

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE DELIVERY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 2024

PRESENT: Councillor L Malyon (Chair)

Councillors C Beswick, J Cox, B Emery, K Flunder, M Haines,
I Herdman and K Hoptroff

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor D Price, D Proudlove and N Yates

APOLOGIES: Councillors G Bentley, C Brady, V O'Shea, P Wilkinson, M Spooner
and L Swindlehurst

49 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY.**

The following substitutions were made:-

- Councillor Johnson for Councillor O'Shea
- Councillor Parkes for Councillor L Swindlehurst
- Councillor Jebb for Councillor Wilkinson

50 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 March 2024 be approved

51 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:-**

No interests were declared.

52 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY. (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN).**

There were no urgent items of business.

53 **ALLIANCE NORSE - DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS UPDATE - RICHARD COLE**

Panel members received a presentation which included the benefits of moving DFG activities to Alliance Norse, KPI's, Service Delivery and the future.

Members thanked the speaker for the positive report and for the great work carried out.

Discussions included how to promote the services available, the reduction of sub contractors, building their own teams, training of their own staff, cost effectiveness, recruitment and support for occupational therapist, procurement framework, average

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costs of repairs, completion timescales, separate engineers for maintenance and installation, discretionary DFG application processes, community grants, servicing, warranty, discovery of additional issues within the property, additional grants and signposting to other agencies. Members suggested with every DFG an EPC should be carried out. It was further suggested that this service could be expanded and rolled out to other LA's.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

54

QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.

Question received by Cllr Callum Beswick:

Q1: Effective planning enforcement is vital to ensure that the public have confidence in the planning process. There have been several reports of issues with significant delays in enforcement action and the lack of prioritisation of reports of ongoing unauthorised building works. Could the portfolio holder detail any steps which they will be taking to ensure that our enforcement service meets public expectations?"

Response from Cllr Darren Price; Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning:

The enforcement plan sets out how complaints will be investigated and identifies a schedule of priorities which set out a timetable for how the most serious breaches will be investigated. In accordance with the plan, the following priorities are identified:

Priorities	Examples (but not exhaustive)
One – Serious or permanent threat to public health, safety and the environment	Development which gives rise to a serious risk to public safety (e.g. non compliance with contaminated land/pollution conditions) Unauthorised demolition of a listed building, buildings in a conservation Unauthorised development in a SSSI and other nationally recognised nature conservation sites Development sites containing tree preservation orders
Two – Less immediate, but harmful with potential to escalate and cause harm to the living conditions of adjoining residents or the environment	Building works that have commenced, including where works have commencement with non compliance with planning conditions imposed to protect public safety/amenity (e.g. safe storage of building materials, site operative vehicles, pedestrian routes, working times)

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Three – Other breaches likely to remain stable	Development completed including non compliance with other planning conditions e.g. hard and soft landscaping conditions
Four – Other minor breaches	E.g. Satellite dishes, adverts, new fences and walls, extensions to properties

The time taken to investigate each breach will vary depending upon the site and the nature of the breach itself. However the Plan identifies the following targets which the Enforcement Service will work towards:

Priority One – A site visit will be undertaken, wherever possible on the same day or the following working day.

Priority Two – A site visit will be undertaken within 5 working days.

Priority Three – A site visit will be undertaken within 20 working days

Priority Four – A site visit will only take place if deemed necessary following a desk top appraisal of the issues.

Where a breach is identified, the transgressor must be given every opportunity to rectify matters to ensure that the Council is seen to have acted reasonably if legal proceedings are taken at a future date. The majority of enforcement cases are resolved voluntarily through for example, retrospective applications, or voluntarily removing works or ceasing a use. Where formal action is taken, there are compliance periods and rights of appeal, all of which mean that in some cases enforcement matters can be ongoing for a considerable period of time and cannot be resolved quickly or within a fixed timescale.

However, in the financial year 2023-24 82% of enforcement cases were resolved within 13 weeks.

The Portfolio Holder responded to a further comment relating to the reflectiveness of this answer in particular wards and how prioritisation could be improved. He also answered a further question relating to the procedures that were in place to ensure land was reinstated following the refusal of a retrospective planning application. The Portfolio Holder advised that specific concerns should be addressed to the enforcement officer, head of planning and the Portfolio Holder for follow-up action.

55 MOWING REGIMES AND WIDER BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS

Members considered a report in relation to mowing regimes and the wider Biodiversity projects which sought recommendation to approve changes to mowing regimes at some Council owned sites.

Traditionally, the Council had adopted a more formal, manicured way of managing and maintaining its green spaces, keeping amenity grassed areas short and cut on a fortnightly basis. This approach still had its place in some of the more formal historic sites, areas where visibility was important and where public perceptions may be that certain sites should be maintained this way to encourage different forms of use.

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Cllr Yates gave a presentation in support of this report titled "30 by 30", which refers to 30% of our land area would be managed for nature by 2030. Ideas were that a threshold strip would be mowed, statement trees would be introduced but areas would be maintained where they were in the line of sight of residents properties.

Members welcomed the report and presentation. Discussions included extending this approach to the County, communicating to the community, wildflower meadows, parish council involvement, ground nesting animals, best practice cutting, working with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the long term impacts. Further discussions were had relating to safety issues for drivers, the risk of invasive species and escalating to resident properties and the impact on community events.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved.

56 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Vice Chair advised members that they were part of a Teams channel pilot group which was established for members to communicate in between meetings with ideas, and to contact officers should they need support.

RESOLVED:

That the Leisure Transformation Plan Report be brought to the next meeting.

57 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.**

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

_____Chairman_____Date