the 'Streets for People' programme, and that there is effective connectivity between the delivery of Decent Neighbourhoods and Independent Living schemes for Council tenants, where appropriate.**

35 Responses to Recommendations

The Chair presented the latest responses received from the Executive to recommendations made to it previously by the Committee.

The Committee noted the responses of the Executive to its recommendations.

36 Work Programme

The Chair presented the Committee's current Work Programme for the 2024/25 municipal year. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Committee added a review of how unoccupied Council housing is brought back to a lettable standard as swiftly as possible as a potential item for a future meeting.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.