

Nottingham City Council

Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 6 March 2024 from 2.07 pm to 4.03 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Imran Jalil (Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Sam Lux
Councillor Kevin Clarke (Substitute for
Councillor Andrew Rule)

Absent

Councillor Faith Gakanje-Ajala
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Andrew Rule

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Amy Goulden - Head of Community Safety
Mary Lester - Director of Resident Services
Adrian Mann - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
Pete Mitchell - Head of Environmental Health and Public Protection
Councillor Sajid Mohammed - Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Safety and Inclusion
Kate Morris - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer

31 Apologies

Councillor Faith Gakanje-Ajala – on leave
Councillor Neghat Khan – unwell
Councillor AJ Matsiko – work commitments
Councillor Nayab Patel – work commitments
Councillor Andrew Rule – work commitments

32 Change in Committee Membership

The Committee noted the appointment of Councillor Sam Lux as a member of the Committee.

33 Declarations of Interests

In the interests of transparency in relation to item 6 (Safety and Environmental Regulation), Councillor Kevin Clarke declared that he is a director of two Nottingham-based companies (NG11 Cars Limited and Clifton Cobs Limited).

34 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meetings held on 24 January 2024 and as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair. The minutes for 7 February 2024 were updated to include apologies from Councillor Liaqat Ali.

35 Community Safety Partnership

Councillor Sajid Mohammed, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Safety and Inclusion, and Amy Goulden, Head of Community Safety, presented a report on the performance in the delivery of the Nottingham Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan 2023-26. The following points were raised:

- a) The CSP (previously the Crime and Drugs Partnership) is a multi-agency group responsible for tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and reoffending. It is made of up five statutory 'Responsible Authorities' and a number of other public sector partners who participate on a voluntary basis. It also functions as the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board, Substance Use Board and Serious Violence Board. As such, the CSP carried out activity under a wide range of legislation.
- b) A Partnership Strategy for 2023-26 is in place to set out how the CSP will meet its responsibilities, with the current three-year priorities being addressing slavery and exploitation, domestic abuse and sexual violence, radicalisation and violent extremism, substance use, anti-social behaviour and serious violence. There is also an additional focus on tackling hate crime on a Nottinghamshire-wide basis, with the CSP working with partners across Local Authority boundaries. The CSP is delivering a number of interventions and initiatives such as the Consent Coalition and Safe Space Pledge, support services for vulnerable people, drug and alcohol treatment services, Purple Flag, 20 Days of Action, awareness weeks and communications campaigns.
- c) A Strategic Assessment exercise is underway to seek to understand the current service needs and required provision, how partnership work can be used to improve services, and how service impact can be measured effectively. A series of key performance indicators are in place so that the outcomes being delivered can be seen and assessed easily. In the context of developing effective prevention and early intervention, it is vital that the CSP fully understands the service requirements, while helping people to report issues as soon as possible and be confident that their needs will be met after doing so.
- d) A great deal of the funding used by the CSP to support its initiatives and interventions is granted by central Government on a fixed-term basis, so this can make it difficult to plan activity in the long-term. Currently, £5.7 million of funding will end in March 2025, so work is underway to seek to mitigate against any potential future financial shortfalls. Fully supporting all potential priorities is extremely challenging, as there is a shrinking level of resourcing for a growing level of need.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- e) The Committee asked how the CSP would meet its national performance requirements in the context of upcoming funding challenges, and how financial resilience would be built to maintain support for prevention and non-statutory services while addressing priorities in the long-term. It was reported that statutory services will always be funded as the first priority, and the CSP is making good progress in delivering against the national requirements. Much of the CSP's

funding comes via the Office of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), from the Home Office, on a two-year cycle, but additional grants are often made available periodically to help support specific initiatives.

- f) The CSP does look five years ahead in developing its Strategic Plan for where future need might be greatest – but it is important that all priorities set are funded and deliverable within the two-year funding cycles. This can result in a great deal of uncertainty regarding future delivery – particularly when very specialist services can only be commissioned on a two-year basis. Reducing resources has had an impact on early intervention initiatives, including those delivered through Youth Services – though targeted prevention support is still carried out with young people, and research is currently being done into the circumstances behind youth offending. More people entering the Criminal Justice System can have a disproportionate impact on certain minority groups, so early intervention is vital. As a result, continual work is carried out to update the priorities of the Strategic Plan on the basis of the emerging data.
- g) The Committee queried how a reduction in the number of the Council’s Community Protection Officers (CPOs) would impact on how the CSP delivers its initiatives, and what work would be carried out with partners to mitigate against the loss of CPOs. It was explained that CPOs often act as an early warning system within neighbourhood policing. Engagement is underway with the Police on how neighbourhood policing can be restructured to be most effectively, as CPO resources will now largely be focused on delivering the Council’s statutory regulatory duties – in addition to targeting anti-social behaviour. Wider conversations are also being held with the Police, the OPCC and Nottingham’s universities on building resources for a city-wide partnership to ensure that Nottingham is a safe place to live. Ultimately, going forward, CPO resources will be deployed in a focused way to target the areas of greatest need.
- h) The Committee asked how community groups can be engaged with effectively to ensure safety in their neighbourhoods (in particular, with the Nottingham universities in relation to the areas where there are high concentrations of students), and how feedback from communities informs the development of the CSP’s priorities. It was set out that the Council’s Resident Development Officers did a great deal of work to support safer and more cohesive communities. There will still be resourcing for this type of work to be carried out – particularly in the context of addressing anti-social behaviour and drug use in student areas. The ambition is to establish a multi-disciplinary CPO team that can deliver the Council’s statutory responsibilities, but is also able to have a specialist focus on some specific areas of need within communities.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee’s questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that a briefing note on the results of the current research into first time young offending is forward to the Committee following the publication of the final report during Autumn 2024.**

- 2) To request that a report is presented to a future meeting of the Committee on the Council's planned Community Protection Officer provision going forward, and on the potential restructure of neighbourhood policing in partnership with other stakeholders.**

36 Safety and Environmental Regulation

Councillor Sajid Mohammed, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Safety and Inclusion, and Pete Mitchell, Head of Environmental Health and Public Protection, presented a report on the performance of the Council's Safety and Environmental Regulation Services. The following points were raised:

- a) The Council has a wide range of regulatory responsibilities for environmental health and public safety. In terms of ensuring food safety, the Council has a statutory duty to inspect all food premises in the city in terms of the type of food that is handled, the number and vulnerability of customers, the types of processes carried out before the food is sold or served, and the hygiene standards. This then results in a formal Food Hygiene Rating being issued. Where necessary, written warnings for improvement can be issued, food can be seized for testing, hygienic improvement notices can be made and, in some cases, premises can be closed. Environmental Health Officers also provide advice and support to food outlets on ensuring that their business is safe and hygienic, outside of the regular inspection processes.
- b) There are nearly 3,000 food premises in Nottingham and each is given a rating to indicate the potential level of risk, with A being the highest and E the lowest. The highest-risk premises are often those that process food industrially or serve food to substantial numbers of customers, and these are inspected regularly and carefully. Problems of access caused by the Coronavirus pandemic led to the accumulation of a significant inspections backlog but, supported by Community Protection Officers (CPOs), the Environmental Health team has been able to carry out the inspections for 96% of all Category A-D premises. However, only 14% of the Category E premises have been inspected.
- c) The Council also has a statutory responsibility for inspecting workplaces in the context of health and safety, and carrying out detailed investigations of any workplace accidents that resulted in either death or serious injury. On average, there can be around 2 to 3 workplace-related deaths per year, and around 30 cases of serious injury. The results of investigations into deaths are fed into the Coroner's inquest processes, and the Council can take a business to court if a death or serious injury arose due to corporate negligence.
- d) Health and Safety inspections are also carried out for business premises that carry out certain activities that require a formal licence, such as skin piercings, tanning salons, tattoo parlours, pet shops and animal breeders. The aim of this regulatory activity is to support business to operate safely and to protect the public.
- e) The Council works to support smaller-scale events, including community events, to ensure that the proper safety controls are in place, including processes such as the effective safeguarding of lost children. Council officers are part of the Safety

Advisory Group for large-scale events, alongside other organisations such as the Police and the Fire and Rescue Service, to ensure that these can take place safely.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- f) The Committee asked why the inspection rates for Category E food premises were so low and what risks this posed to the Council meeting its statutory obligations. It was reported that Category E premises are relatively numerous and there can be a very rapid turnover in their ownership and operation. The new owner must seek a registration of their own and a fresh inspection is required – making it difficult to catch up on the post-pandemic backlog. As Category E represents the lowest risk, the priority has been to ensure that the higher-risk inspections of Category A-D premises are fully completed.
- g) The Committee queried how long it would take for the inspection backlog created by the Coronavirus pandemic to be cleared, how this would be affected by the proposed reduction in CPOs as part of the Council's 2024/25 budget, and whether the right resources were in place to enable both inspection and enforcement activity to be carried out effectively. It was explained that the current inspection rates were drawing closer to their pre-Coronavirus levels – though, even before the pandemic, there were resourcing challenges both in the city and for Local Authorities nationally. CPOs have carried out a number of initial inspections in support of the Environmental Health Officers and helped to keep track of the turnover in food premises at the neighbourhood level. As such, any necessary reduction in support from CPOs will be difficult to mitigate against. However, it is vital to public health that food outlets are safe, so work will be done to ensure that all Category A-C premises are inspected to schedule.
- h) The Committee asked how many 'near miss' workplace incidents were reported, which did not result in serious injury or death – but might have done so. It was set out that, generally, only accidents that result in injury are reported – but that employers are required to keep a record of 'near miss' incidents. Regular inspections of high-risk workplaces are carried out to ensure that the right health and safety management processes, and appropriate recording practices, are in place.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To recommend that consideration is given to how communications with the public can be used to highlight the importance of the positive work carried out by the Council's Safety and Environmental Regulation Services.**

37 Heat Network Options Scrutiny Review

The Chair presented a report on the proposed scope for the establishment of a 'spotlight' review group to consider the options available regarding the future of the

District Heating Network, as part of the Council's decision-making process. The following points were raised:

- a) Unfortunately, due to the complexity of the position in relation to the District Heating Network, it has become necessary to delay the carrying out of the spotlight review to allow more time for the potential future options to be fully developed for presentation to the review group. Work is underway with officers and the relevant Portfolio Holder to establish when it will be most effective for the review to take place, ahead of any final decision being taken by the Executive Board.

Resolved:

- 1) To establish a Spotlight Review Group to consider the options open to the Council regarding the future of the District Heating Network, pending the establishment of an appropriate timetable for the review.**

38 Work Programme

The Chair presented the Committee's current Work Programme. The following points were raised:

- a) It is intended to review the Council's performance against its pledge to become carbon neutral by 2028 at the Committee's next meeting on 3 April 2024. The planned item on the potential options for the District Heating Network has been delayed and will be rescheduled as appropriate.
- b) The Committee's April meeting represents its last for the current municipal year, so the planning process for the Committee's potential business for the 2024/25 municipal year is now underway.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.