

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



Council Offices,
Urban Road,
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 8DA

Agenda

Cabinet

Date: **Tuesday, 1st December, 2020**

Time: **10.00 am**

Venue: **[Ashfield District Council's YouTube Channel](#)**

For any further information please contact:

Lynn Cain

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01623 457317

CABINET

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Councillors:

Kier Barsby
Tom Hollis
David Martin
Helen-Ann Smith
John Wilmott

Samantha Deakin
Rachel Madden
Matthew Relf
Daniel Williamson

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SUMMONS

You are hereby requested to attend a meeting of the Cabinet to be held at the time and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



Carol Cooper-Smith
Chief Executive

AGENDA

Page

1. To receive apologies for absence, if any.
2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.
3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 October 2020. 5 - 10
4. COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel - Verbal Update.

Scrutiny Panel Chairman
Councillor David Hennigan
5. Scrutiny Review: Community Protection Service. 11 - 24

Scrutiny Panel Chairman
Councillor Christian Chapman
6. The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. 25 - 52

Key Decision

Portfolio Holder
Councillor Tom Hollis – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing
7. 22020/21 Forecast Outturn Position for General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme as at September 2020. 53 - 68

Key Decision

Portfolio Holder
Councillor Rachel Madden – Portfolio Holder for Finance

8. **Green Spaces Capital Investment Programme.** 69 - 74

Key Decision

Portfolio Holder

Councillor David Martin – Portfolio Holder for Streets, Parks and Town Centres

9. **Business Support and Towns Funding Update.** 75 - 80

Non Key Decision

Portfolio Holder

Councillor Matthew Relf – Portfolio Holder for Place, Planning and Regeneration

CABINET

Virtual Meeting held on Tuesday, 13th October, 2020 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Jason Zadrozny in the Chair;

Councillors Kier Barsby, Samantha Deakin,
Tom Hollis, Rachel Madden, David Martin,
Matthew Relf, Helen-Ann Smith,
Daniel Williamson and John Wilmott.

Apology for Absence: Pete Hudson

Officers Present: Phillip Bennett, Craig Bonar, Bev Bull,
Lynn Cain, Carol Cooper-Smith, Ruth Dennis,
Katherine Green, Theresa Hodgkinson, Mike Joy
and Paul Parkinson.

In Attendance: Councillors Jim Blagden and David Hennigan

CA.33 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CA.34 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 September 2020 be received and approved as a correct record.

CA.35 Announcement from the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to update Cabinet in relation to the latest Government guidelines in relation to Covid Alert Levels. A three tier alert system was being implemented and Nottinghamshire had been designated a tier two, high level alert for the foreseeable future with a review period every four weeks.

Tier two rules included the following:

- households not allowed to meet indoors;
- friends and family could continue to meet in gardens and outdoor places;
- Maximum limit of 6 on any gatherings;
- travel discouraged where unnecessary;
- 10pm curfew for pubs and restaurants;
- workers to continue to work from home where possible.

The tier two restrictions were due to commence the following day as the virus was increasing in all parts of Nottinghamshire. Students return to the two universities in Nottingham had been a contributory factor but most of the increases were being seen within the 21-45 age range. Accessing tests was still proving to be an issue but it was hoped this would be resolved in the near future.

The Leader reiterated the message that although the local lockdowns would be challenging, it was everybody's responsibility to abide by the rules to reduce the spread of the virus. The Council would continue to provide a full range of services and residents would be updated on any changes as they became known.

To conclude, the Leader expressed his disappointment at the local MP's lack of support for Ashfield and his recent unhelpful media narrative, blaming local Leaders in Nottinghamshire for the tighter measures rather than offering support and guidance to his constituents.

CA.36 COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel - Verbal Update

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel gave an update to Cabinet regarding the work undertaken at the latest meeting of the Panel.

Key Worker Memorial

The Vice Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel reported on progress regarding the potential development of the Key Workers' Memorial.

Following discussions with officers, it had been acknowledged that there was potential for allocating funding from S106 monies to fund the installation of the memorial and a communications strategy had also been agreed to place an article in the next 'Ashfield Matters' publication to encourage residents to offer their views regarding the potential style and location for the memorial thus enabling the Council to gauge public opinion and progress the project accordingly.

Residents would be asked to respond via a dedicated email address and complete a short questionnaire and in addition, letters would also be sent out to local schools, colleges, voluntary groups, churches and faith groups asking for their involvement in the process. The publication was due to be circulated (to around 120,000 residents) with the annual bin calendars week commencing 23 November 2020.

It was hoped that firm proposals would be submitted to Cabinet in January 2021 with a view to unveiling the memorial in the autumn of 2021. The Council's Place Team Leader would also be in attendance at the next Scrutiny Panel meeting in 5 November 2020 to discuss the proposals further.

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel Meeting – 6 October 2020

The third meeting of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel was held last Tuesday, with a primary focus on small business recovery in Ashfield. The meeting was very well attended by officers and the Panel also welcomed attendance from Martin Rigley, the Chairman of Discover Ashfield and the owner of an engineering firm in Sutton in Ashfield.

Discussions centred on difficulties businesses faced during lockdown, the work of the recently established Economic Development Team and the purpose of the draft Economic Recovery Plan in supporting businesses within the District.

Following discussions, the Panel unanimously agreed to approve a set of recommendations for submission to Cabinet and these were read out accordingly.

Preparations were already being made for the next meeting of the Panel, which would again focus on small business recovery due to Panel Members identifying it as a key theme of the recovery process. The Panel were hoping to welcome attendance from the Director for Public Health Nottinghamshire, Jonathan Gribbin, to be advised in relation to the development of a countywide response to the pandemic, subsequent recovery plans and details of a potential local lockdown.

Invitations were also being extended to representatives from businesses in Ashfield operating in a diverse range of sectors, as Members seek to gain a further understanding of the challenges facing businesses and the role the Council can play in assisting recovery.

RESOLVED that

- a) the draft Economic Recovery Plan be approved with the proviso that the Plan is updated accordingly as circumstances change;
- b) work be undertaken to consider establishing a scheme to recognise local businesses that have excelled at adapting to guidelines and providing a COVID-secure environment for customers, in conjunction with key partners such as Discover Ashfield;
- c) the Council continues working toward the establishment of a Key Workers Memorial, including consultation with Ashfield residents and key partners;
- d) the Council's established Business Support Hub offers support for those looking to set up new businesses or reinvent existing businesses as a result of the pandemic;
- e) Cabinet be commended for the decision to implement 2 hour free parking in all town centre car parks to aid the longer-term recovery of Ashfield's local economy;
- f) congratulations be extended to the Planning and Economic Development Team, the Environmental Health Team, and the Discover Ashfield Board for their continued efforts to ensure that local businesses sufficiently adapt to COVID-19 measures and survive the ongoing economic difficulties brought about by the pandemic;

- g) the Council looks at all options to use all of the 'ring-fenced 'reopening High Streets' Fund, innovatively.

CA.37 Affordable Housing Development - Maun View, Sutton in Ashfield

Cabinet was requested to consider and approve an opportunity to develop affordable family housing on an undeveloped plot of Council owned land at Maun View, Sutton in Ashfield.

Members considered alternative options for the site including declining to utilise the land at the present time, developing the land for industrial units or selling the land for private housing development.

RESOLVED

that the following be approved, subject to Planning consent and confirmation of Homes England funding:

- a) the use of the undeveloped section of the Council-owned Maun Valley site for family housing, let on an affordable rent basis;
- b) delegated authority being granted to the Director of Housing and Assets, in conjunction with the Director of Legal and Governance and the Chief Finance Officer, to agree the appropriation of the Maun Valley site from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account based upon best consideration of the land value and the parameters of the social housing viability model;
- c) Council is recommended to duly approve the use of Housing Revenue Account reserves to fund the construction of 17 new affordable homes as detailed in the report;
- d) delegated authority being granted to the Director of Housing and Assets, in conjunction with the Director of Legal and Governance, and the Chief Finance Officer, to negotiate and formalise final scheme costs, specification and delivery;
- e) delegated authority being granted to the Director of Housing and Assets, in conjunction with the Director of Legal and Governance and the Chief Finance Officer, to procure and appoint a contractor to develop the site;
- f) delegated authority being granted to the Director of Housing and Assets to contract, on behalf of the Council, with Homes England for the purposes of receiving subsidy to ensure that developments are viable and fall within the Council's 30 year business plan model.

Reason:

The development helps to achieve the Council's Corporate Plan objective of delivering much needed additional good quality affordable housing in the District and the development will bring in to use in an extremely positive way an under-used brownfield site.

CA.38 Green Spaces Capital Investment Programme

Cabinet considered approving some additional investment earmarked for green space improvement projects this financial year.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to allocate additional investment to a number of green space improvement projects but this was not recommended, as a number of sites required intervention this financial year to ensure that the quality the District's green space provision provides remains high.

RESOLVED that

- a) Council is recommended to duly allocate £193k General Fund Capital Receipts and £173k Section 106 Public Open Space monies for a number of green space improvement projects;
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Director Place and Communities to allocate the funding to specific projects as required;
- c) it be noted that the proposed improvement projects will be available for consideration by Council at its next meeting when approval to add these schemes to the Capital Programme will be sought.

Reason:

There a number of sites in the District which require additional investment in order to increase the quality of provision.

CA.39 War Memorials Management Plan

Cabinet was updated on the progress of Scrutiny review recommendations regarding ongoing cleaning and maintenance of Ashfield's war memorials and approval was sought for the creation of a cleaning schedule and associated budget along with the approval of a community protocol.

To ensure readiness for the 2020 remembrance events across Ashfield, Members were asked to agree an additional recommendation to those contained in the report, requesting that all 10 war monuments under the Council's control be professionally cleaned by the end of October at a cost of £4,780.50 + VAT.

It was also acknowledged that the Council's Environment and Housing Teams had been busy undertaking peripheral work around the monuments (i.e. repair work to railings and walls and pruning/cutting back bushes) to ensure the sites were looking immaculate for the upcoming remembrance services.

Members considered alternative options of declining to approve the content of the proposed War Memorials Community Protocol and leaving the 10 war monuments in their present state for the 2020 remembrance events.

RESOLVED that

- a) progress against the Scrutiny review recommendations regarding the ongoing cleaning and maintenance of Ashfield's war memorials, be received and noted;
- b) a budget of £3k per year to carry out a rolling programme of maintenance to War Memorials for which Ashfield District Council is responsible, be approved;
- c) the proposed schedule of maintenance for War Memorials for which Ashfield District Council is responsible, as outlined in the report, be approved;
- d) the War Memorials Community Protocol, as appended to the report, be approved and adopted;
- e) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place and Communities to approve any cleaning or restoration works to war memorials as required;
- f) approval be given for all 10 war monuments under the Council's control within the Ashfield District, to be professionally cleaned by the end of October at a cost of £4,780.50 + VAT, in readiness for the 2020 remembrance events.

Reasons:

1. The Council is responsible for ten war memorials; previously they have been cleaned upon request or in line with remembrance service events. This has led to some memorials being cleaned more frequently than others and some being cleaned by community groups, which has caused some degree of damage to the memorials due to the delicate material they are constructed from.
2. The Council recognises the need to preserve these war memorials, some of which are listed, and to ensure that a programme of cleaning is carried out in a sensitive and effective way.
3. These recommendations have provided the Council with the best opportunity to maintain and therefore preserve the life of war memorials whilst providing clear guidance on how interested parties and community groups can continue to be involved in these highly valued assets.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

Chairman.

Report To:	CABINET	Date:	1 DECEMBER 2020
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: COMMUNITY PROTECTION SERVICE		
Portfolio Holder:	PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

The Council's Community Protection Service was added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in July 2019 and was subsequently added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2020/21 by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members wished to consider the objectives and remit of this discretionary service, how it works with partners to achieve these objectives, and to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and provides value for money. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an overview of the considerations during the review and sets out the recommendations agreed by Scrutiny Panel B Members.

Recommendation(s)

- a) The Panel note the importance of and endorse the ongoing restructure and recruitment exercise within Community Safety, ensuring the Community Protection Service is fully resourced
- b) Full consideration is given to the equipment needs of Community Protection Officers to ensure that the on-street presence and back office support maximises efficiency in both reporting and monitoring casework
- c) The Community Protection Service focuses on four core priorities of:
 - Providing a visible presence
 - Dealing with anti-social behaviour issues
 - Working collaboratively with key partners
 - Ensuring public safety in Ashfield

whilst maintaining a flexible approach to holistic issues.

Recommendation(s) Cont.

- d) As part of a wider engagement initiative, a managed consultation exercise is undertaken to understand public perception of the Community Protection Service. This would also allow the Council an opportunity to raise awareness of the Community Protection Service and its priorities.
- e) Delegate the power to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, to ensure all options are explored regarding the use of powers accredited to Community Protection Officers.
- f) The Community Protection Service continues to expand on partnership working with the Police and other key partners, including training opportunities and intelligence sharing, to ensure a more integrated approach to community safety in the District.
- g) Following the review and restructure of Community Safety, the Community Protection Service topic be referred back to Scrutiny as appropriate in 2021.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council's Community Protection Service was added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in July 2019 and subsequently added to the Scrutiny Workplan 2020/21 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2020.

Alternative Options Considered

All options considered by the Panel are detailed in the report.

Detailed Information

INTRODUCTION

Scrutiny Panel B Members began the Scrutiny Review: Community Protection by agreeing a review terms of reference. The agreed terms of reference set out the review rationale, objectives, indicators of success, review methodology, key witnesses, and information required.

Rationale

By 2023, Ashfield District Council has committed to ensure the foundations for a good quality of life are in place: reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. Specific actions include:

- Continue to develop effective patrol plans and priorities for the community protection team, targeting hotspots areas
- Influence operational tasking through more effective use of Council data to determine priorities and activity
- Enhance the Police and Community Protection integrated hub collaborative working through our area team approach

In approving the topic for the Scrutiny Workplan, Members of the Panel agreed the importance of ensuring that the Community Protection Service, as a discretionary service, continues to both meet its wider objectives and be adaptable to differing social challenges.

Review Objectives

The objectives of this review will be to:

- Gain an understanding of the current Community Protection Service, and how it operates within the wider Community Safety section
- Establish the objectives and requirements of the service
- Examine outcomes and achievements
- Review procedures in place to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the service
- Understand public expectation of the service

Indicators of Success

- Establishing clear service objectives that are fit for purpose
- Identifying effective mechanisms to monitor performance and outcomes
- Clear evidence of effective collaborative working within the Integrated Services Hub
- Understanding public expectations and current perspectives of the service
- Ensuring the service provides value for money
- Ensuring adequate resources are in place for the service to operate efficiently

Methodology

This review was carried out through consideration of both qualitative and quantitative research.

- Interviewing Community Protection Officers, Police representatives and Council Officers
- Public consultation
- Statistical information regarding the service
- Consultation with partner agencies
- Best practice from other authorities, systems used, powers given etc.

Review Involvement

It is important for a scrutiny review to be a collaborative process, inviting involvement from experts both within the Council and externally. Members engaged with the following over the course of this review:

- Director – Place and Communities
- Service Manager – Community Safety
- Community Protection Team Leader
- Community Protection Officers
- Portfolio Holder
- Leader of the Council

Supporting Information considered by the Panel

The Council's current Community Protection Service originated as the Ashfield Neighbourhood Warden Service. The Ashfield Neighbourhood Warden Service began operation in December 2002,

established with a mission statement to: “assist to improve the quality of life for residents, reduce crime, the fear of crime, and help businesses thrive in Ashfield”.

Previously co-ordinated by Ashfield Homes, the current Community Protection Service was established in 2008 and set out as the “Eyes for Ashfield”, with the main objective of tackling anti-social behaviour in Ashfield.

Throughout the review, Members of the Panel were focussed on ensuring that the objectives of the service remained clear, effective case management continues to support and inform the operational duties of the service and provide a visible and collaborative role in the community.

In doing so, the Panel engaged with the Director, Service Manager, operational officers and the Portfolio holder to gain a clear understanding of the current service, individual roles, challenges and partnership working.

COMMUNITY PROTECTION SERVICE

Approach and Responsibilities

Ashfield District Council’s CPOs undertake a problem-solving approach to address on-street antisocial behaviour, environmental and nuisance related issues, which affect the quality of life for residents in Ashfield.

Community Protection Officers provide a uniformed patrol presence within Ashfield’s town centres and communities, spending time in communities conducting high visibility patrols, engaging with residents, visitors, and businesses, and proactively challenging perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

Using both a proactive and reactive approach, CPOs follow patrol plans that include schools, parks, town centres and estates, focusing patrol time on areas that evidence the greatest levels of need at that time.

Key tasks and responsibilities of Community Protection Officers include:

- High visibility foot, bicycle or vehicle patrols across the District
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints
- Supporting victims of anti-social behaviour
- Gathering evidence and preparing statements to proceed with legal action
- Problem solving approach to persistent anti-social behaviour
- Targeted approach to geographical areas and locations
- Recognising issues relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Collaborative Working

The Community Protection Service operates within the Council’s Integrated Services Hub based at the Council Offices in Kirkby – in – Ashfield. Representatives from the following agencies are able to work within the Integrated Services Hub:

- Nottinghamshire Police
- Ashfield District Council Community Safety
- Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue
- Women’s Aid Integrated Service

- The Reducing Re-offending Partnership
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Nottinghamshire Victim Care
- Framework
- Change Grow Live

The Integrated Services Hub facilitates a collaborative approach to community safety. Agencies within the Hub work together towards:

- Delivery of priorities – reducing and deterring crime and anti-social behaviour
- Delivery of transformation
- Engagement
- Achieving value for money
- Improving services
- Project delivery
- Understanding communities and customers

Patrol Plans

Throughout the review, Members of the Panel considered the importance of effective, visible patrols. Members agreed that this was a pivotal part of the service in relation to both prevention and providing confidence in the district regarding community safety.

To assist Members, the Panel discussed patrols with operation Community Protection Officers and the Director. The importance of remaining both proactive and reactive was acknowledged by the Panel.

Members further recognised the necessity to ensure that Community Protection Officers had all of the equipment necessary to ensure their own personal safety when carrying out the role and that of the public.

Community Protection Officers undertake high visibility foot patrols in hotspot areas focusing on anti-social behaviour, and issues that present risk, threat, and harm. Patrols also focus on themes including town centres, parks and open spaces, and housing estates.

The team are also expected to connect with the community and key individuals within it. This includes retailers, elected members, community voices, individuals requesting services, and vulnerable people. Officers should also provide immediate feedback on any high-risk issues identified; ensuring safeguarding referrals are made appropriately.

Members agreed that Community Protection Officers should maximise the impact that their high visibility can have within the District.

Hotspots

The Council's Community Protection Officers have a thorough understanding of the geography and communities within Ashfield, including problematic locations in the district. Hotspots are identified based on this knowledge and experience.

The hotspots could relate to anti-social behaviour or environmental issues in town centres, estates, roads, parks, footpaths, and trails. Historically, CPOs have been assigned specific locations to manage. At present, CPOs are borderless within Ashfield and take on a District-wide role.

The Community Protection Service has maintained flexibility, ensuring a high level of responsiveness to any new or emerging issues generating a short-term hotspot are supported and addressed. Until COVID-19 CPOs attended the Partnership Operational Tasking meeting every three weeks, which incorporate victim, location and, offender briefings, as well as weekly team and geographical problem-solving meetings. The Team Manager provided the police with updates and collaborates regarding the weekly briefings and patrol plans.

Operational Tasking and CCTV

Community Protection Officers carry airwave radios that link to the Police operational channel Page 12 and the CCTV control room. This ensures that, in addition to planned activity in hotspot areas, they can also be reactively tasked following either visual reports of an incident through the control room or through the police for low-level reported incidents.

Furthermore, all Community Protection Officers are also equipped with body worn cameras, allowing visual recordings to be used as evidence if required.

Case Referrals and Partnership Working

Community Protection Officers attend many kinds of issues and when appropriate, some of these issues will be referred to the Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworkers or Complex Case Team. Such cases can often include dealing with vulnerable people with needs that will need a multi-agency approach. CPOs also undertake safe and well checks, deliver food parcels and gather evidence for caseworkers.

In considering this aspect of the role, Members of the Panel agreed that utilising appropriate technology to enable officers to make timely referrals on cases that can be picked up in an efficient manner by other Members of the Service was essential.

Partnership working was intrinsic to the Community Protection Service within the Integrated Services Hub and Ashfield Community Partnership. Members recognised the importance of ensuring these partnerships worked collaboratively and welcomed the progress of the Integrated Hub as part of a collaborative approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

In discussing partnership collaborative working with Community Protection Officers, Members of the Panel were informed that Officers found this to be highly beneficial particularly in relation to information sharing.

The officers spoke positively about the working arrangements and the willingness on both sides to work together to achieve outcomes. The airwaves radio system, shared by the Police and CPOs, was considered an excellent communication tool and allowed for requests for back up, assistance and information as required.

Members were also informed that the Council were also working with the Police to enable the CPOs to have access to their 'safe system' that would enable a greater level of information sharing to support their work further. The Anti-Social Behaviour and Triage Team Manager also attended both joint tasking meetings and Police briefings as required.

The Panel also considered the Ashfield Community Partnership Strategic Plan, a strategy setting out how various agencies in Ashfield will work together to address crime and disorder issues and improve quality of life for residents.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to develop a community safety partnership and an associated strategic plan. The authorities specified in the Ashfield Community Partnership are:

- Ashfield District Council
- Nottinghamshire Police
- Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Authority
- Ashfield and Mansfield Clinical Commissioning Group
- Nottinghamshire Probation Trust
- The Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Rutland Community Rehabilitation

The Ashfield Community Partnership Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 identified five following areas as priorities:

Anti-social Behaviour Aims:

- Increased identification and active targeting of offenders and hot spot locations
- Improved provision and promotion of support to victims and witnesses
- Increased community empowerment
- Increased positive diversionary activity
- Improved management of perceptions
- Ensuring people know how to report anti-social behaviour

Indicators of success:

- A downward trend in anti-social behaviour incidents
- Communities and residents are safer and feel safer
- Improved public perception of anti-social behaviour and connected issues
- Reduction in the number of repeat anti-social behaviour victims year on year

Protecting Vulnerable People Aims:

- Increased identification and support for vulnerable residents and victims
- Improved early help support mechanisms
- Improved multi-agency awareness and prevention programmes
- Increased proactive response to emerging and high-risk vulnerability concerns
- Improved early intervention and community based assistance
- Enhanced awareness of violent extremism and hate crime

Working Times/Hours of Community Protection Officers

Community Protection Officers form the high visibility uniformed service operating between 8am and 10pm, seven days per week. There are 10 CPOs on the establishment, this equates to 50 shifts over the seven-day period covering 14 hours per day.

The CPOs contract allows CPOs to work between 7am and 12pm with a four-week notice period for shift pattern changes. The service benefits from the goodwill of officers to change their shift pattern at late notice on occasions to accommodate service and community needs.

Mobility of Community Protection Officers

CPOs were based in the localities they served when the service first started at Police stations and are now based at Kirkby Council Offices. CPOs have one dedicated CPO vehicle, use the IT vehicle (566) most days/evenings, and utilise a van (520) from the depot Friday evening to Sunday evening.

Area based Community Protection Officers

When the service originally started, 16 CPOs covered the district and were ward based (16 wards) and predominantly worked evenings and weekends. The same challenge exists today as per when the service first started regarding coverage on rest days, holidays and sickness when having area-based CPOs.

Equally, without having area-based CPOs there is a challenge in recognising the perpetrators (by only coming into contact periodically rather than daily); of building community intelligence and confidence with residents who may not report without dedicated officer support.

Members were further informed about the priority areas in the District:

- Sutton Town Centre - One dedicated Community Protection Officer.
- Leamington Estate - One concentrated Community Protection Officer (also covers Sutton on a demand request basis).
- Carsic Estate - One concentrated Community Protection Officer (also covers Sutton on a demand request basis).
- Kirkby East (Coxmoor) - Two concentrated Community Protection Officers (also cover Kirkby on a demand request basis).
- Hucknall East (Butlers Hill and Broomhill) - Two concentrated Community Protection Officers (also cover the rest of Hucknall/Rural on a demand request basis).
- Hucknall Town Centre - One concentrated Community Protection Officer (also covers the rest of Hucknall on a demand request basis).

A recent change to the Community Protection Service was introducing a 'duty CPO' to receive demands, allocate or undertake initial visits and problem solving.

Community Protection Officer Powers

Members agreed that providing Community Protection Officers with appropriate powers in the community was vital to them contributing to improving community safety in the District. The Panel acknowledged some of the powers currently vested in the CPO's, as follows:

- Require the name and address of a person who has committed a criminal offence or acting in an anti-social manner;
- Confiscate alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco from young people;
- Require the removal of abandoned vehicles;
- Require a person to stop drinking in a designated public place and leave;
- Issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, littering, graffiti and fly posting;
- Issue a penalty notice for disorder for:
 - The sale of alcohol to a person under 18
 - Buying or attempting to buy alcohol by a person under 18
 - Consumption of alcohol by a person under 18
 - Wasting police time or giving a false report

- Behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress;
- Housing enforcement action against Council tenants;
- Statutory nuisance powers for bonfire and noise nuisances etc.

Triage Service and Out of Hours Response

The Panel were advised that the Council's Community Safety triage service was only operational during working hours. The service was designed to enable designated staff to assess cases as they came in and referring them to the most appropriate place i.e. Community Protection Team, Anti-Social Behaviour Caseworkers or the Complex Case Team. After 5.00pm, any calls/emails are diverted to the CCTV control room and are picked up by the 'out of hours' officers.

The airwave radios are still operational at these times including a duty phone that ensures contact can be made at all times to assess cases and target resources accordingly.

Community Protection Service Restructure

Early into the review, Members were informed that their discussions and concerns would be considered as part of a wider Community Safety review/restructure. The restructure involved introducing two new Team Leader positions within the Community Protection Service, ensuring increased flexibility and improved strategic management.

Members were informed that the recruitment process for the new Team Leaders had already begun, with the first Team Leader recruited and undertaking the role already. The second Team Leader post was currently going through the recruitment process and was due to be finalised within weeks.

During the review, Members expressed concerns regarding capacity due to vacancies within the team. Following a successful open day for the recruitment of Community Protection Officers, three officers had been appointed and were due to begin training with the Police imminently. It was remarked upon that having received an offer from the Chief Inspector to undertake the necessary training of the new Community Protection Officers; it was testament to the ongoing success of partnership working by partners through the Integrated Hub.

During the restructure, it had become apparent that there was synergy between the roles of the Council's Place and Wellbeing Team and the Community Protection Service and with that in mind, a revised Service Manager, Place and Wellbeing position had been established with responsibility for Place and Regeneration, Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Community Safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of Scrutiny Panel B approved the following set of recommendations at the 15 October 2020 meeting. Rationale regarding the reasons for each recommendation is provided below.

The Panel note the importance of and endorse the ongoing restructure and recruitment exercise within Community Safety, ensuring the Community Protection Service is fully resourced

During the course of the review and as a result of the open co-operation of the team, Members of the Panel acknowledged the capacity issues due to vacancies and the structure in place. Reviewing this structure was considered pivotal in ensuring the service continued to meet the needs of the community.

Full consideration is given to the equipment needs of Community Protection Officers to ensure that the on-street presence and back office support maximises efficiency in both reporting and monitoring casework.

The importance of ensuring Community Protection Officers were both protected and had the capacity to efficiently log cases and referrals, Members agreed that the service would benefit from reviewing the effectiveness of current equipment with a view to upgrade as appropriate.

The Panel's views on mobile, hand-held technology to enable digital input reports and data in situ (rather than having to return to the main office) was taken on board during the review by the Director and this service upgrade had been embedded in the second phase of the Council's Digital Transformation Programme for progression.

The Community Protection Service focuses on four core priorities of:

- *Providing a visible presence*
- *Dealing with anti-social behaviour issues*
- *Working collaboratively with key partners*
- *Ensuring public safety in Ashfield*

whilst maintaining a flexible approach to holistic issues.

The core priorities of the Community Protection Service have been heavily considered by Members through the course of the review, as a key objective agreed in the terms of reference. After considering both the challenges and demands of the service, Members agreed the above core priorities. All four are considered intrinsic to the continuation of an effective Community Protection Service.

As part of a wider engagement initiative, a managed consultation exercise is undertaken to understand public perception of the Community Protection Service. This would also allow the Council an opportunity to raise awareness of the Community Protection Service and its priorities.

Members identified the importance of ascertaining and managing public perceptions of the Community Protection Service, as a key discretionary service. It was agreed that this could be achieved through undertaking a public consultation exercise involving residents and businesses in Ashfield but again, the new structure would need time to establish itself before any meaningful data could be captured.

This could form part of a wider engagement exercise as Community Safety works more closely with the Community Engagement team. This would also allow a clear opportunity for the Council to raise awareness of the service and its priorities within Ashfield.

Delegate the power to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, to ensure all options are explored regarding the use of powers accredited to Community Protection Officers.

Members acknowledge that options for optimising the use of accredited CPO powers should be explored following discussions during the review with Officers, the Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council. Finding the balance between deterrent and enforcement is crucial. This work should be completed by the Director of Place and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety.

The Community Protection Service continue to expand on partnership working with the Police and other key partners, including training opportunities and intelligence sharing, to ensure a more integrated approach to community safety in the District.

The Panel considered collaborative working with our partners and the Integrated Hub as part of the review process. Members were encouraged by the benefits that the Hub had provided so far, such as the Police offering training for the CPOs, and would consider this a key factor in improving the Community Protection Service and effectively working towards the core priorities.

Following the review and restructure of Community Safety, the Community Protection Service topic be referred back to scrutiny as appropriate in 2021.

The Panel recognise that following the restructure, it will take some time to be able to analyse the outcomes. Therefore, due to the strategic importance of Community Safety, the Panel agreed that it should come back to Scrutiny for a progress update in 2021.

CONCLUSION

Scrutiny Panel B undertook a comprehensive review of the Council's Community Protection Service, focusing on the objectives and requirements of the service and examining outcomes and achievements. Members of the Panel recognised the wide-ranging demands placed upon the service but applauded the hard work of all of the staff, particularly the Community Protection Officers. Members were greatly encouraged to see that some of those ideas discussed at the Panel Meetings have been used to inform the review/restructure of Community Safety.

Lastly, the Panel would like to thank all who contributed to the review including the Community Protection Officers, Service Manager, Portfolio Holder and Leader. Members acknowledge both the importance of the service, the role it plays in the community and the outcomes it has achieved.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Ashfield District Council's vision for a safer and stronger Ashfield by 2023 is set out within the new Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023. This includes ensuring the foundations for a good quality of life are in place and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

This will be achieved through prioritising both an effective response to issues but also working on prevention and behavioural change. To achieve this, the Council will continue working with our partners to ensure people feel safe and are safe by reducing levels of crime and disorder and antisocial behaviour.

Legal:

There are no direct legal implications detailed in this report.

Finance:

There are no direct financial implications contained in this report.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
The Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023 identifies ensuring a safer and stronger Ashfield by 2023 as a key priority. Capacity, expectations, resourcing and adapting to new social issues could be viewed as ongoing risks.	The restructure of the service to meet different needs provides the mitigation necessary to the effective delivery of the service. In addition, the recommendations provided in this review suggest further options for improvements.

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications resulting from this report.

Environmental/Sustainability

There are no direct environmental or sustainability implications resulting from this report.

Equalities:

There are no direct equality implications resulting from this report.

Other Implications:

There are no other implications resulting from this report.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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Report To:	CABINET	Date:	1 December 2020
Heading:	THE HOUSING OMBUDSMANS COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE		
Portfolio Holder:	CLLR TOM HOLLIS		
Ward/s:	N/A		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

To provide Cabinet with an overview of the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code and the requirements for the Council to ensure full compliance.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is requested to :-

- Acknowledge the requirements within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code
- Approve the introduction of a Housing Complaints Policy
- Authorise the self-assessment to be published on the Council's website by the 31st December 2020

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code forms part of the statutory membership obligations set out in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. Landlords must comply with the requirements of the Code or offer an explanation to the Ombudsman as to why they do not.

A self-assessment has been undertaken against the Complaint Handling Code which the Housing Ombudsman published in July 2020. Currently the Council is not meeting all of the requirements of the Code; therefore the new policy and a number of actions are required to be implemented in readiness for the requirement to publish the self-assessment by the 31st December 2020.

Alternative Options Considered

To not comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Not recommended, as the requirement is mandatory for the Housing Department as a regulated service to follow and adhere to.

Failure to follow and adhere to the code could result in interventions and sanctions by the Regulator of Social Housing including the Housing Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders. In addition to this, the Ombudsman has a new power to carry out wider investigation where there is evidence of a 'systemic failing' and where this the case, it will be referred to the appropriate regulatory body (Regulator of Social Housing). This could lead to the housing stock being removed from landlords.

Detailed Information

Following on from the tragic events at Grenfell in June 2017, it has been evidenced that some Social Housing Landlords do not take sufficient notice, action or learning from complaints made to them by their customers. The Government and Regulator of Social Housing have made it clear to Housing Providers that they must improve the quality of their complaints handling and resolution and indicated the need for change in the Housing Green Paper published in 2018.

Following on from this the Housing Ombudsman Service has published a new Complaint Handling Code in July 2020. This provides a high-level framework to support effective handling and prevention of complaints alongside learning and development.

The Code is part of the new powers in a revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme and sets out the requirements to ensure that landlords respond effectively to complaints effectively and fairly. As well as setting out expectations for boards, senior executives and front line staff, the Code will help tenants in knowing what to expect from their landlord when they make a complaint and how to progress their complaint.

All Landlords have been asked to self-assess against the Code by the 31st December 2020 and publish their results.

This differs considerably from the Local Government Ombudsman best practice and is a mandatory requirement placed on housing providers, introduced to ensure greater consistency across landlords' complaints procedures following the five core themes in the Government's Social Housing Green Paper (a new deal for social housing).

Whilst this policy does not in any way impact on how the Council wishes to operate its complaint procedure, it is mandatory for the Housing Department to follow it or risk intervention by the housing regulator which could ultimately lead to the stock is removed from the Council.

The key areas of the Code are:

- Universal definition of a complaint
- Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring that tenants are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- The structure of the complaints procedure – only two stages necessary and clear time-frames set out for responses

- Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a tenant-focused process
- Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and putting things right
- Demonstrating learning in Annual Reports

A self-assessment has been undertaken against the Complaint Handling Code which the Housing Ombudsman (HOS) published in July 2020 alongside the current Council's complaints policy.

Some of the differences between the requirements of the new Code and the existing policy include:-

- The current definition of a complaint is different to that of the new definition
- Timescales for stage 1 and 2 are different
- There is no reference to the Housing Ombudsman in the Council's policy
- The complaints policy must be available online
- A persistent and unreasonable complaints policy must be available to set out how persistent and unreasonable complaints will be managed
- A reasonable adjustments policy is required to comply with the Code and the Equality Act 2010. This should be published alongside the complaints policy
- Social Media - Facebook/twitter must be used as an additional complaint channel
- Complainant satisfaction levels need to be measured via a survey to identify any issues or trends and service improvements
- A report must be presented to Cabinet on an annual basis alongside the Housing Ombudsman's landlord report
- Learning and improvements collected and actioned need incorporating into the annual Housing Report to tenants.
- An officer responsible for dealing with complaints must be identified and empowered
- A complaint handling failure order can be served on the Council if it fails to follow its complaints procedure.
- The Housing Ombudsman has the ability to refer the Housing Provider to the Regulator of Social Housing based on the gravity and pattern of complaints being made.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Fully meets the corporate plan priority of leading a customer focussed service, which engages our tenants and adheres to all regulatory standards.

Legal:

Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Service is a mandatory requirement for the Housing Department.

Finance:

Design and production of the housing complaints policy and associated documents can be met from existing resources and budgets. Awareness sessions can be facilitated internally within existing resources.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Significant reputational risk - A 'complaints handling failure order' could be served on the Council.</p> <p>This is an order to rectify within a given timescale and referral to the Regulator of Social Housing</p> <p>This could result in the removal of the housing stock from the Council.</p>	<p>Full compliance with the Complaint Handling Code as set out in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.</p>

Human Resources:

n/a

Environmental/Sustainability

n/a

Equalities:

This is strengthened by the requirement to publish the Council's Reasonable Adjustments Policy on the intranet.

Other Implications:

(if applicable)

Reason(s) for Urgency

n/a

Reason(s) for Exemption

n/a

Background Papers

Please refer to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code self-assessment form.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
Self-assessment form – Ashfield District Council
Pre Policy/Cabinet Approval (November 2020)

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint? <i>An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.</i></p> <p><i>The Policy needs to include this definition. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include this in the Housing Services Complaints Policy.</i></p>		x
	<p>Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?</p> <p><i>No - This needs including in the policy. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include in new Complaints Policy.</i></p>		x
	<p>Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?</p> <p><i>These need including in the policy. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include in new Complaints Policy.</i></p>		x
2	Accessibility		
	<p>Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?</p> <p><i>Currently not all accessibility routes are available. These need outlining in the policy. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to include all above accessibility routes in the Policy.</i></p>		x
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p> <p><i>There is an overview of the policy and procedure on the Council's website, but there is no copy of the policy online. Service</i></p>		x

	Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to publish the Policy on the Council’s website.		
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy? <i>No, the Council has a Reasonable Adjustments information on the intranet for employees but no Policy available online for residents. Director - Resources and Business Transformation to review and update the Councils Reasonable Adjustments’ Scheme by the 31st December 2020.</i>		x
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? <i>We do this to a degree in that we update tenants with information in Ashfield Matters (the residents’ newsletter). We also discuss complaints with the Tenants Gateway at meetings. We need to look at how we can regularly advise residents e.g. include information with rent statements etc. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to promote Complaints Policy more widely to tenants.</i>		x
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? <i>Projects and Partnerships Lead Officer in place for Housing.</i>	x	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	x	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	x	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? <i>Our Tenants Gateway act as the Tenant Panel and operate as one of the Designated Person should a tenant want to refer the complaint to this stage prior to going to the Housing Ombudsman.</i>	x	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	x	
	Does the final stage response set out residents’ right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? <i>The outcome of stage 2 correspondence gives the tenant, the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman Service and outlines their right to refer the matter.</i>	x	

	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	x	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 out of 34 complaints received between 1 April 2019 and 21 July 2020 were resolved at Stage 1 • 2 out of 34 complaints received between 1 April 2019 and 21 July 2020 were resolved at Stage 2 • 1 out of 34 complaints contacted the Housing Ombudsman 	Stage 1	
4	Communication		
	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process? <p><i>Residents are contacted initially to discuss their complaint and are then kept in contact during the duration of the complaint until the outcome has been determined. The resident is then written to formally with the outcome of the complaint and the options for taking this further, if dissatisfied.</i></p>	x	

	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?	x	
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?	x	
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?	x	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one? <p><i>Based on last 16 months - see above.</i></p>	91	
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two? <p><i>Based on last 16 months - see above</i></p>	6	
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one 32 out of 34 are within timescales • Stage one (with extension) None • Stage two 3 out of 3 are within timescales • Stage two (with extension) None 	94% 100%	

	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?	N/A	
	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?	N/A	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p><i>33 out of 34 complaints resolved without going to stage 2 complaint level, however no formal satisfaction survey is undertaken to determine residents' satisfaction with the process. We need to introduce the survey as part of the revamped process to measure this. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to introduce a satisfaction survey which will be sent out with the complaint responses. Satisfaction levels to be monitored and reported.</i></p>		X
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	<p>Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?</p> <p><i>The one case where information was supplied to the Housing Ombudsman Service was within agreed timescales.</i></p>	x	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	
6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	<p>Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?</p> <p>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services will include the following wording in the Complaints Policy:</p> <p><i>'Anyone can make a complaint, including the representatives of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We can take complaints from a friend, relative or an advocate if you have given them your consent to complain for you.'</i></p>		x
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	N/A	

	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	0 N/A									
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A									
7	Outcomes and remedies										
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? <i>As part of the investigation, where we identify that the complaint is justified or partially justified we will take the appropriate steps to put things right. We may need further information from managers to evidence what other steps we are taking to put things right.</i>	x									
8	Continuous learning and improvement										
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? <i>See table below:</i>										
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Feedback</th> <th>How we have improved our service</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Repairs need to be undertaken in a timely manner and with timescales agreed with tenant.</i></td> <td><i>We are committed to maintaining a high quality service by completing repairs within the agreed timescales set out in our procedures and as agreed with our tenants.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Officers need to ensure that financial details are correct when making amendments.</i></td> <td><i>When matters relate to finance/payments and changes to these, officers have put further checks in place to ensure that these details are correct.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Commitments need to be kept when agreeing to actions with tenants.</i></td> <td><i>When making commitments to visit, call or respond in a timely manner we have put arrangements in place to ensure officers meet these commitments or if they are unable to do they</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Feedback	How we have improved our service	<i>Repairs need to be undertaken in a timely manner and with timescales agreed with tenant.</i>	<i>We are committed to maintaining a high quality service by completing repairs within the agreed timescales set out in our procedures and as agreed with our tenants.</i>	<i>Officers need to ensure that financial details are correct when making amendments.</i>	<i>When matters relate to finance/payments and changes to these, officers have put further checks in place to ensure that these details are correct.</i>	<i>Commitments need to be kept when agreeing to actions with tenants.</i>	<i>When making commitments to visit, call or respond in a timely manner we have put arrangements in place to ensure officers meet these commitments or if they are unable to do they</i>		
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		<i>keep the tenant informed of progress.</i>		
	<i>Effective communication is key in terms of keeping tenants updated when dealing with tenancy matters.</i>	<i>We have highlighted the importance of clear communication with officers so that our tenants are kept up to date with any ongoing tenancy matter.</i>		
	<i>How do we share these lessons with:</i>			
	<p>a) <i>residents? Tenants Gateway, Ashfield and Tenants Residents Forum, Annual Report (website) and Ashfield Matters.</i></p>			
	<p>b) <i>the board/governing body? Information is shared through Housing DMT on a quarterly basis and a report is scheduled to go to Cabinet on an annual basis.</i></p> <p>c) <i>in the Annual Report? Some information is shared in our Annual Report which goes out as part of Ashfield Matters and is located on the website.</i></p> <p>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to ensure that all lessons are reported to tenants in the Annual Report.</p>			
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p><i>The Code has led to a review of the Complaints Policy/Procedure.</i></p>		x	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p><i>Updated our Revised Policy to take into account the Code's recommended best practice.</i></p> <p>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services has reviewed the new Complaints Policy to take into account the Code's recommended best practice.</p>			



Ashfield

DISTRICT COUNCIL

November 2020

Housing Services Complaints Policy



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Introduction

Ashfield District Council's Housing Department is committed to providing excellent housing services and aims to give the best customer service possible.

If we have failed to provide a service or a customer is dissatisfied with the way in which a service has been provided by the Housing Department (or by contractors providing a service on behalf of the Council), we want to know about it.

In most cases we hope and will strive to resolve these with the member of staff you have been dealing with in a quick and efficient manner. We will also use your feedback to help us make improvements. Where this is not possible, we have a formal complaints policy to fully consider your complaint.

We will look into the issue, provide an explanation and an apology (where it is appropriate to do so) with a view to improving our services. We will aim to resolve the issue quickly.

This policy explains:

- What we mean by a complaint
- Who can make a complaint
- How you can make a complaint
- How we will deal with your complaint
- What you can do if you are unhappy with our response
- How we use your feedback to improve our services

What is a Complaint?

The Housing Ombudsman Service which oversees housing complaints define a complaint as:

“ An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Housing Department, its own staff or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents ”

You can complain about things like:

- Delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- Failure to provide a service
- Our standards of service
- Our failure to follow proper procedure
- Unreasonable behaviour by an Officer

What can't I complain about?

We will not treat certain issues as complaints and where this is the case, we will tell you by setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

Some failures of service will be dealt with outside of the complaints process and will be considered a service request.

Here are some things we can't deal with through our complaints procedure:-

- If you ask us for a service – such as reporting a repair or anti-social behaviour.
- Matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy.
- Where legal proceedings have been started or where decisions have been made, or actions taken that have followed due process, are legal but that you disagree with.
- Where either the Council's, yours or a third party's insurer is determining liability.
- Any issue which is agreed Council Policy, where the policy has been followed.
- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over 6 months ago except where there are health and safety issues or safeguarding concerns.
- Complaints about Elected Member's conduct. These are handled through a separate process.
- Freedom of Information requests (FOI) and Data Protection Requests. These are handled through a separate process.
- Issues you have asked the local MP or Councillor to investigate which are to be determined or responded to.

It is also important to note that where you wish to complain about the work or approach of a contractor working on behalf of the Council then you will be directed to that company's own complaints and liabilities process. In such instances the Council will work as an advocate on your behalf.

Who can complain?

Any tenant or leaseholder who feels that they have had a poor service from us or from someone providing the service for us and have tried to get the problem solved by speaking to someone in the relevant department.

We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We can take complaints from a friend, relative or an advocate. If you ask someone to make a complaint on your behalf, we will ask you formally authorise it for the security of your personal information.

If you are not a tenant or leaseholder of the Council you cannot use this procedure to complain about someone who is a tenant or leaseholder.

Anonymous complaints

If you complain to us but can't give us your name, we will not be able to deal with your complaint under the complaints procedure. However, we will ensure steps are taken to deal with the issue. We cannot however, provide feedback if we do not have any contact details.

How do I complain?

You can make a complaint by:

- Completing our online form on our website: www.ashfield.gov.uk/residents/housing/making-a-complaint
- Email us at: housingadmin@ashfield.gov.uk
- Telephone by calling: 01623 608888
- Writing to us at: Ashfield District Council, Broadway, Brook Street, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts, NG17 1AL
- Or via social media:



facebook.com/ADCAshfield



[@ADCAshfield](https://twitter.com/ADCAshfield)

If you do feel that it is necessary to make a complaint about our housing service it is extremely helpful if you can explain what you are concerned about and how you would like it resolved; as this may mean we can rectify the issue for you in a much quicker timescale and to your satisfaction.

Help with making your complaint

Some complainants may require help in preparing their complaint and the Council may be able to help you to do this, where appropriate to do so.

Please see www.ashfield.gov.uk for further details or contact us on 01623 608888 for more information.

Equality Statement: Ashfield District Council is committed to equality of opportunity in service delivery. We will not treat you any differently because of your gender, race, disability, religion or belief, sexuality or age.

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to accommodate a person's needs in in line with the Councils' Reasonable Adjustments' Scheme and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

If the complaint is not clear when received, the complainant will be contacted so further details can be obtained.

There are two stages:

Stage One Complaint – Formal response from the Head of Service or Service Manager

We will:

- Acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
- We will endeavour to speak to the complainant in order to get a full understanding of the complaint and how it can be rectified.
- Give you a full response to your complaint within 10 working days and where this is not possible, we will send you a letter explaining reasons for the delay and give a date when you can expect a full response.
- The response will include the contact details of the Head of Service/Service Manager with an offer to clarify any points made within the reply and the offer of a discussion. The response will conclude by offering stage two of the Complaints procedure for those complainants that remain dissatisfied with the reply they received under stage one of the process.



Stage Two Complaint – Review and response by the Director of Housing and Assets (Deputy CEO)

If you remain dissatisfied after a stage one response, you can escalate the complaint to stage two for an internal review. You will need to explain the reasons why you are dissatisfied. When escalating to stage two it is helpful to outline why you are dissatisfied with the solution or response provided at stage one as this will allow the Director to look at alternative solutions you would like to see, alongside reviewing the original complaint or issue.

We will:

- Acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
- Give you a full response within 20 working days where this is not possible, we will send you a letter explaining reasons for the delay and give a date when you can expect a full response.
- This is the final stage of our procedure and the complaint will be closed.
- If you remain dissatisfied after a stage two response, you can submit a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service, details of which will be included in the stage two response.

Stage Three – Housing Ombudsman Service

If you are not satisfied with how we have handled your complaint then you may wish to complain directly to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint. They will usually only consider a complaint after it has been through our complaints procedure as they expect you to bring your concerns to our attention first and give us a chance to put things right.

The Housing Ombudsman Service details are: Tel - 0300 111 3000, email info@housingombudsman.org.uk. Postal address: Housing Ombudsman, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ. More information can be found on their website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Designated Person

As an Ashfield District Council tenant, you can ask for your complaint to be considered by a Designated Person. A Designated Person can be an MP, a local Councillor or a Tenant Panel. It is for you to decide who you would want to consider your complaint. The aim of the Designated Person is to help resolve complaints locally. There is no obligation on you to refer your complaint to the designated person. If you prefer, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) directly. In these circumstances the HOS will only consider the complaint if eight weeks have passed since the stage two decision.

Dealing with Persistent Unreasonable Complainants

The purpose of our complaints procedure is to find out what went wrong and try to put things right for the future.

There are some actions and behaviours that are considered unreasonable.

Examples of these types of behaviour could include:

- Refusing to co-operate in the complaints process.
- Refusing to accept that the issues raised are not a function of the Housing Department of Ashfield District Council.
- Changing the basis of a complaint part way through the process.
- Repeated or excessive complaints which are disproportionate to the problem.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.
- Submitting repeat complaints after complaints processes have been completed or repeatedly raising issues which occurred over 6 months ago.
- Refusing to accept the decision and repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.

We will not tolerate abusive and threatening behaviour in the reporting or investigating of complaints. If this occurs the case will be passed to a senior officer to investigate. Once a way forward has been determined a warning letter is sent out to the customer which explains our position in relation to the contact we have received. This letter will set out a guide for the individual to follow when contacting us and explains the potential consequences if the guide is not followed.

Restrictions may be put in place which could include the following;

- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with employees per week or month.
- Offering a restricted time slot for necessary calls.
- Limiting the customer to one medium of contact (telephone, letter, email etc.).
- Requiring the customer to communicate with one named employee.
- Requiring any personal contacts to take place in the presence of a witness, and in a suitable location.
- Declining to register and process further complaints about the same matter.

Where restrictions are put in place they will be reviewed at appropriate intervals. However where it is apparent that the options listed above have been ineffective, and a complainant continues to act in an unreasonable manner, we will consider what further action is available to us, including legal action.

Putting things right

We are committed to using the complaints process as a learning experience and, where appropriate, will put things right. This can be done in a variety of ways including an apology, an explanation, preventative action, payments for loss or damage, or in exceptional circumstances compensation. Where appropriate, we will seek to make amendments to policies or procedures or to the way a service is provided and will do so in a timely manner.

If something has gone wrong through this process, we will acknowledge this and set out the actions that we have already taken or intend to take to put things right.

Any remedy offered will reflect the extent of any and all service failures, and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result.

The Director of Housing and Assets/Deputy CEO has discretion to:-

- Decide how to respond to a complaint
- Decide on the remedy to resolve the complaint
- Decide if the complaint is unreasonable or falls outside the policy

Data Protection

Any information you give us is covered by the Data Protection guidelines (Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations). This means that we will:

- Keep personal information and secure.
- Keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.
- Not share it with other organisations without your permission, unless the law says we must.

We will keep effective records of all complaint investigations and outcome to inform service improvements.

Monitoring Feedback/Satisfaction

We are committed to improving service delivery through the complaints reporting and feedback process. If you make a complaint you will be encouraged to provide feedback by completing a satisfaction survey on how your complaint was handled and your satisfaction with the outcome. These learning outcomes will be used to help us to improve services.

In addition the Housing Department's complaints performance feedback is reported to various management and tenant groups on a quarterly basis and also to Councillors and in a report to tenants on an annual basis.

Housing Contact

The Performance and Projects Lead officer is responsible for co-ordinating the recording of complaints, ensuring compliance with the timescales and stages within the policy.

Service Managers co-ordinate the resolution of the complaints working with their teams to do this before sharing the information with the Performance and Projects Lead Officer.

The Performance and Projects Lead Officer can be contacted as follows:-

**Ashfield District Council,
Broadway, Brook Street
Sutton in Ashfield
Notts
NG17 1AL**

Tel: 01623 608888

Email: housingcomplaints@ashfield.gov.uk



Ashfield

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Self-assessment form – Ashfield District Council – Post Policy/Cabinet Approval

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code			
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?</p> <p><i>An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.</i></p>	X	
	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?	X	
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents?	X	
2	Accessibility		
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	X	
	<p>Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?</p> <p>This will be uploaded when approved action – action for IT/website updater.</p>	x	
	<p>Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?</p> <p>No, the Council has a Reasonable Adjustments information on the intranet for employees but no Policy available online for residents. Director - Resources and Business Transformation to review and update the Councils Reasonable Adjustments' Scheme by the 31st December 2020.</p>		X

	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process? Raised with Tenants Gateway. Will publish on the website and in Ashfield Matters.	X	
3	Complaints team and process		
	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post? <i>Projects and Partnerships Lead Officer in place for Housing.</i>	x	
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	x	
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	x	
	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making? <i>Our Tenants Gateway act as the Tenant Panel and operate as one of the Designated Person should a tenant want to refer the complaint to this stage prior to going to the Housing Ombudsman.</i>	x	
	Is any third stage optional for residents?	x	
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service? <i>The outcome of stage 2 correspondence gives the tenant, the contact details of the Housing Ombudsman Service and outlines their right to refer the matter.</i>	x	
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?	x	
	At what stage are most complaints resolved? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 out of 34 complaints received between 1 April 2019 and 21 July 2020 were resolved at Stage 1 • 2 out of 34 complaints received between 1 April 2019 and 21 July 2020 were resolved at Stage 2 • 1 out of 34 complaints contacted the Housing Ombudsman 	Stage 1	

4	Communication		
	<p>Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?</p> <p><i>Residents are contacted initially to discuss their complaint and are then kept in contact during the duration of the complaint until the outcome has been determined. The resident is then written to formally with the outcome of the complaint and the options for taking this further, if dissatisfied.</i></p>	x	
	<p>Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?</p>	x	
	<p>Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?</p>	x	
	<p>Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?</p>	x	
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?</p> <p><i>Based on last 16 months - see above.</i></p>	91	
	<p>What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?</p> <p><i>Based on last 16 months - see above</i></p>	6	
	<p>What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stage one 32 out of 34 are within timescales</i> <i>Stage one (with extension) None</i> • <i>Stage two 3 out of 3 are within timescales</i> <i>Stage two (with extension) None</i> 	94% 100%	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?</p>	N/A	
	<p>Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?</p>	N/A	
	<p>What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction</p> <p><i>33 out of 34 complaints resolved without going to stage 2 complaint level, however no formal satisfaction survey is undertaken to determine residents' satisfaction with the process.</i></p>	N/A	

	<i>We need to introduce the survey as part of the revamped process to measure this. Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to re-introduce a satisfaction survey which will be sent out with the complaint responses. Satisfaction levels to be monitored and reported.</i>		
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service		
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days? <i>The one case where information was supplied to the Housing Ombudsman Service was within agreed timescales.</i>	x	
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	N/A	
6	Fairness in complaint handling		
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	X	
	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	N/A	
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?	0 N/A	
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	N/A	
7	Outcomes and remedies		
	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right? <i>As part of the investigation, where we identify that the complaint is justified or partially justified we will take the appropriate steps to put things right. We may need further information from managers to evidence what other steps we are taking to put things right.</i>	x	
8	Continuous learning and improvement		
	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints? <i>See table below:</i>		

Feedback	How we have improved our service		
<i>Repairs need to be undertaken in a timely manner and with timescales agreed with tenant.</i>	<i>We are committed to maintaining a high quality service by completing repairs within the agreed timescales set out in our procedures and as agreed with our tenants.</i>		
<i>Officers need to ensure that financial details are correct when making amendments.</i>	<i>When matters relate to finance/payments and changes to these, officers have put further checks in place to ensure that these details are correct.</i>		
<i>Commitments need to be kept when agreeing to actions with tenants.</i>	<i>When making commitments to visit, call or respond in a timely manner we have put arrangements in place to ensure officers meet these commitments or if they are unable to do they keep the tenant informed of progress.</i>		
<i>Effective communication is key in terms of keeping tenants updated when dealing with tenancy matters.</i>	<i>We have highlighted the importance of clear communication with officers so that our tenants are kept up to date with any ongoing tenancy matter.</i>		
<p><i>How do we share these lessons with:</i></p> <p><i>a) residents? Tenants Gateway, Ashfield and Tenants Residents Forum, Annual Report (website) and Ashfield Matters.</i></p>			
<p><i>b) the board/governing body? Information is shared through Housing DMT on a quarterly basis and a report is scheduled to go to Cabinet on an annual basis.</i></p> <p><i>c) in the Annual Report? Some information is shared in our Annual Report which goes out as part of Ashfield Matters and is located on the website.</i></p>			

	<p>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services to ensure that all lessons are reported to tenants in the Annual Report.</p>		
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p> <p><i>The Code has led to a review of the Complaints Policy/Procedure.</i></p>	<p>x</p>	
	<p>What changes have we made?</p> <p><i>Updated our Revised Policy to take into account the Code’s recommended best practice.</i></p> <p>Service Manager – Housing Management and Tenancy Services has reviewed the new Complaints Policy to take into account the Code’s recommended best practice.</p>		

Agenda Item 7



Report To:	CABINET	Date:	1 December 2020
Heading:	2020/21 FORECAST OUTTURN FOR GENERAL FUND, HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME AS AT SEPTEMBER 2020.		
Portfolio Holder:	CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES – COUNCILLOR RACHEL MADDEN		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

To summarise the Council's forecast financial outturn position to 31 March 2021 compared to the latest approved budgets for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme. The forecast financial outturn is based on the actual financial activity to the 30 September 2020 and forecast costs and income from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is requested:

- (1) To note the current forecast outturn for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme 2020/21.
- (2) To approve the budget adjustments outlined in section 3.1, Table 3.
- (3) To recommend to Council the proposed addition to the Capital Programme as set out in Section 6.3.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations to report to those charged with Governance the financial position.

Alternative Options Considered

None

Detailed Information

- 1.1 Table 1 below shows the current revised budget based on original budget approved by Council on the 5th March 2020 and Council approved budget adjustments to 30th September 2020. It sets out the 2020/21 net revenue forecast outturn position based on actual income and expenditure to 30 September 2020 and forecast income and expenditure for the remainder of the year to 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 The current General Fund forecast is £1.601m underspend, taking into account the in-year Covid-19 grant received to date. Details of significant variances are detailed in the commentaries below the table.

General Fund	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Current Forecast Variance	Previous Forecast Variance	Change
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Directorate					
Chief Executive Officer	540	529	(11)	0	(11)
Legal and Governance	1,783	1,817	34	(41)	75
Resources and Business Transformation	(931)	101	1,031	468	563
Place and Communities	9,844	9,852	8	264	(256)
Housing and Assets	2,137	2,300	163	121	42
Total Net Directorate Expenditure	13,373	14,599	1,226	812	414
Net Recharges	(2,781)	(2,781)	0	0	0
Capital Financing	2,454	2,252	(202)	(130)	(72)
Net Interest Payable	216	25	(191)	0	(191)
Net Revenue Expenditure	13,262	14,095	833	682	151
Funding	(12,886)	(15,320)	(2,434)	(1,543)	(891)
Net Revenue Expenditure before transfer to(from) earmarked reserve	376	(1,225)	(1,601)	(861)	(740)
Transfer to(from) earmarked reserve	(376)	(376)	0	0	0
Net Revenue Expenditure after transfer to(from) earmarked reserve	0	(1,601)	(1,601)	(861)	(740)

1.3 Chief Executive (£11k forecast underspend)

The Chief Executive's budgets are forecast to be underspent due to savings on the Civic Events budget (£8k) due to events not being held during the pandemic and £3k forecast savings across the wider Directorate.

1.4 Legal and Governance (£34k forecast overspend)

The main forecast variances in Legal and Governance are:

- Directorate wide salary costs - £15k forecast underspend.
- Legal Services - £41k forecast under achieved income due to reduced charges to MDC for shared legal services, as a result of vacancies.
- Democratic Services – £8k forecast overspend due to a required unbudgeted upgrade to mod.gov. system software.

1.4 Resources and Business Transformation (£1,031k forecast overspend)

The main forecast variances within the Resources and Business Transformation Directorate are:

- ICT – £23k forecast overspend on salaries due to the vacancy factor not being achievable. £4k forecast underspend on printing costs due to increased agile working. £61k forecast overspend due to increase in telephone and internet charges due to the Covid-19 pandemic as previously reported.
- Revenues and Benefits – £31k forecast underspend on salaries due to vacancies partially off-set by £15k forecast overspend in overtime charges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, £15k forecast underspend on postages and £2k forecast underspend on car mileage as the visiting officers are doing less mileage due to COVID restrictions and £8k forecast under-recovery of fees and charges. Net uncommitted new burdens grant monies of £70k reduced down from £200k previously as additional resources are now forecast to be needed to meet service needs.
- £312k overspend forecast on Housing Benefits due to reflecting the outcome of the 2019/20 final claim in the forecast for 2020/21 as previously reported.
- £291k forecast loss of income as Housing Benefits Overpayments invoices have reduced due to COVID, which means the overpayments are being collected through benefits rather than invoicing not previously reported.
- £17k increase in income for NNDR cost of collection allowance and £185k forecast loss of income due to reduced NNDR and council tax costs raised due to Covid-19, increasing from £85k previously reported, partially off-set by £8k forecast underspend on court fees.
- Investment Properties – Forecast loss of income of £530k, associated with one tenant going onto administration and a new tenant and lease agreement being secured. £34k forecast costs for a re-gear on the Wishaw lease not previously reported. This is being partially off-set by forecast £240k additional rental income for the new investment property purchased in year.
- Commercial Properties - Forecast loss of income of £18k due to a rent free period being agreed to secure a 5 year extension to a lease as previously reported.
- Commercial Development - £31k forecast underspend on salaries due to vacancy.
- Director - £5k forecast overspend on salaries as the vacancy factor will not be achieved.
- HR & Payroll – forecast underspend of £42k on the shared services element partially off-set by £20k overspend in recruitment advertising and £2k forecast overspend for occupational health costs.

- Finance - £35k forecast overspend on salaries due to the vacancy factor not being achieved, £3k forecast overspend on application software
- Corporate Support – forecast overspend of £12k on salaries as the vacancy factor will not be achieved.
- £62k Covid-19 grant income received in 2019/20 being moved from reserves into 2020/21 budget. This along with the Covid-19 grant funding received in year (see paragraph 1.9) is off-setting the loss of income and additional expenditure relating to Covid-19 across all Directorates as previously reported.

1.5 Place and Communities (£8k forecast overspend)

The main forecast variances within the Place and Communities Directorate are:

- Community Protection - £192k forecast underspend due to vacancies across the service area.
- Environmental Maintenance – £75k forecast overspend. £44k due to implementation of pay award, and non-achievement of vacancy factor, £20k on Vehicle hire to maintain social distancing (Covid related), £11k net overspend on a number of items across the service area.
- Twin Bin Scheme - £11k forecast overspend on equipment purchases.
- Waste Services - £53k forecast overspend on pay due to implementation of pay award and overtime, partly off-set by £10k forecast underspend on repairs.
- Trade Waste - £19k forecast underspend on cost of disposals due to lower tonnage; reduced forecast income from disposal of £31k; and £9k forecast reduction in income for collections.
- Transport and Depot - £31k forecast overspend, due to £15k overspend on pay due to implementation of pay award, reduced income from lower MOTs £6k, Covid related expenditure £7k, and Canteen net overspend of £3k due to closure as a result of Covid-19.
- Place & Wellbeing – Employee costs £33k forecast underspend due to staff vacancies.
- Leisure Centres Payments to Contractors - Forecast overspend £136k due to additional support to SLM during Covid-19 lockdown including a further £100k (£50k each for August and September) support recently agreed to facilitate the re-opening of the Leisure Centres from August.
- Locality income – £19k forecast underachieved income due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on use of outdoor sports facilities.
- Markets - £57k forecast underachieved income due to Covid-19, and £22k over spend on Supplies & Services as a result of expenditure on measures to counter the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Planning and Regulatory Services - £10k underachieved income due to lower fees from Land Charges, offset by additional income of £20k due to the delay in transfer of Building Control to Erewash and £129k forecast underspend on staffing as a result of staff vacancies, both in Planning and Environmental Health.
- Regeneration - £56k forecast underspend due to late implementation of service, after bringing it back 'in house'.
- Directorate wide – Forecast £13k overspend being net of other over and under spends.

1.6 Housing and Assets (£163k overspend)

The main forecast variances within Housing and Assets Directorate are:

- Homelessness Bed & Breakfast - £8k forecast overspend due to providing accommodation under Covid-19 regulation introduced by the Government
- Community Centres - £16k forecast loss of income while closed under Covid-19

- Car parking - £109k forecast loss of income
- Asset Management - £14k forecast overspend on central office costs associated with changes required for safe working due to Covid-19
- Full establishment, pay award and agency costs anticipated to overspend by the year end of £28k
- Strategic Housing - £9k forecast underspend while reviewing analogue to digital equipment switchover and £3k forecast underspend due to changes to car allowances.

1.7 Capital Financing (£202k forecast underspend)

This is the revenue charges that are a consequence of the historic and existing capital programme. The forecast underspend is £130k on the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges due to slippage on the capital programme in 2019/20, as previously reported, and £72k underspend on interest due to borrowing being undertaken at the end of the previous year being at lower interest rates than budgeted.

1.8 Net Interest payable (£191k forecast underspend)

This is the net position of the interest earned on investment balances and the interest paid on third party balances that are managed and utilised by the general fund in managing its cash flow, mainly HRA balances, S106 balances and insurance balances. The overall underspend is due to the reduction in interest rates due to Covid-19 pandemic.

1.9 Funding (£2.434m forecast over achievement)

This increase in funding against budget is due to the central government grant received in year to cover costs and loss of income associated with Covid-19. A fourth tranche of funding has been received of £784k to add to £1.543 previously reported as being received in year. Some of the costs and loss of income to be covered from the grant include loss of income in relation to NNDR and Council Tax, however this will impact in future years due to the treatment under collection fund accounting. Therefore the impact of Covid-19 will continue to be updated and excess grant will be moved to reserves to mitigate these future year impacts. An allocation may be made to the HRA to contribute towards additional costs and loss of income associated with Covid-19. Clarification is awaited as to whether the grant funding can be used to meet HRA pressures.

The forecast also includes an additional £107k funding expected in relation to the first claim made against the sales fees and charges compensation scheme which covered April to July.

1.10 Transfer to (from) earmarked reserves - (net transfer to reserves £376k)

Appendix 1 details the approved earmarked reserves movements for 2020/21 to date and the impact on earmarked reserve balances.

2. **General Fund Savings/Efficiencies Monitoring 2020/21**

2.1 The 2020/21 budget included the proposed savings and efficiencies as detailed in Table 2 below. The forecast achievement of these savings is identified, on the following basis:

- saving has been achieved in full (green),
- saving forecast to be achieved but not in full, revised forecast savings is detailed in the 'Forecast Saving' column (amber),

- saving will not be achieved (red).

Table 2 - General Fund Savings/Efficiencies Monitoring 2020/21

Saving/Efficiency	Comments on achievement	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Achieved Saving	Forecast Saving Shortfall
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Base Budget Review		302	302	0
HRA - reviewed contribution		100	100	0
Increase Vacancy Factor by 0.5%		72	72	0
Cease Trade Waste arrangement with MDC	Some waste is being collected by a third party contractor, forecast saving reduced to £30k, to be keep under review.	35	30	5
Building Control – Outsource	Delay in transfer of service resulting in costs of service being incurred, which has been partially off offset by income generated. Saving forecast to be £66k	75	66	9
Regeneration Service (Updated Proposal)		90	90	0
Transport Review - Phase 1&2		49	49	0
Lifeline Service - transfer to Notts City Homes		58	58	0
HR/Payroll structure review		35	35	0
Stationery (including paper) saving (20%)		10	10	0
Pest Control - additional income to break even	Income forecast to be slightly less due to Covid-19 impact – saving forecast to be £9k but needs to be monitored for recovery impact.	13	9	4
Depot Canteen - income target	The canteen has been closed due to covid-19, therefore the income target will not be achieved. However reduced costs are contributing to wards the savings target.	5	2	3

Democratic Services restructure		14	14	0
Environmental Health restructure		37	37	0
Finance Review		9	9	0
Community Foundation – Grants		5	5	0
Ashfield Business Centre		33	33	0
Reduce revenue ICT budget (capitalisation)		40	40	0
Kingsmill Reservoir Car Parking income	Impacted on by free parking until September given across the district under Covid-19 – saving forecast to be £1.5k.	3	1.5	1.5
Additional rental income from Police	Rent increase not yet confirmed.	2	2	0
TOTAL		987	964.5	22.5

- 2.2 Since previously reported the additional rental income from the police has been achieved and the canteen savings target has been partially achieved. This has increased the savings achieved by £4k since previously reported. As outlined in the previous monitoring report the position outlined above has been included in the forecast outturn reported in section 1 of the report. It is anticipated where deliverability of the savings have been impacted on by Covid-19, the loss on achieving the full savings will be met from the Covid-19 grant.

3. General Fund Budget Adjustments

- 3.1 Approval is requested for the following budget adjustments to recognise additional grant income received in year and create the corresponding expenditure budgets:

Table 3 – Budget Adjustments 2020/21

Description	£'000
Covid19 emergency funding	(2,327)
Covid19 emergency costs expenditure budget *	2,327
New burdens funding for the delivery of the Covid-19 business support grant schemes	(130)
New burdens expenditure budget for costs of delivery of the Covid-19 business support grant schemes	130
New burdens funding – various R&B initiatives	(69)
New burdens expenditure budget for costs of delivery of the R&B initiatives	69
Test & Trace Self Isolation Support Payments - administration funding	(37)
Test & Trace Self Isolation Support Payments - administration costs expenditure budget	37
Re-opening High Streets Safely funding	(115)

Re-opening High Streets Safely costs expenditure budget	115
Covid-19 LA Compliance & Enforcement funding	(74)
Covid-19 LA Compliance & Enforcement expenditure budget	74
Homelessness Grant	(202)
Homelessness expenditure budget	202
Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant	(837)
Rough Sleeper Initiative expenditure budget	837
Syrian Vulnerable Person Refugee Scheme Grant	(175)
Syrian Vulnerable Person Refugee Scheme Payment to contractors	175

4. Summary for Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- 4.1 Table 3 sets out the 2020/21 HRA forecast outturn position based on actual income and expenditure to September 2020, compared to the revised budget.
- 4.2 Details of any significant variances incorporated within the forecast outturn are detailed in the commentaries below the table.

Table 4 - Net Revenue Forecast to 31 March 2021 by Directorate

Description	2020/21	2020/21	Current	Previous	Change
	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Forecast Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income					
Rents, Charges and Contributions	(24,471)	(24,435)	36	30	6
Interest and investment income	(210)	(60)	150	100	50
Total Income	(24,681)	(24,495)	186	130	56
Expenditure					
Repairs and Maintenance	7,799	7,517	(282)	(113)	(169)
Supervision and Management	4,446	4,433	(13)	(7)	(6)
Interest payable and similar charges	3,548	3,548	0	0	0
Rents, Rates, Taxes and other charges	192	187	(5)	(1)	(4)
Depreciation and impairments of fixed assets	3,736	3,736	0	0	0
Debt Management Costs	45	45	0	0	0
Contribution to the Bad Debt Provision	240	240	0	0	0
Transfer to Major Repairs Reserve	22	22	0	0	0
Capital expenditure funded by the HRA	2,589	2,589	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	22,617	22,317	(300)	(121)	(179)
Net Cost of HRA Services	(2,064)	(2,178)	(114)	9	(123)

4.3 Rents, Charges and Contributions

Tenant rental income is forecast to be £19k underachieved due to delayed property sign ups and property moves and community centre income is forecast to be underachieved by £17k, both due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

4.4 Interest and Investment Income

Reduced Interest rates in the banking sector will reduce the average annual interest rate on the HRA balances. Currently forecasting a reduction of £150k but this is open to fluctuation dependant on the economy.

4.5 Repairs and Maintenance

Forecast underspend of £282k across several budget areas. This includes vacancy savings across the Housing Repair Operatives, Estate Services and the Responsive Maintenance management sections. A reduction in materials and subcontractors used in planned, responsive and void repairs due to Covid-19 lockdown. It is unlikely that subcontractors will be able catch up the lost time on planned works in the remainder of the current financial year as their capacity is limited. This is being reviewed each month taking into account the responsive element of the service.

4.6 Transfer to the Major Repairs Reserve

Since the previous forecast, Cabinet approved the budget changes to the Capital Programme on the 15th September 2020, which in turn approves a revised budget for the MRR in line with the current forecast.

Additional costs of £58k have been incurred due to Covid-19 in terms of a payments to the existing contractor to contribute towards on-going costs during the lockdown to ensure the contract remains live and ensure their ability to resume works upon the easing of lockdown; these cost are being off-set against the underspend detailed above.

4.7. Capital Expenditure funded by the HRA

Since the previous forecast, Cabinet approved the budget changes to the Capital Programme on the 15th September 2020 which in turn approves a revised budget for the HRA contribution to the capital programme.

5. HRA Savings/Efficiencies Monitoring 2020/21

5.1 The 2020/21 HRA budget included the proposed savings and efficiencies as detailed in Table 5 below. The forecast achievement of these savings is identified, on the following basis:

- saving has been achieved (green),
- saving forecast to be achieved but actions are still required to secure the saving (amber),
- saving will not be achieved (red).

Table 5 - General Fund Savings/Efficiencies Monitoring 2020/21

Saving/Efficiency	£'000
Housing Repairs Review - staffing efficiency	13
Dynamic Resource Scheduler efficiency - less use of subcontractors	60
Increase Vacancy Factor by 0.5%	25
TOTAL	98

5.2 The forecast full achievement of these budgeted savings is included within the forecast outturn reported in section 4 of the report. There has been no changes since previously reported.

6. **Capital Programme Summary 2020/21**

6.1 Table 6 below details the current approved Capital Programme for 2020/21 as at 30th September 2020. This is based on the original budget approved by Full Council on the 5th March 2020 adjusted for slippage from the 2019/20 Capital Programme and other amendments to 2020/21 Capital Programme as approved by Full Council up to 30 September 2020.

Table 6 - Capital Programme Summary 2020/21

Description	Actual and Commitments as at 30 September 2020 £'000	Current Approved Capital Programme as at 30 Sept 2020 £'000	Variance to Current Approved Capital Programme £'000
Housing Revenue Account			
<i>Decent Homes Schemes</i>			
Management Fee	0	581	(581)
Catch Up and Future Major Works	1,170	3,163	(1,993)
Service Improvements	2	72	(70)
Contingent Major Repairs	27	115	(88)
Exceptional Extensive Works	36	190	(154)
Kirkby & Rural	-80	0	(80)
Disabled adaptations - Major adaptations	66	178	(112)
Disabled adaptations - Minor adaptations	56	339	(283)
Sub Total	1,277	4,638	(3,361)

<i>Other Housing Revenue Account Schemes</i>			
Affordable Housing developments	0	730	(730)
Investment in Additional Council Dwellings in Hucknall	0	4	(4)
Investment in New or Existing Dwellings	246	1,595	(1,349)
Hucknall Infill Sites	0	1,750	(1,750)
Housing Vehicles	675	700	(25)
Maun View Sutton-in-Ashfield	0	2,606	(2,606)
Officers` IT for Agile Working (HRA)	41	103	(62)
Other Housing Revenue Account Schemes (less than £100k)	176	117	59
Sub Total	1,137	7,605	(6,468)
Total HRA	2,415	12,243	(9,828)
General Fund			
Green Space Improvements	0	366	(366)
Health and Safety works for Kirkby Offices	0	312	(312)
Hucknall Car Parks (Combined)	0	115	(115)
Hucknall Leisure Centre	6	118	(112)
Improvement Grants 1996 Act Disabled Facility Grant	306	1,177	(871)
Investment Properties	3,565	26,494	(22,929)
Kings Mill Reservoir (The King and Miller to Kingfisher)	350	650	(300)
Kings Mill Reservoir Car Park Expansion	1	196	(195)
Kirkby Leisure Centre	646	4,200	(3,554)
Kirkby Park and Play Areas	58	165	(107)
Lindleys Lane Play/Youth Area	0	178	(178)
Officers' IT for Agile Working (General Fund)	47	103	(56)
Piggins Croft Car Park	5	153	(148)
Purchase of Vehicles	298	325	(27)
Titchfield Park Brook	19	319	(300)
Towns Fund Projects	0	1,425	(1,425)
Other General Fund Schemes (less than £100k)	134	702	(568)
Total	5,434	36,998	(31,564)
Grand Total	7,849	49,241	(41,392)

6.2 The current forecast for the year 2020/21 is the approved budget of £49.241m.

6.3 Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council that £28k be added to the Capital Programme to fund rewiring costs at Urban Road and the Depot to facilitate optimisation of the Digital Services Transformation Programme. To be funded via external borrowing.

As part of the preparatory work undertaken by ICT, it has been identified that the current wiring infrastructure across the Urban Road and Northern Depot sites is old and does not meet current standards of Cat6 or Cat5e. External cabling companies have reviewed and tested the wiring and in places it requires replacing to ensure the new LAN equipment will work at its fullest capacity.

This work will see most of the networking equipment (the edge switches) moved from the Comms Room to locations across the building (similar to the top floor), freeing space and tidying the Comms Room. This will remove the requirement for the Comms Room to include gas suppression which can be removed.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The revenue and capital funding included within this report supports delivery of the priorities in the Corporate Plan.

Legal:

This report ensures compliance with the Council's approved Financial Regulations.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	As set out in the detailed information section of the report.
General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to spend within approved budgets could impact on the financial sustainability of the Council.	Financial monitoring reports to CLT and Cabinet. Financial Regulations. Financial Management training of Budget Holders and Managers.

Human Resources:

No implications

Environmental/Sustainability

No implications

Equalities:

No implications

Other Implications:

No implications

Background Papers

Annual Budget and Council Tax 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy Update to Council 5th March 2020 2019/20

Forecast Outturn for General Fund, HRA and Capital Programme as at Jan 2020 to Council 23rd April 2020

Draft Outturn 2019/20 Accounts Report to Cabinet 21 July 2020
2020/21 Forecast outturn for General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital
Programme as at July 2020 Report to Cabinet 15 September 2020.

Report Author and Contact Officer

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Summary of Reserve Movements 2020/21 (General Fund)

	Balance at	Approved		Balance at
	1st April 2020	Contributions	Withdrawals	31 August 2020
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Earmarked Reserves				
District Planning Enquiry Fund	(375)	0	250	(125)
Elections	(11)	(54)	0	(65)
Joint Use Maintenance Fund	(201)	0	0	(201)
Asset Renewal	(773)	0	30	(743)
Corporate Change Reserve	(1,384)	(200)	484	(1,100)
Insurance Related Funds (Inc Risk Mngt)	(417)	(75)	0	(492)
Revenue Grant Reserve	(1,757)	0	459	(1,298)
Brexit Reserve	(51)	0	0	(51)
Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) Reserve	(76)	0	0	(76)
NNDR Equalisation Reserve	(1,430)	0	0	(1,430)
Commercial Property Investment Reserve	(2,300)	(600)	0	(2,900)
Economic Development and Place Reserve	(209)	0	30	(178)
Licensing Reserve	(110)	0	0	(110)
Covid-19 Grant Reserve	(62)	0	62	0
Joint Crematorium Reserve	(486)	0	0	(486)
Other Reserves	(29)	(930)	20	(939)
Total Earmarked Reserves	(9,670)	(959)	1,335	(9,294)
General Reserve	(6,675)			(6,675)

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Report To:	CABINET	Date:	1st December 2020
Heading:	GREEN SPACES CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME		
Portfolio Holder:	CLLR D. MARTIN, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR STREETS, PARKS & TOWN CENTRES		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	Yes		
Subject to Call-In:	Yes		

Purpose of Report

To note and agree the proposed site-specific green space improvement projects for the funding approved at Council on 22 October 2020 and to note progress on the Green Space Improvement Programme.

Recommendation(s)

1. To agree the proposed site-specific green space improvement projects.
2. To note progress on the Green Space Improvement Programme.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The improvements have been identified following a review of the play area annual inspection reports and site walkovers with the Leader and ward members.

The sites are all neighbourhood sites which have not received investment for several years and require improvement. Improvements will include additional pieces of play equipment, bins and signage, footpath works and tree planting.

These sites are a valuable community resource, particularly during the pandemic when people have been making greater use of their local green spaces. These improvements will provide significant investment into green spaces this financial year, complementing the existing commitment of over £1.5m spend by the end of March next year.

Alternative Options Considered

Not to agree the proposed allocation of improvements – **not recommended**, each of the improvements have been identified in consultation with the Leader and / or ward members. A number of sites require intervention this financial year to ensure that the quality of the District's green space provision remains high.

Detailed Information

Green Space Improvement Programme

An ambitious programme of investment will see over £1.5m invested into green spaces this financial year. A number of projects are due to start on site in December this year, or early in the New Year 2021, which include:

- completion of the stone-carved mining statues and additional car parking at Brierley Forest Park;
- installation of the new play areas at Sorrel Drive and Skegby Road Recreation Ground;
- improvements at West Park;
- and the brook restoration and landscape works at Titchfield Park in Hucknall.

As well as this, a wide variety of Projects across the District have been completed so far this year and these include:

- restoration of the viaduct and dredging work at Kings Mill Reservoir and refurbishment of the Mill Waters Café;
- the new outdoor gym facility at Jacksdale Recreation Ground, footpath improvements and increased capacity for the main car park in the village;
- refurbishment of the play area at Nabbs Lane Park, Hucknall;
- resurfacing of Rights of Way on the western pit tip site in Kirkby;
- installation of play and fitness equipment at Annesley Recreation Ground;
- and the refurbishment of the play area at Titchfield Park, Kirkby which is due for completion by early December.

Additional improvement works

The improvement works and cost estimates for each project are detailed below. Final project costs will be allocated from the allocation of £366k (£193k Capital Receipts and £173k S106 funding) which has been made available to meet the cost of these investments.

1.0 Healdswood Recreation Ground		Cost Estimate
1.1	Toddler play area. –Remove redundant play panels and replace with new alternative.	
1.2	Paint existing toddler equipment within the fenced area.	
1.3	Repair and paint all fencing around toddler play space and boundary between the recreation ground and the Health centre – (To include the entire length along Mansfield Road approx. 150 lin/m)	
1.4	Replace maintenance gate off Mansfield Road.	
1.5	Planting at the entrance off Mansfield Road.	
1.6	Existing teen area: Remove bark pits infill with topsoil, turf and lay grass safety mats to existing equipment.	
1.7	Provide and install three pieces of new teen equipment amongst the exiting to complement play provision.	

1.8	Remove redundant basket swing frame.	
1.9	Make repairs as necessary to existing equipment	
1.10	Bin and signage audit and remove / replace as necessary	
		£32,500
2.0 Riley Recreation Ground		Cost Estimate
2.1	Infill bark pit with topsoil. Turf area and lay grass safety mats to existing unit.	
2.2	Provide and install new play unit similar to the climbing unit at Annesley Rec with grass mat safety surface.	
2.3	Replace play binoculars with new play item.	
2.4	Make repairs as necessary to existing equipment.	
2.5	Bin and signage audit and remove / replace as necessary	
		£24,300
3.0 West Park		Cost Estimate
3.1	Forster Street to Southwell Close footpath – resurface footpath	
3.2	Repaint entrance gate and fencing from Forster Street.	
3.3	Remove low-level balance / maze and resurface area with crushed 10mm limestone to dust.	
3.4	Provide and install single toddler play unit and safety surface.	
3.5	Review footpath lighting arrangements with the Academy / NCC. Explore option to install lighting columns between Forster Street entrance and Southwell Close.	
3.6	Make repairs as necessary to existing equipment	
3.7	Bin and signage audit and remove / replace as necessary	
		£35,500
4.0 Nuncargate Recreation Ground		Cost Estimate
4.1	Provide and install three piece of teen play equipment into grass mats safety surface	
4.2	Incorporate one new piece of Junior play equipment and grass matt safety surfacing to the area north of the toddler play space.	
4.3	Remove existing basket swing frame and replace with standard swings.	
4.4	Replace swings and slide within fenced toddler area.	
4.5	Renew wet pour surface to toddler equipment.	
4.6	Repaint fencing around toddler play area.	
4.7	Replace self-closing gates.	
4.8	Make repairs as necessary to existing equipment.	
4.9	Bin and signage audit and remove / replace as necessary.	
4.1	Create bike track surface around existing BMX jumps.	
4.11	Improve boundary planting.	
4.12	Replace ring barked trees. Replace with Cricketers willows with Sherwood Forest Trust to deliver event. Include contribution towards the Cricketers Bats event hosted by the Landscape Partnership	
4.13	Upgrade existing and provide new footpaths around site	
4.14	Review boundary chain link / concrete post fencing.	

4.15	Improve entrance / create feature entrance	
		£146,000
5.0 Rowan Drive		Cost Estimate
5.1	Construct / upgrade 68 metres of crushed stone footpath off Rowan Drive.	
		£8,000
6.0 Glen View/ Warwick Close		Cost Estimate
6.1	Supply and install piece of play equipment and safety surfacing.	
		£15,000
7.0 Titchfield Park Play, Hucknall		Cost Estimate
7.1	Allocation to play equipment budget	
		£70,000
	Total cost estimate	£331,300

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Cleaner and Greener - Parks and Open Spaces:

1. Review the standard of all parks, play areas and sports facilities, rationalising to ensure there are better quality sites that are fit for purpose.
2. Continue to improve parks and green spaces with a rolling programme of investment.

Legal:

There are no legal implications contained within this report.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	No implications
General Fund – Capital Programme	A financial envelope of £366k (£193k Capital Receipts and £173k S106 funding) is available to meet the cost of these investments.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	No implications
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	No implications

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Overspend of the additional budget.	All projects will be managed through the Council's project management system to ensure that they remain within budget. A site specific budget has been

	identified which also include a contingency sum to manage unforeseen items.
Meeting the March 2021 deadline	Working with the procurement unit to seek the appropriate route to market within the available timescale. Regular dialogue with the contractors and suppliers to monitor and manage any supply chain risks. Work closely with the Neighbourhoods & Environment team to identify where works can be undertake in-house to reduce costs and reduce delivery timescale.

Human Resources:

No HR issues identified.

Environmental/Sustainability

Additional tree planting will support the Council's commitment to carbon reduction. Any timber products specified will be from sustainable sources, all redundant metal play equipment is sent for recycling. Where applicable locally sourced materials and contractors will be secured.

Equalities:

No issues have been identified.

Other Implications:

Not applicable.

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable.

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report 13th October 2020

GREEN SPACES CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

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Report To:	Cabinet	Date:	1st December 2020
Heading:	BUSINESS SUPPORT AND TOWNS FUNDING UPDATE		
Portfolio Holder:	CLLR M. RELF, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLACE, PLANNING AND REGENERATION		
Ward/s:	ALL WARDS		
Key Decision:	No		
Subject to Call-In:	Yes		

Purpose of Report

To note the updates regarding support to businesses during the pandemic and progress on the Towns Fund Accelerated Projects.

To agree the principle of utilising Compulsory Purchase Powers where required for projects being developed through the Towns Fund or other funding sources.

Recommendation(s)

1. To note the contents of the report.
2. To note the principle of utilising Compulsory Purchase Powers if required for projects being developed through the Towns Fund or other funding sources.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To ensure that Cabinet is updated on the measures being taken to support businesses through the pandemic and progress on the Towns Fund Accelerated projects.

To ensure that the Council is able to utilise all available powers to ensure that projects can be taken forward and to support discussion and negotiations with landowners and developers, as well as strengthening funding bids.

Alternative Options Considered

Not to agree to utilise Compulsory Purchase Orders – **Not recommended** as this would reduce the Council's options and weaken its negotiating position.

Detailed Information

1. Support to businesses during the pandemic

Grant funding

Businesses affected by the pandemic can now access the Local Restrictions Support Grant and the Discretionary Local Business Support Grant Schemes. The Schemes seek to support those in the non-essential retail, hospitality, leisure, entertainment, personal care and accommodation sectors and those who directly supply these sectors where they have been significantly impacted by the trading restrictions. Businesses can access the grant application on the Council's website and payments are usually made within a few days. 471 applications have been received to date and by 19th November 95 applicants had been paid to a value of £317k. Details of each grant available are provided below:

Local Restrictions Support Grant

Support for businesses in hospitality, hotel, bed & breakfast and leisure sectors that have remained open under Tier-2 and Tier 3 restrictions, funding of up to £2,100 for 4-weeks. (Time Period: 16th Oct to 4th Nov, 2020)

Local Restrictions Support Grant

Support for businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, beauty and leisure sectors that have legally been forced to close under Tier-3 restrictions, funding of up to £3,000 for 4-weeks. (Time Period: 30th Oct to 4th Nov, 2020)

Local Restrictions Support Grant National Lockdown

Support for businesses that have legally been forced to close under the conditions of the national lockdown, funding of up to £3,000 for 4-weeks. (Time Period: 5th Nov to 2nd Dec, 2020)

Local Restrictions Support Grant (Sector)

Support for businesses that were required to close in March and which have never been able to re-open (for example nightclubs), funding of up to £3,000 for 4-weeks payable from 1st Nov (not backdated).

Additional Restrictions Grant

This is also known as the Local Business Support Grant and it supports businesses affected by closed or reduced trading conditions experienced during national lockdown. This is for businesses that operate in hospitality, accommodation, beauty and leisure sectors, non-essential retail and their direct supply chains. (Time Period: from 5th Nov and ongoing).

High Street support

Four Covid Information Officers and one senior officer have been appointed on temporary contracts until March next year. The posts are funded through the Government's Reopening High Streets Safely and Surge Funding. The officers are visiting businesses and providing information and support to ensure that all high street retailers who have not been forced to close under the national lockdown restrictions are operating in a Covid-secure way. Officers are visiting all premises in the three town centres and shopping areas in local neighbourhoods.

Two temporary Environmental Health Officer posts have also been created to support the team due to the significant increase in workload, during the pandemic.

Hand sanitiser stations and signage are due to be installed in all Council owned pay and display car parks over the next four weeks and the PayByPhone parking app. is also available to pay for parking.

2. Towns Fund

Towns Fund Accelerated Projects

The Council was successful in securing the full **£1.5m** provisionally allocated to Kirkby and Sutton to support delivery of a number of key projects by the end of March next year:

Sutton

The Council will purchase vacant property on Low Street, and renovate and re-purpose it for potential new uses including residential, education and a youth employment hub, working with DWP. The market assessment, condition surveys and valuation estimates are completed and governance is being put in place to commence the negotiation and purchase.

At Portland College the New Start building is being refurbished to create a Centre of Excellence for disabled people in Sport and Theatre. This will provide a community hub with sports facilities available free of charge to local schools and community groups.

The £1.6m project will provide a regional leading, multi-use facility for sports, performance & teaching. Funding from the accelerated Towns Fund helped to meet the funding gap so that the project could start on site in October, with the new facility due to open in spring 2021

Kirkby

Kirkby indoor market – a number of vacant units on the pedestrianised area of Lowmoor Road are being converted to create a small indoor market in the heart of the town centre, attracting more shoppers to the area. The design team are currently drawing up plans for the new market.

Cycling and Walking routes – an initial phase of upgrading off-road walking and cycle routes will be undertaken with design and costings being progressed. We are also developing plans for the main Towns Fund submission which will create a network of safe, accessible routes across the area, connecting residential areas with places of work and visitor destinations.

Sorrel Drive play area – a company has been appointed to supply and install a new play area, with the works due to start on site in early 2021. Following public consultation over the summer, this will create an exciting play experience for children in the local area.

Development sites - a number of sites are currently being considered for purchase, to contribute towards the overall Towns Fund strategy.

Towns Fund - Compulsory Purchase Order

Work has been ongoing during 2020 to develop the plans for the Towns Fund, with the application being submitted in January next year. More than 20 projects are being developed which will support the transformation of Kirkby and Sutton town centres to create thriving towns with high quality housing, leisure and visitor attractions.

As part of our ambitious plans we are working with landowners and developers to support delivery of a number of projects and are considering all options to secure appropriate future uses of sites which will support the town centre. Discussions with developers and landowners have stalled on some of these sites due to differing aspirations. The Council's ambition through the adopted town centre masterplans is to increase residential provision within our town centres, as part of the strategy to increase town centre living and diversify the offer within town centres.

Residential development may not always provide the best economic return for developers and landowners. The Council will negotiate with the developers and landowners so far as possible however there is the possibility that, if negotiations stall, the Council may need to utilise its powers of compulsory purchase. This would be a last resort option.

If the Compulsory Purchase Order process did need to be utilised for a specific site or property this would be reported to Cabinet at each step of the process.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

COVID-19 Impact and Recovery - Open up our town centres safely in response to the recovery from Covid-19 implementing appropriate measures. Ensure that eligible businesses receive COVID-19 grant support funding to help their future sustainability. Ensuring transport is safe (social distancing). Permitting processes and safe practices

Economic Place and Growth - Business Support: Ensure eligible businesses access COVID-19 grants and support.

Strategic Planning and Town Centres - Re-invigorate and re-purpose town centres by bringing empty buildings back into use, enhancing our town teams and diversifying the town centre economy; Capitalise on external funding opportunities, e.g; Future High Streets and Towns Fund, to improve our town centres

Legal:

The Report is for update and noting. The Shared Legal Service will provide assistance throughout the projects to ensure compliance and assist the Council in achieving its objectives.

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	No implications. The revenue grants awarded to businesses are fully funded by the Government’s Local Restrictions Support Grants and the Additional Restrictions Grant.
General Fund – Capital Programme	The Accelerated Towns Fund grant of £1.5m has been received from Government and will fully meet the costs of these projects.
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	No implications
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	No implications

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Project delivery risks including delivery timescales	Risks managed through individual risk assessments for each project.

Compulsory Purchase Order Powers	No risks identified as this is to improve the Council's negotiating position – not to enter into any specific CPOs.
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Human Resources:

No HR issues identified.

Environmental/Sustainability

The Towns Fund Accelerated Projects will contribute to the Council's aim of carbon reduction by providing new and improving existing cycling and walking routes encouraging residents and visitors to reduce car usage and by ensuring that the refurbishment of existing buildings includes renewable energy solutions.

Equalities:

Building and route improvements will be fully accessible. The Newstart building at Portland College will provide state of the art facilities for disabled people to access cultural and sporting opportunities.

Other Implications:

None identified.

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable.

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable.

Background Papers

Not applicable.

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