

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



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

Agenda

Principal Select Committee

Date: **Thursday, 15th February, 2024**

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 25 January 2024.** 5 - 10
4. **Annual Budget Update.**

The Corporate Resources Director and Section 151 Officer will provide a presentation to the Committee.
5. **Select Committee 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, 25th January, 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Kier Barsby in the Chair;

Councillors Jamie Bell, Jodine Cronshaw,
Julie Gregory (Vice-Chair), Warren Nuttall,
Phil Rostance and John Smallridge.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Mike Joy, Darren Wardale,
Phil Warrington and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor Cathy Mason.

PS.14 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

PS.15 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 November 2023, be received and approved as a correct record.

PS.16 Petition Received - Community Sites.

In accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Petition Scheme, the petition regarding "STOP The bulldozing of Community Sites", having received in excess of 500 signatures, was presented to the Committee for consideration.

The petition organiser, Councillor Cathy Mason, was in attendance to discuss the details of the Petition and put forward three questions for discussion. Both the Assistant Director for Strategic Housing and the Strategic Asset Manager were in attendance at the meeting to respond to the petition and questions accordingly.

Question 1

"The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2020-21, compiled by ADC and accessible at <https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/media/hc1je04a/annual-monitoring-report-2020-2021-final.pdf>, designates Leamington as an deprived area. The report further highlights that the majority of Carsic also falls within this category.

Notably, the residents of Carsic were not engaged prior to the proposal announcement and its presentation to the cabinet, a deviation from ADC policy outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) section 1.1, emphasising “We ARE COMMITTED TO ENGAGING WITH LOCAL PEOPLE”. This information is corroborated by written confirmation from the Secretary of the TRA, underscoring the lack of communication with existing groups.

The Community Engagement Strategy 2020-23, which emphasises a people-focused approach, explicitly states, “We won’t expect people to come to us. We will go to where the people are, whether that is by knocking on people’s doors or standing outside the pub on a Friday night.” However, Carsic, lacking any form of engagement, cannot even claim tokenism.

Carsic received nothing – a stark inequality,

Can this committee give an explanation as why Carsic residents are being treated differently from Leamington residents?”

Officer’s Response

The Assistant Director for Strategic Housing made reference to the community engagement programme currently running for a 6-month period in respect of Willetts Court on the Leamington Estate. He explained that all the Council’s community centres were subject to regular reviews, which enabled officers to ascertain their ongoing viability taking into account usage, income received and costs for running and maintaining the facilities.

As pointed out by the questioner, the Council had previously adopted a Community Engagement Strategy which reaffirmed its commitment to engage in a meaningful way with residents to achieve the Council’s core aims (as per the Corporate Plan). The Strategy did make clear that consultation should be appropriate for each project and not a one size fits all approach.

On conclusion of the review for Brierley House, it was agreed that consultation with local residents was not appropriate because evidence on current/likely future use, running costs, future investment requirements etc. had shown that the Centre was no longer viable. The conclusion had been based upon the following;

- 2022/23 the Centre was used for 5 hours in total over the course of the year, 0.2% of the time available. During 2021/22 it had 3 hours of paid use. Pre-Covid, in 2018/19 it had 568 hours use over the course of the year, equating to 26% of the total time available.
- Groups that used the Centre prior to Covid had not returned and there were no enquiries or interest from new groups to use the Centre.
- 2022/23 the net cost of running the Centre was £22,608. With staffing costs and utilities making the bulk of this figure, running costs would increase in future years as inflationary pressures drove up prices.
- A stock condition survey showed that £7,260 needed to be spent in each of the next 5 years to maintain the building.

- Additional costs would be incurred to update and improve facilities e.g. to improve ICT connectivity.
- As an HRA owned site, it was Council tenants who were paying for the Centre to be open and were in-effect subsidising the Centre for other residents, it was unreasonable to expect this to continue.
- The availability of other Council owned Community Centre's in the local area, namely Willetts Court, Harwood Close, Healdswood and the Homesteads.

Had the evidence pointed to a different conclusion, the Council would have needed to determine who to consult with to assist with a review as to its future use. Current service users would normally form the focus of any consultation but in respect of Brierley House, there weren't any groups/organisations using the facilities that could have been contacted for feedback and comment.

As a final point, the Statement of Community Involvement, mentioned by the questioner, was a Planning related document and due to a Planning Application having been submitted in respect of Brierley House, consultation would be undertaken in accordance with that process.

Question 2

"In July, the Cabinet decision relied on a limited community centre review. Acknowledged by email on September 22nd/25th, by the assistant director of strategic housing. The cabinet papers encompassed all relevant documents, with no additional information provided. This prompts skepticism about the sustainability conclusion for the centre, considering there was no communication and engagement with residents.

The equality screening aims to ensure that "no person or group is being displaced by the proposal or WILL BE DETRIMENTALLY IMPACTED IN ANY WAY,". However, as no outreach occurred with residents, particularly the elderly and disabled, prevalent in the deprived Carsic area, the screening lacks completeness and robustness.

Brierley House is now listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) by ADC. "The panel concluded that the recent use of the nominated land had furthered the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and that it is realistic to think that in the next 5 years there could be non – ancillary use that would further the social wellbeing or social interests of the community"

Notts County Council have appointed a local area co-ordinator, who has been in contact, as they recognise the need in this high deprivation area to assist in organising meetings and community engagement.

866 residents of Ashfield have voiced their desires for a community engagement programme for Brierley House.

Given all this relevant new information and for ADC to follow their own policies Can the committee explain why Brierley House should not have a community engagement programme?"

Officer's Response

The Assistant Director for Strategic Housing addressed the issue of the emails sent to Councillor Mason on 22 and 25 September 2023 and advised that these did not state that the Cabinet report and subsequent decision were based on a limited Community Centre Review. The emails had stated that the Assistant Director was not in a position to share the full Community Centre review with the Councillor at that time.

The Cabinet report considered in July 2023 had been based upon empirical evidence contained within the Community Centre Review document. In respect of Equalities, the report had stated that no person or group was being displaced by the proposal or would be detrimentally impacted in any way, as determined by an Equality Impact Assessment screening. The new homes would also provide much needed accommodation for older households and those with mobility difficulties and disabilities.

Committee Members were advised that following on from the Cabinet decision in July 2023, the Sutton in Ashfield Community Group was formed on 26 August 2023 and an application submitted for the Centre to be considered an Asset of Community Value (ACV). As part of the ACV application a series of suggestions were put forward for how the Centre could possibly be used in future.

The Council's Health and Well-Being Partnership Strategy 'Be Health Be Happy 2021-25' identified Leamington as a priority area, along with Coxmoor, Kirkby and Broomhill and Butlers Hill, Hucknall, with resources being targeted in this location. The Carsic area still remained a focus of the Council but was not a named priority area and so community engagement specific to the area would remain limited.

The Council's Health and Wellbeing Officer was currently working part time in Leamington, coordinating partner organisations to effectively engage and better support the local community.

The Officer was working closely with the recently appointed Nottinghamshire County Council Local Area Coordinator, who was similarly focused on Leamington but with the proviso that her role might extend to other areas of deprivation within Sutton in Ashfield. The Coordinator was working with individuals in a social prescribing role, helping those who were isolated, lonely and vulnerable to engage with services and be part of the community. The role was person focused rather than a group or activity-based position.

Question 3

"Community Engagement Strategy 2020-2023 states community engagement is underpinned by fairness and equality. Good quality community engagement is:

Effective – in meeting the needs and expectations of the people involved.

Efficient – by being well informed and well planned.

Fair – by giving people who may face additional barriers to getting involved an equal opportunity to participate.

Unfortunately, as shown in question 1 and 2, ADC failed to follow their own binding policies on community engagement in order to provide actual evidence that Brierley House is unsustainable, and viewed it through a narrow lens of one years use, post Covid.

NPPF chapter 97 states the need to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, as well as c) guard against unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day to day needs. The loss of Brierley House would indeed impact the elderly and disabled Carsic residents, and would give sufficient grounds for an appeal should this proposal progress without correction.

So we respectfully ask that this committee, who's role it is, to hold the executive, including cabinet to account over decisions that are made and given that Brierley House is now a listed Asset of Community Value.

As to why it shouldn't refer this matter back to cabinet for review with the recommendation that a community engagement programme be run?"

Officer's Response

The Assistant Director for Strategic Housing reiterated that the Council was committed to its Community Engagement Strategy and to engaging with communities in a meaningful way, as demonstrated through the recent Residents Survey and feedback on the Local Plan.

As explained in the answer to Question 1, the evidence from the Community Centre Review document presented the facts accordingly. There were barely any users of the Centre, no new interest had been shown and there had been minimal hire charge income received. With the significant operating, maintenance and investment costs it was evident that the Centre did not have a viable financial future. As an HRA asset, costs were being met by all Council tenants through their rent payments and it was unfair for tenants to continue subsidising other residents.

The Council kept all its services under review and had to make tough decisions when needed. The conclusion was therefore reached that the Centre was not viable, meaning that it was not appropriate to consult with local residents. This was not a failure to follow the Engagement Strategy, the principles of the Strategy had been applied.

Petition Organiser's Summation

The petition organiser, Councillor Cathy Mason, was then offered the opportunity to make any closing points before the Committee debated the details of the petition.

Councillor Mason reiterated her concerns that Carsic residents were never offered any form of consultation regarding the future of Brierley House before the report was presented to Cabinet for determination in July 2023. Many elderly residents were struggling post Covid and her desire to bring community groups into the Brierley House was soon thwarted when she was advised that no further bookings would be taken for the Centre around September 2023.

In addition, the Asset of Community Value request (ACV) had been duly acknowledged by the Council, but no suggestions/opportunities had been forthcoming to enable the Group to try and increase the usage of the facility.

To conclude, Committee Members were advised that should any time be afforded to the Group to endeavour to bring in users to the centre, external funding was available that could be accessed to assist with the Centre's regeneration.

The Committee duly debated the details of the petition, the questions and the officer responses for a period of 15 minutes.

RESOLVED that

- a) the petition, questions and responses be received and duly noted by the Committee;
- b) Cabinet be requested to ensure that a full consultation exercise is undertaken with any proposed repurposing of Council owned community centres within the District;
- c) in conjunction with the above, ensure that all user groups are identified and contacted as a matter of course should any public consultation or engagement exercises be carried out to determine the future use of Council owned community centres.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chairman.



Report To:	PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE
Date:	15 FEBRUARY 2024
Heading:	SELECT COMMITTEE 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 Committee Work Programme 2023/24.

Finally, Members are asked to identify additional topics to be added to the select committee work programme to form the basis of the agendas for the upcoming Inward Focus and Outward Focus Select Committees.

Recommendation(s)

The Principal Select Committee is recommended to:

- a. Review the progress made to date against the Select Committee Work Programme 2023-24.
- b. Identify additional topics to be added to the Select Committee Work Programme to be undertaken by the Inward Focus and Outward Focus Select Committees at upcoming meetings.

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 Committee Work Programme.

Alternative Options Considered

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

Detailed Information

SELECTING NEW WORK PROGRAMME TOPICS

Overview and Scrutiny is a member led function, driven by a 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 Overview and 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.

SELECT COMMITTEE 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>The Principal Select Committee held a meeting on this topic in September 2023. Members took part in a detailed discussion and agreed on a list of ideas that have since been shared with the Strategic Leadership Team. Following this, an ADC 50 Years Working Group has been established to put the ideas into practice where possible.</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 was reviewed by the Inward Focus Select Committee during late 2023. 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 reviewed the developing Damp and Mould Policy as well as 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 formal 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>Members will be asked to provide feedback on the tender specification in February 2024.</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, attended the November 2023 meeting of the Principal Select Committee and provided 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. 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.	Update to be provided at the meeting.	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. The recommendations were presented to Cabinet in January 2024 and were unanimously accepted.</p>	Principal Select Committee.
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 at the February 2024 meeting of the Principal Select Committee.	Principal Select Committee - Standing item – annually.
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Implications

Corporate Plan:

When managing the Select Committee Work Programme, the Principal Select Committee remains mindful of the Council's Corporate Plan and the priorities set out within. Review topics are selected that align with these priorities where possible.

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 of the Principal Select Committee to appropriately manage the Select Committee Work Programme, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.	The Select Committee 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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