

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

7th June 2023

Present: Councillor Jabbar Riaz in the Chair

Councillors Ali, Cooper, Desayrah, Hodgson, Lamb, Laurenson (Vice-Chair), Lawrance and Piotrowski

Officers: Lloyd Griffiths, Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities
Emma Jordan, Housing Welfare and Options Team Manager
Tom Mountford, Head of Homes and Communities
Alan New, Contracts and Performance Manager

1 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Hodgson for Councillor Amos.

2 Declarations of Interest

The following declaration of interest was made:

Councillor Laurenson – Annual Sanctuary Housing Update (Minute 6) - As an employee of Sanctuary Housing.

3 Public Participation

None.

4 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Presentation from John Campion, West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

The Committee received a presentation from John Campion, West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner. The presentation covered a range of topics including the budget for 2023/24, the changing nature of services and demands post-covid and support for witnesses and victims of crime. The investment in recruitment was also highlighted and the roles which additional staff will undertake was explained.

There was an opportunity for Members to ask questions following the presentation and a these covered a wide range of topics.

The Chair concluded by thanking John Campion for his responses to Members' questions.

6 Annual Sanctuary Housing Update

The Committee received a presentation from Sanctuary Housing. Sophie Bell – Head of Development (Midlands), Yvonne Crinean – Operations Manager (Housing), Rebecca Craig – Director of Sustainability and Climate Change and Steven Ward – Operations Manager (Asset Delivery) were in attendance and they all presented in turn.

The presentation included information about Sanctuary's operations and activity in Worcester, its operation as an employer in Worcester, initiatives for the provision of new homes, investment in existing homes including Sanctuary's approach to damp and mould, sustainability and its relationship with customers. They responded to questions from Committee Members.

In the ensuing discussion, the following action points were identified:

- Reference was made to ongoing problems with the lifts at John Gwynne House and the Chair asked if this could be investigated further.
- Members made reference to the development of Environmental Management System and asked if further information can be shared with Council officers.
- More information can be provided on Sanctuary's community investment activities locally.
- The Chair asked if Members can be provided with some key contact details for Sanctuary staff which can be used to assist in dealing with constituent inquiries.

The Chair concluded by thanking all the speakers for their contributions.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to note the contents of this report.

7 Provision of a New Artificial Grass Pitch at Perdiswell

The Committee considered a report on a proposal to construct a new 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at Perdiswell, to be located to the side of the building in the area of land between the Football Foundation changing accommodation and the six existing grass football pitches. The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities presented the report and the Contracts and Performance Manager commented on the detailed aspects of the scheme.

The Corporate Director explained that the business case for the proposal and the release of the 'in principle' capital allocation of £200k – which represents the Council's financial contribution to the AGP - had previously been approved by this Committee and full Council.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members. In the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the environmental impact of an artificial surface. In response, the Corporate Director gave an assurance that the Council will ensure there is a net biodiversity gain of 10%. This would not ordinarily feature in the Council report but it can be formally recorded in the minutes.

It was proposed and seconded that the Committee agree the following additional recommendation:

That the Council keeps its commitment to achieving a 10% biodiversity net gain on site.

Upon being put to the vote it was resolved:

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree:

- 1. To approve the business case for an Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at Perdiswell Leisure Centre;**
- 2. To approve the release of the 'in principle' capital allocation of £200k previously approved at Council on 5th June 2022, which represents the Council's financial contribution to the AGP project;**
- 3. To note the requirements outlined in section 5.2 of this report relating to the disposal of public open space and approves the undertaking of a statutory public consultation having regard to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended);**
- 4. To note the previously approved Council Motion relating to Perdiswell and that a further report will be presented to Council at its July meeting seeking approval for use of land at Perdiswell as set out within this report;**
- 5. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Operations, Homes & Communities in consultation with the Chair & Vice-Chair of this Committee to submit a planning application for the AGP facility;**
- 6. Subject to the grant of a satisfactory planning permission and confirmation of the successful award from the Football Foundation grants panel, to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance & Resources and the Corporate Director of Planning & Governance in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Communities Committee to:**
 - (a) finalise the operating arrangements and user pricing structure and enter into the requisite lease and other legal agreements with Freedom Leisure to operate the AGP facility on the Council's behalf;**
 - (b) enter into the requisite legal agreements with the Football Foundation to secure their grant funding;**
 - (c) award the construction contract under the Football Foundation framework up to the value of £800k; and**
- 7. That the Council keeps its commitment to achieving a 10% biodiversity net gain on site.**

8 **Annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Update 2022/23**

The Committee considered an update report on the delivery of the Worcester City Action Plan since the Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2022-2025) was adopted by Council in January 2023. The Head of Homes and Communities presented the report and highlighted the main points. The report included an annual report on the homelessness service and a summary of the proposed allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2023/24, which was as follows:

B/fwd	£935,705
Homeless Prevention Grant 2023/24	- 489,617
Outreach Officers x 4.5 FTE	162,000
DV Coordinator-County wide post	4,550
County Intelligence Officer Post-County wide post	4,550
Customer/Business Support Officer	31,200
TA Placement Officer (0.5 FTE)	15,600
Additional Housing Solutions Officer post	31,200
Contribution to Worcester City Lettings post	13,368
Contribution to Private Sector Housing Technical Officer post	20,000
Additional Property Standards Officer (Private Sector Housing)	44,000
System Support Costs	6,340
Housing First	56,048
Contribution to General Fund (Staffing costs)	489,000
Single Person HOPEs contract	70,000
Worcestershire Nightstop Mediation	15,000
Intervention and Transition Team post	35,000
Park Street Management costs	35,562
Severe Emergency Weather Protocol (SWEP)	40,000
C/fwd	£351,904

The Head of Service responded to questions and comments from Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. Note the contents of this report;**
- 2. Note the contents of the Annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Report 2022/23; and**
- 3. Endorse the proposed allocation of resources.**

9 **Quarter 4 and Annual Performance Report for 2022/23**

The Committee considered the annual and quarter 4 performance report. The Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities presented the report and explained that the report provided a narrative to explain those indicators which remain overdue and actions being taken to rectify the position. Officers responded to questions from Committee Members on detailed aspect to the report. In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- Percentage of successful homelessness preventions – Officers will check when the target was originally set and how it was identified.
- Participation in tennis in parks was raised and the Corporate Director stated that this can be discussed further at a Chair/Vice-Chair’s briefing.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council’s annual and quarter 4 performance for 2022/23.

10 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 10.18p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
19th July 2023