

MEETING MINUTES

- Purpose of Meeting**
1. Welcome and actions from previous meeting.
 2. Presentation by Rob Mitchell Chief Executive of Charnwood Borough Council.
 3. Any other business, updates from members.

Date 23rd May 2024 1-3 pm

Venue The Hut, Old Ashby Road, Loughborough

Attendance:

Members	June Bush Trish Edwards Janice Wright Craig Jordan Christopher Hipwell Betty Saunders Yvonne Diamond Phil Hudson Stuart Wells Diane Lockwood	Thorpe Acre Community Association Aingarth Loughborough Riversdale Court Birstall Ashby Road Estate Community Centre Selbourne Court Loughborough George Toon Court Syston Beresford Court Shepshed Fielding Court Association Loughborough Fielding Court Association Loughborough Chapman Street Garden Association
Guests	Andrew Everitt-Stewart Helen Kennedy Rob Mitchell	Customer Engagement Officer Customer Engagement Officer Chief Executive Charnwood Borough Council
Apologies	Tracey Riley Paul Maine Christine Maine Ireen Kennedy Wayne Bridges John Mason Carol Airey Trev Fairminer	Chapman Street Loughborough Chapman Street Garden Association Chapman Street Garden Association Park Court Loughborough Brook Street Shepshed Arnold Smith House Association Longcliffe Road Shepshed Longcliffe Road Shepshed

1: Actions from previous meeting

Actions for Customer Engagement:

- Investigate installing a ramp at Arnold Smith House for access to the bin area. *This has been passed to Ian Wrights to survey and quote on the work.*
- Investigate the door program for Arnold Smith House. *This is currently being assessed.*
- Investigate the progress of work and scaffolding in areas mentioned. *Asbestos removal started the week commencing 6th May, there will be another 6 properties having removals on 15th and 16th May, the contractors will then follow round, and will be starting on 170 Old Ashby on the 13th May.*
- Look to invite the Police to a future CHRF meeting. *Invitation being organised.*

2. Presentation by the Charnwood Borough Council Chief Executive:

- An introduction was given explaining previous experience and background, and that the Chief Executive has held the position since 2019.
- The chief executive is very keen to engage across the borough and regularly takes part in visits with teams and officers.
- The focus is on supporting the community, vulnerable customers and the environment.
- The new administration is labour controlled with the support of the Green Party.
- The chief executive oversees the officers of the council and is the head of paid service. Performance of the chief executive is monitored by the leader of the council and the committee of councillors. The councillors oversee strategic decisions but are advised by the chief executive and officers. The chief executive officers oversee the day to day running of the council and this is dictated by the constitution.
- There are two funds, the housing revenue fund and the general fund, the latter comes from council tax, however Charnwood Borough Council only receives 7 % of that in total.
- There are some financial concerns due to the reduction of funds, and the council has made savings over recent years of over £3million pounds.
- Price increases are an issue so there is a funding gap. However, the council is in a reasonable financial position compared to similar councils.
- There is pressure on the budget due to increasing demand for services such as homelessness.
- The focus is on customer service, and although repairs and work on voids is behind, backlogs in customer service are now up to date.
- Recruitment and staff retention can be an issue and can affect performance. Incentives are being considered to counter this, but wages are difficult to match to the private sector.
- Listening to customers is a priority, and that is why forums are important. The council looks at surveys and listens to feedback, but resources and capacity issues can be a problem.

Questions asked:

- It is rumoured that the Southfields building is to be sold, is this true? *Agile working means there are less staff in the building at any one time. Options have been explored and selling the land and building new premises is not financially viable. The building will be adapted to be more efficient; money will be invested in reducing the buildings carbon footprint and the council will look to rent out space within the building.*

- The communal cleaning standard is still an issue. Customers do not want to pay for a service that is not value for money. Some staff from the previous contract are now employed and have not improved. Money is tight and the service being paid for is not good enough. *The chief executive will talk to relevant officers and feedback, the contractors must be held to account on meeting the specification.*
- Could customers decide if they wanted to pay for the cleaning contract or do the cleaning themselves? *This is not an option.*
- Cleaning inspections by customers have stopped with the new contract, will these be reinstated? *No plans currently, but standards will be investigated. The company is still in its probationary period, so this is the time to instil standards.*
- Are customers using the number provided on notice boards to phone the company if standards are not being met? *Members stated that customers don't always want to call but it was reinforced that this is the correct procedure.*
- Staff do not visit to check standards. *The chief executive will investigate all discussed issues, feedback in writing to the next meeting and then return to a future meeting in person with more feedback. **ACTION.***
- With the amount of housing stock sold due to the right to buy scheme, do the council have enough housing stock? *The right to buy scheme is likely to continue. A proportion of money is kept from this scheme by the Council. The council is looking at purchasing new properties currently but does not own a lot of land to build on themselves. Building new properties will still be considered.*
- When planning permission is given for developments could a percentage of homes built be given to the council? *Affordable housing is always a stipulation, and there are various financial help schemes available.*
- Is the council still considering working in partnership with housing associations? *Not currently, the focus is in improving current stock, redeveloping sheltered courts, and the acquisition of new properties.*
- Will the right to buy scheme continue in the same form? *This could depend on what party is in government following the scheduled general election.*
- With higher incomes, affordable housing is more expensive, it then means that the right to buy is preferable and hard to redress. *It was suggested that the forum could write to the local election candidates and ask what their manifesto promise is regarding the right to buy. It was also assured that all types of housing are catered for when planning is considered.*
- The amount of student accommodation and houses of multiple occupancy are a problem, and families are being forced out of the town. *Certain areas within the town do have limits on the amount of student accommodation and houses of multiple occupancy. Pressure on housing is high within the borough. Houses of multiple occupancy are licensed and monitored.*
- Parking at these properties is an issue and the landlord should be held accountable for this. *The council are using all powers available to them to monitor and control this.*
- There are empty student accommodation blocks, why is this? *The university is modernising some outdated accommodation, the number of students is constant and the demand for housing high.*
- What is the council doing about empty privately owned properties? *There is an empty homes officer and where possible the owners of long term vacant properties will be found and asked to maintain or sell the properties, but this can be difficult.*
- Can the council use the land registry to check ownership on these properties? *Yes, however finding and communicating with private owners can often be difficult.*
- A property on Fennell Street is very neglected and unsafe. *This property has been demolished and the dangerous structures act was enforced to do this.*

3: Update from members:

Thorpe Acre Community Association: Coffee mornings continue to be well attended. The planned boat trip is now full and the coach trip almost full. Thanks were expressed to Charnwood Borough Council for the funding through the Community Initiative Fund.

The Hut Old Ashby Road Loughborough: The trip to Cleethorpes is virtually full, but if anyone would like to go there are spaces available, but they are limited. A new youth group has been set up at The Hut for children aged 9-14 years and is called 'Tricky Trees' and is proving to be very successful. This has lots of activities and has opened new connections. Anti social behaviour is still an issue in the area.

Riversdale Court Birstall: There will be a community party using the Community Initiative Fund on 07.06.24.

Beresford Court The front door to the old wardens flat has still not been repaired. This has been mentioned at the tenant court meeting and the warden controller is dealing with it. Customer Engagement will chase up. **ACTION.**

Fielding Court Loughborough: The automatic door on the laundry room sometimes doesn't close properly. Tenants were advised to call the contact centre and report this.

Chapman Street Garden Association: The association is making progress, and one member has now become head gardener and is organising work. The annual Mayors Tea Party will be held on 21.06.24 from 3-5 pm. Customer Engagement will supply letters and posters for this. **ACTION.**

George Toon Court: Lots of work is being carried out within the court however the workmen are leaving a mess. Tenants were advised to call the contact centre and report this.

Chapman Street Loughborough: A new home is being sought for the gazebo.

Selbourne Court Loughborough: One resident is consistently causing anti social behaviour issues, members were informed that every issue must be reported on the appropriate form on the Charnwood Borough Council website

Housing Management Advisory Board update: The board has reviewed the new pet's policy, garage strategy, and received an update from the ombudsman complaint handling board.

Actions for Customer Engagement:

- Chase up front door issue at Beresford Court.
- Supply posters and letters for the Mayors Tea Party at Chapman Street.

Actions for the Charnwood Borough Council Chief Executive:

- To investigate the communal cleaning standards, feed back in writing to the next forum meeting and return to a future meeting in person.

Meeting closed at 3:00 PM. The next meeting will be held on 23.05.24 at The Hut Old Ashby Road Loughborough.