

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



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

Agenda

Principal Select Committee

Date: **Wednesday, 15th November, 2023**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield**

For any further information please contact:

Lynn Cain

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Principal Select Committee

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Kier Barsby

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Julie Gregory

Councillors:

Jamie Bell

Warren Nuttall

John Smallridge

Jodine Cronshaw

Phil Rostance

FILMING/AUDIO RECORDING NOTICE

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SUMMONS

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



Theresa Hodgkinson
Chief Executive

AGENDA

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- 1. To receive apologies for absence, if any.**
- 2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests.**
- 3. To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 September 2023.** 5 - 10
- 4. Executive Lead Member Update - Universal Credit.**
- 5. Select Work Programme.** 11 - 20

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PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 28th September, 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Kier Barsby in the Chair;

Councillors Jodine Cronshaw, Julie Gregory,
Warren Nuttall and Phil Rostance.

Apology for Absence: Councillor John Smallridge.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor John Wilmott.

PS.4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

PS.5 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 June 2023, be received and approved as a correct record.

PS.6 No Mow May Campaign

Councillor Julie Gregory advised Members that she had raised the topic of 'No Mow May' earlier in the year and had requested Committee to include it on the Work Programme for consideration by Members.

In her opinion, the 'No Mow May' campaign at Ashfield could have seen improvements in its execution and there had been inadequate promotion by the Council prior to it taking place during May 2023. The majority of Ashfield residents were not aware it was happening, and many complaints had been received during the campaign in respect of untidy areas of land and safety concerns regarding visual splays at road junctions as grassed areas became overgrown.

Having spoken with the Council's Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods it became clear that the Environmental and Waste Services Team were currently undergoing a restructure review coupled with the implementation of a new digital case management system. Due to the disruption, the teams were taking a predominantly reactive approach to their workloads and changing priorities which was leaving little time for planned approaches to campaigns/initiatives throughout the year.

The new, digital case management system once fully implemented would allow all works on the District to be tracked with data captured in real time. This would then allow the teams to be better co-ordinated with a more proactive approach to scheduling and prioritising works and resolving complaints.

In respect of the 2024 'No Mow May' campaign, it had been agreed that cutting mazes in areas to be left unmown would be the preferred approach. This method would therefore still allow for green spaces to be adequately liberated, providing spaces for nature whilst tackling pollution and locking away atmospheric carbon below ground.

It had also been agreed that a suitable awareness campaign would be rolled out prior to May with signage being displayed in prominent areas.

To conclude Members were advised that children's play areas, earmarked road junctions and football pitches across the District would still be tended and mown throughout the 'No Mow May' campaign.

Following the presentation, the Chairman thanked Councillor Gregory for her report and welcomed this new approach of individual Members taking a lead on review topics. It was acknowledged that should any other Members wish to embark on a similar exercise, the Scrutiny Research Officer would be more than happy to offer support and guidance as required.

A discussion ensued and Members debated the following:

- a suggestion that the locational search facility on the Council's website in respect of bin collection dates could be extended to offer dates for when grass cutting is programmed to take place
- concerns regarding the visual aspect of mazes being cut into green spaces and issues with weeds proliferating in May following April being a traditionally wet month
- agreement that it would be helpful for Members to alert the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods of any green space areas within their wards that are causing issues and require cutting.

To conclude, the Scrutiny Research Officer also commended Councillor Gregory for her work on the 'No Mow May' review topic and made some suggestions for suitable recommendations to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

RESOLVED that

a) the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration:

- to consider using a maze cutting approach to designated areas of green space and enhanced wildflower planting as part of the Council's commitment to the 'No Mow May' campaign for 2024;

- to ensure that a suitable awareness campaign is rolled out in April 2024 to ensure Ashfield residents are aware of the 'No Mow May' campaign and its potential impact on local areas;
 - for Council to commit to ensuring the ongoing maintenance of children's play areas, road junctions and football pitches during the 'No Mow May' campaign for 2024;
- b) it be agreed that an evaluation and feedback report be submitted to Committee following 'No Mow May' in 2024 to enable Members to assess the success, or otherwise of the campaign.

PS.7 Ashfield District Council - 50 Year Anniversary

The Scrutiny Research Officer introduced the item and informed Members that on 1 April 2024, Ashfield District Council would be commemorating its 50 year anniversary.

The District Council was formed on 1 April 1974, under the Local Government Act 1972, by the merger of Urban Districts of Hucknall, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Sutton-in-Ashfield and parts of Basford Rural District, namely the parishes of Annesley & Felley and Selston.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had suggested that the milestone should be marked in some way and so the item had been included on the agenda to ascertain Members ideas and suggestions for celebrating the event. SLT had acknowledged that this milestone might not be of particular interest to Ashfield residents but more for employees and Members to mark and celebrate the occasion.

The Chairman decided to take the idea around the table and asked all Members and officers present at the meeting for their ideas and suggestions for marking the event as follows:

Ideas/Suggestions

- to organise an event for Officers, Members, past Members and past Chief Executives with slideshow and refreshments
- a celebratory item to be included on the Council meeting agenda scheduled for 15 April 2024
- celebratory signs to be erected at all the Council's market site including showcase stalls with special offers available on the anniversary day
- memory videos/photos to be posted on the Council's website
- publicity comprising all the Council's achievements over the past 50 years (i.e. new leisure centres and Robin Hood line)

- 'Do you remember?' interviews with older, local residents including a special feature on couples married for 50 years or more
- a one day promotional offer of 1974 prices at all the Council's leisure centres
- a promotional 'then and now' publicity campaign with a 1974 fancy dress day at Council facilities across the District on the anniversary date
- magnetic vehicles signs for the Council's fleet stating 'Proudly serving Ashfield for the last 50 years'.
- celebratory afternoon event amalgamated with the Council's 2024 staff recognition awards for all employees.

Following the discussion, the Chairman thanked everyone for their enthusiasm and great ideas and suggestions for marking the historic event.

RESOLVED

that all the ideas/suggestions for marking the 50 year anniversary of Ashfield District Council, as formulated at the meeting, be relayed to the Council's Senior Management Team and Civic Office for further consideration.

PS.8 Select Committee Co-optees

The Scrutiny Research Officer presented the report and asked Committee Members to consider the options relating to the appointment of non-voting co-opted members to the Principal Select Committee and/or the Inward and Outward Focus Select Committees.

Members were advised that the item had originally been submitted to the Committee back in October 2022, but Members at that time thought it would be prudent to leave the decision to new Members of the Committee following the District Elections in May 2023.

The outcome of a recent Audit of the Council's scrutiny function had raised a recommendation that there had not been a recent discussion regarding the potential added value of appointing non-voting co-opted members to the Council's scrutiny committees and that it would be prudent to visit the matter as soon as possible.

With that in mind, Members were advised as to the rules and possible benefits of appointing non-voting co-opted members to committees and a detailed discussion took place.

RESOLVED

that having considered the potential benefits of appointing non-voting co-opted members to the Council's scrutiny committees, it was decided to not pursue this option at the present time and to continue to invite expert witnesses to meetings as and when required.

PS.9 Select Work Programme

The Scrutiny Research Officer gave an update on progress of the Select Work Programme for 2023/24 and asked Members to consider two further topics suggested by Councillor Lee Waters, for possible inclusion on the Work Programme going forward:

1. Public Toilets in Town Centres

Many residents had been in contact with Members, particularly in Hucknall, regarding the possible provision of new public toilets in town centres and whether any of the Town's funding could be utilised to provide the capital investment to build them.

Members discussed the suggestion and acknowledged the previous anti-social behaviour issues experienced in relation to public toilets (and the subsequent repair costs) and the lack of mainstream funding to maintain any new facilities going forward. As an alternative it was suggested that indoor toilet provision could be provided to the public by working in partnership with other local businesses/facilities in the area.

2. Reinstatement of Community Funding for Councillors

A request to reinstate a community fund for individual Members to distribute had firstly been submitted as a motion to Council but this had been refused due to a lack of any financial assessment. It was then subsequently submitted as a potential Work Programme topic for Members' consideration.

During deliberations, the Committee raised concerns regarding the reputational implications of agreeing to such a fund at this present time due to recent allegations in the press against certain Members.

In addition, Cllr. Phil Rostance also asked if a further topic could be added to the Work Programme in respect of an analysis of the Council's current property assets with a view to considering the repurposing or sale of any unused properties, once an inventory had been established.

RESOLVED

- a) that the following three topics suggestions for adding to the Select Work Programme for 2023/24, be declined at this present time
 - Public Toilets in Town Centres
 - Reinstatement of Community Funding for Councillors
 - Inventory of Council Property Assets;

- b) as a result of a) above, delegated authority be granted to the Scrutiny Research Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, to consider the merits/suitability of each potential topic further and if warranted, a report be submitted back to Committee for further consideration.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Chairman.

Report To:	PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE
Date:	15 NOVEMBER 2023
Heading:	SELECT WORK PROGRAMME
Executive Lead Member:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the Principal Select Committee with an update regarding progress against the select work programme 2023-24. Members are also asked to provide some further details to some items on the select work programme to inform the review process. Finally, Members are asked to consider any additional topics to be added to the select work programme.

Recommendation(s)

The Principal Select Committee is recommended to:

- a. Review the progress made to date against the select work programme 2023-24.
- b. Consider any additional topics to be added to the select work programme.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Established in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, it is the responsibility of the Principal Select Committee to maintain overview and management of the select work programme.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered. Managing the select work programme is a key responsibility of the Principal Select Committee as set out in the Constitution.

Detailed Information

Please see below the select work programme 2023-24.

SELECT WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

Topic	Rationale/Description	Update	Lead Committee/Approach
<p style="text-align: center;">Ashfield District Council – 50 Year Anniversary</p>	<p>Ashfield was formed in April 1974 with the merger of the urban districts of Hucknall, Kirkby in Ashfield, Sutton in Ashfield, and rural areas. In 2024, Ashfield will celebrate its 50 Year Anniversary. Select Committee Members would like to explore how the Council can recognise this milestone.</p>	<p>This item was included on the agenda for the September 2023 meeting of the Principal Select Committee. Members took part in a detailed discussion and agreed on a list of ideas that will be sent forward to the Council’s Senior Management Team and Civic Office.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Principal Select Committee Review</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Damp and Mould</p>	<p>Damp and mould in both private rented and social housing has been under the spotlight for some time, with mainstream media running campaigns highlighting and naming landlords in regular news bulletins. The Council have recognised a significant increase in contact from customers requesting inspections and reporting damp and mould. Members are looking to work with the appropriate Officers to understand and contribute to the Council’s policies and procedures regarding damp and mould.</p>	<p>This item has been reviewed by the Inward Focus Select Committee over the past months. The Committee has held two meetings on this topic and welcomed collaboration from the Assistant Director of Housing Operations and the Team Manager for Environmental Health (Residential).</p> <p>Members have had opportunity to review the developing draft Damp and Mould Policy and a guidance document produced for tenants on damp and mould related issues. The Committee provided feedback on both documents and the processes the Council undertakes tackling damp and mould issues.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Inward Focus Select Committee Review</p>

<p>Christmas Lights</p>	<p>The Council's contract for Christmas Lights in the District is approaching renewal. Members would like to undertake a wholesale review of the Council's provision and understand and contribute to the requirements within any new contract.</p>	<p>This item is under review by the Outward Focus Select Committee. The Committee has held one meeting so far, welcoming attendance from the Assistant Director of Regeneration who explained to Committee the Council's current position relating to Christmas lights provision as well as future plans for procuring an updated provision.</p> <p>The topic will return to the Outward Focus Select Committee's agenda in the New Year as the Council looks to secure a new provision of Christmas lights following the end of the previous contract. Members will provide feedback on this process to assist in guiding the provision for years to come.</p>	<p>Outward Focus Select Committee Review</p>
<p>Homeless Prevention Strategy</p>	<p>Members are set to take part in the consultation process for the Council's developing Homeless Prevention Strategy 2024-2029.</p>	<p>This item was added as an opportunity for Members to take part in the consultation process for the developing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029. The Outward Focus Select Committee held a meeting in October 2023 and welcomed attendance from the Housing Strategy Lead Officer who delivered a detailed presentation to Members covering homelessness and rough sleeping.</p> <p>Members used the opportunity to hold a question and answer session and provided feedback on the key priorities set out within the developing strategy.</p>	<p>Outward Focus Select Committee Consultation</p>

General Waste Bins	Members agreed it would be beneficial to scrutinise the Council's general waste bins, including the criteria for household eligibility for larger capacity waste bins. Members would also like to understand how the Council encourages recycling and composting waste to reduce the amount of general waste needing disposal.	This item has yet to be considered by any Select Committee. The Principal Select Committee is asked to consider the most appropriate method to proceed with this topic, including what information and evidence is needed.	TBD
Universal Credit	Members of the former Overview and Scrutiny Committee conducted a review of the Impact of Universal Credit in 2020. Members are also aware that the various impacts continue to be felt and monitored by the Council, and would like to extend an invitation to the appropriate Executive Lead Member(s) to provide an update on	The Executive Lead Member for Social Housing and Assets, along with the Assistant Director of Housing Management, will be in attendance at the November 2023 meeting of the Principal Select Committee to provide Members with an update in relation to universal credit as requested by the Committee.	Principal Select Committee – Executive Lead Member Update
Funding Programme Updates	Members of the Principal Select Committee would like to extend an invitation to the appropriate Executive Lead Member(s) to provide an update on the Council's many projects underway through secured funding.	This item has yet to be considered by the Principal Select Committee. It is intended for an invitation to be extended to the Executive Lead Member for Growth, Regeneration, and Local Planning to attend a meeting of the Committee in the New Year. Members are asked to identify exactly what information they would like the Executive Lead Member to provide to the Committee at this time.	Principal Select Committee – Executive Lead Member Update
Parks and Green Spaces on New Estates	Members have expressed an interest in exploring the upkeep of parks and green spaces on new estates. This includes the relationship the Council maintains with developers and estate management companies to ensure these spaces are maintained long-term.	This item has yet to be considered by any Select Committee. The Principal Select Committee is asked to consider the most appropriate method to proceed with this topic, including what information and evidence is needed.	TBD

No Mow May	<p>Members discussed the recent 'No Mow May' initiative and recognised the benefits of the initiative. However, Members did raise some concerns over the wider impacts, including road safety. Members would like to receive assurances for similar future plans that steps will be taken to ensure safety.</p>	<p>In recent months, the Vice Chair of the Principal Select Committee undertook a desktop review of recent 'No Mow May' campaigns took part in by the Council – exploring the purpose and successes of the campaigns, as well as identifying any issues relating. A meeting was held with the Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods who provided further context on the campaigns and the challenges faced by the Council.</p> <p>An update report was delivered by the Vice Chair to the Principal Select Committee in September 2023, where Members agreed a set of recommendations to be presented to Cabinet in the New Year ahead of the next campaign.</p>	Principal Select Committee – Member led desktop review.
Performance	<p>The Principal Select Committee considers Council performance quarterly to inform work programme topic selection and provide feedback on performance indicators.</p>	<p>To be considered by the Principal Select Committee in line with wider corporate performance reports.</p>	Principal Select Committee - Standing item – quarterly.
Crime and Disorder	<p>Crime and disorder is considered either annually as a one-off meeting of the Principal Select Committee or through review work undertaken by the Inward Focus Select Committee or Outward Focus Select Committee.</p>	<p>To be considered as part of a standalone item or as part of a related review being undertaken by any Select Committee.</p>	TBD

Budget	Budget is considered annually by the Principal Select Committee in line with the annual budget and tax setting process.	To be considered in line with the Council's wider budget and tax setting process in the New Year.	Principal Select Committee - Standing item – annually.
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SELECTING NEW WORK PROGRAMME TOPICS

Scrutiny is a member led function, driven by Member commitment to improve services and the lives of residents. Committee Members are asked to consider the following potential sources (among others) of suitable work programme topics:

- Issues of community concern
- Service delivery concerns
- Council outcomes, objectives, and priorities
- Partnership objectives
- The Forward Plan
- Peer challenge outcomes
- Performance
- Emerging policy and legislation

When approving work programme topics, Members are asked to use effective processes to select topics that will contribute towards the best and most effective programme. This means having clear terms of reference in mind and considering many different sources of information to help inform topic selection.

This involves approving items to the work programme:

- Of community concern
- With defined objectives and clear outcomes
- That add value to the Council's performance and/or service delivery
- That contribute to the Council's Corporate Priorities

Members should also avoid including items on the work programme that are unsuitable for review for different factors that could include topics that are:

- Unmanageable
- Purely for informational purposes
- Have limited anticipated outcomes
- Fail to add value to service delivery
- Fail to improve community wellbeing and quality of life.

Finally, the Council's scrutiny function has limited time and resources, meaning the work programme must be manageable. It is not possible to include every topic suggested through work programme consultation. Effective long-listing and short-listing of topics is critical to the success of the function.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

In managing the select work programme, the Principal Select Committee is mindful of the Corporate Plan and the priorities set out within. Review topics are selected that align with these priorities.

Legal:

There are no direct legal implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Finance:

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

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

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to appropriately manage the select work programme.	The select work programme is regularly added as an item to the agenda of the Principal Select Committee to enable management and review as necessary.

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Environmental/Sustainability:

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

Equalities:

There are no direct equalities implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Other Implications:

There are no other implications resulting from the recommendations within this report.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

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