

COUNCIL MEETING – 14 JULY 2020

REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

29 June 2020

Present: Councillors Graves (Chairman), Skittrall (Vice-Chairman), Aslam and Maguire.

Also present: Miss K Denton (Assistant Director), Mrs V Jessop (Assistant Director), Mr S Whiteley (Electoral Services Team Leader) and Ms E McGinlay (Electoral Services Officer).

(Ms J Savage, Ms D Lewis and Ms M Meadwell attended from Greatwell Homes for Agenda Item 4. Ms S Jinks from Corby Borough Council attended to present on Agenda Item 5.)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillor Patel.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, the under-mentioned councillors declared an interest in the following items:

Councillor	Minute	Report Title	Reason
Maguire	4	Presentation from Greatwell Homes	Registerable interest – relative in employment of Greatwell Homes

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2020 be confirmed and signed.

4. PRESENTATION FROM GREATWELL HOMES

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to introduce the presentation from Greatwell Homes. The chairman invited Ms J Savage, Ms D Lewis and Ms M Meadwell to present the report.

The representatives from Greatwell Homes thanked members for the invitation and began their presentation, discussing their achievements over the past year and the activities undertaken in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ms Meadwell, Director of Customers, outlined some of the work around digitalisation and improving the range of services accessible online, including

customers paying rent online and setting up direct debits, with a 49% increase in customers utilising online services.

She also informed members of Greatwell Homes' achieving TPAS accreditation, largely as a result of the implementation of their customer involvement framework, and went on to say that over 80% of Greatwell Homes tenants expressed that they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

Ms Lewis, Director of Assets, outlined some of the improvement works undertaken and the phased planned building works going forward, including the delivery of 159 new homes in the borough over the next few years.

Ms Savage, Chief Executive, provided members with information relating to the organisation's response to Covid-19, including suspending non-essential works, identification of vulnerable customers and providing welfare calls and support to those at most risk of isolation. She went on to explain some of the challenges for the organisation moving into the recovery phase, and how the service provision may need to adjust to accommodate different working practices alongside government guidance and the potential financial impact of the pandemic.

Members discussed the presentation and queried the approach to evictions under the pandemic, with some concerns around antisocial tenants and tenants at high risk. Ms Meadwell specified that whilst evictions had been suspended until 23 August 2020, Greatwell Homes has a generally low level of eviction rates, with five evictions due to arrears and three due to antisocial behaviour within the last year. She went on to say that eviction was always used as a last resort, and that Greatwell Homes work hard with customers to ensure that any customers experiencing difficulties were not slipping into rent arrears.

Members also discussed the challenges facing tenants who are having to move properties during lockdown and the support offered by Greatwell Homes to those residents. The chair thanked the members from Greatwell Homes for attending and wished them well for the future.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

Due to slight technical issues the chairman decided to take agenda item 6 earlier in the meeting and re-ordered the agenda accordingly.

5. PERFORMANCE: COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – 1 OCTOBER 2019 TO 31 MARCH 2020

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to inform the committee of the council's performance, including Wellingborough Norse, during the second half of 2019-20 in handling customer feedback, including complaints which have been referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The assistant director advised that there were no significant areas of concern, with attention paid to the consistent positive outcomes from complaints that had been referred to the LGSCO.

Members thanked Ms Denton for the report and expressed their pleasure with regard to the positive outcomes and requested again that their thanks to the council's employees be noted.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6. PRESENTATION FROM HUMAN RESOURCES SHARED SERVICE

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to introduce a presentation from the Human Resources Shared Service (HRSS). The chairman invited Ms S Jinks of Corby Borough Council to present the report.

Ms Jinks thanked the chairman for the invitation to the meeting and talked members through the background and the structure of the HRSS, which works in partnership with Corby Borough Council and East Northamptonshire Council. The service began as a collaborative agreement, working together for around 12 months up to the formal adoption of the service in 1 April 2020.

Ms Jinks outlined some of the key achievements of the HRSS, including a performance management report allowing for comparison of key information between the three authorities, and specified that the Borough Council of Wellingborough had the lowest sickness absence and staff turnover of all partners in the shared service. Other achievements resulting from the partnership included a more efficient digitalised shared recruitment platform and the development of an agency framework for temporary resources within the public sector.

She went on to focus on the options that the HRSS delivered for training, including the reduced costs of procuring corporate training across three councils, alongside the identification of free training courses online for employee-led training opportunities and how the HRSS provides great resilience for all three authorities involved in the service.

Moving onto the Covid-19 response, Ms Jinks outlined the challenge of significant changes to working environments and how it has impacted on the relationship between employees and staff, alongside dedicated resources for staff to assist with different personal situations and maintain connected professional relationships.

Ms Jinks closed by providing members with information around some of the work being undertaken with Future Northants to prepare for the new local authorities in the county, such as TUPE of staff and the development of the culture of the new organisation with policies, procedures and training.

Members also considered how Kettering Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council would be dovetailed into the existing shared service as part of unitary developments and were advised that this was yet to be determined.

Members thanked Ms Jinks for her presentation and paid particular thanks and praise to the employees at Wellingborough for the positive feedback received as part of the presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

7. PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020-21

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to seek guidance from the committee as to what broad areas of policy they would like to review in the coming year.

Members discussed the organisations proposed and which services and organisations they would like to call to present to the committee within the current cycle.

Following a short discussion it was agreed that the work programme for 2019-20 at Appendix B would be amended to include Shire Community Services to present at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2019-20 at Appendix B to the report be agreed with the inclusion of Shire Community Services.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 8:35pm.