

## **Report to Cabinet**

**Subject:** Update on the work of the Policy Advisors

**Date:** 11 February 2021

**Author:** Chief Executive

### **Wards Affected**

Borough-wide

### **Purpose**

To update Cabinet on the actions and activities that the Policy Advisors have undertaken since their appointment in May 2019.

### **Key Decision**

This is not a key decision.

### **Recommendation(s)**

**Members are recommended to note the content of the report.**

## **1. Background**

1.1 At the Annual General Meeting on 22 May 2019 the Leader of the Council notified the Council of the composition of the Cabinet and resulting Portfolio Holders.

1.2 The Leader also announced that the Cabinet would be supported by the following Policy Advisors:

Policy Advisor for Growth and Regeneration - Councillor Julie Najuk  
Policy Advisor for Young People and Equalities – Councillor Kathryn Fox  
Policy Advisor for Environment – Councillor Ron McCrossen  
Policy Advisor for Health and Well-being – Councillor Rosa Keneally  
Policy Advisor for Housing and Homelessness – Councillor Des Gibbons

1.3 Policy Advisors do not hold delegated responsibility but support their respective Cabinet member on development and progression of specific

Gedling Plan actions as appropriate. The precise focus for the work of each Policy Advisor is agreed by the Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant Cabinet member in discussion with the Policy Advisor.

- 1.4 The work of each Policy Advisor has been reported to the Leader on a regular basis since May 2019, and this report provides a summary of work undertaken across all portfolios by Policy Advisors.
- 1.5 The onset of Covid-19 in early 2020 and the introduction of social distancing and self-isolation measures has had an impact on delivery of some of the Gedling Plan actions, which has in turn impacted on the work of some of the Policy Advisors. In addition, the response work to Covid-19 by Members and officers has in some areas led to a change in working priorities, particularly in respect of those most vulnerable in our society who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic either through physical or mental ill-health, or financial hardship. The necessary refocus of officer and Member activity onto dealing with the pandemic has understandably impacted on the delivery of key initiatives that would have been worked on by the Policy Advisors.
- 1.6 In general terms the work undertaken by Policy Advisors has been agreed by the Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant Cabinet member as follows:

#### **Work Applicable to all Policy Advisors**

- Initially the roles involved fact finding and understanding how decisions are made in each applicable directorate/service area.
- Attending regular meetings held between the Portfolio Holder, relevant Director, and Heads of Service (formerly Service Managers) to discuss delivery of actions and initiatives as approved within the Gedling Plan.
- These meetings also involve discussion of operational matters that are of significance to the Portfolio Holder and Policy Advisor.
- Attending individual meetings with Service Managers and officers as appropriate to deliver specific actions as allocated by the Leadership.
- Feeding back updates, ideas and concerns to the Portfolio Holder and officers at the regular meetings on the work undertaken.
- Keeping up to date with business held at Cabinet, Scrutiny, Licensing and Planning meetings as appropriate.

#### **1.7 Work undertaken by individual Policy Advisors**

The following actions and activities have built upon the above actions and activities in furtherance of the specific projects allocated to each Policy Advisor.

##### Policy Advisor for Growth and Regeneration - Councillor Julie Najuk

- Contacted and engaged with local groups to consult on the possible use of the Town Centre and redevelopment of Arnold market. This work is still ongoing as the development project progresses.
- Attended the Gedling Business Partnership meetings with the intention that this role will grow over time. This is ongoing and relationships with

members of the group are developing. This engagement is particularly important during Covid-19 as many businesses have been significantly impacted and the Council continues to offer support and advice to local businesses.

- Supported the officers during the consultation with shoppers at Carlton Square in respect of the redevelopment of Carlton Square.
- Supported the delivery of school based employability events, which is ongoing work.
- Engaged with discussions and plans for the Christmas activities programme.
- Worked with officers on the Economic Bounce-back Plan which covers initiatives that restore business confidence, delivery on regeneration projects, and re-opening of our Towns' high streets safely.

#### Policy Advisor for Young People and Equalities – Councillor Kathryn Fox

- Organised a Bone Marrow Donor registration event, summer activities schedule, and autumn school holiday activities.
- Worked with the Communications team to discuss press releases, leaflets and social media for events such as the Bone Marrow donors, young people's activities, and how to work closely with the Youth Council to improve interaction with young people via social media.
- Attended Youth Council meetings with the intention to build closer working relationships with them and raise issues such as mental health, knife crime, and the environment.
- Advised and developed the Council's Young People survey and consultation process to identify issues and priorities that are of concern.
- Attended We R Here open days and meetings, and discussed the possibility for future partnership working to access funding streams for therapeutic counselling and services for young people's mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Worked on the development of a future Young People's Cinema club.
- Considered what actions can be taken around Social Mobility.
- Attended all 'Kids Against Plastic' meetings.
- Worked with partners to promote Youth counselling services.
- Scoped all UK councils for best practice regarding equalities structures, framework and Protected Characteristics language to assist officers in the development of the Equalities Policy and Action Plan.

#### Policy Advisor for Environment – Councillor Ron McCrossen

- Numerous in-depth discussions around walkways and cycle routes across the borough. These include rights of way and improving public access, the Minor to Major project, promoting good health through walking and Park Runs, linkages to heritage sites, and the development of the two former Mineral lines.
- Strategic lead for the 'Big Clean' initiative, working alongside community groups to improve their locality environments. This includes being the Chair of the Steering Group and directing council resources in support of those community activities.
- Produced a joint report on Community Based Voluntary Street Cleaning in conjunction with Steering Group colleagues to provide an update on the

developing partnership between the council and community groups of volunteers who are actively engaged in street cleaning within the borough. This report also set out an ambitious programme of community based clean-up activities, and resulted in a number of recommendations for improvement.

- Organised Member/officer visit to Veolia Recycling Centre in Mansfield, creating a wider understanding of how our waste is recycled, and the detrimental impact that bin contamination has on our recycling targets.
- Participated in the review of the Green Space Strategy and Play Areas.

#### Policy Advisor for Health and Well-being – Councillor Rosa Keneally

- Attended numerous We R Here open days, events and Annual General Meeting to learn about the work that staff and volunteers do to support children and families impacted by trauma.
- As the Council's Hate Crime champion, completed training in Hate Crime Shift Champions Scheme which is a development opportunity for people working with the public to equip themselves with specialist skills and knowledge to effectively tackle hate crime.
- Attended Nottinghamshire Women's Aid briefings and meetings which both explored the holistic support needs for families who have experienced trauma whilst going through legal family court proceedings, and how disabled women and those with long-term illness find it harder to access the support they need.
- Attended the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy workshop with officers which discussed physical activity levels within the borough and how we support the uptake and improvement for individuals.
- Attended a seminar on Working with Children and Young People impacted by domestic violence, exploring the detrimental ways in which this affects a child's health and development, and how to develop effective responses.
- Completed e-learning training in equalities, diversity, human rights, health, safety, welfare, safeguarding, and conflict resolution.
- Engaged in a research project by the University of Nottingham surrounding the current provision of therapeutic and restorative service provision for survivors of domestic abuse.
- Completed the Signs of Safety training which helps to develop skills in formulating health and wellbeing goals for children and families.

#### Policy Advisor for Housing and Homelessness – Councillor Des Gibbons

- Shadowed frontline staff within the housing and homelessness contact team to understand how decisions around allocation of homes and temporary accommodation are made.
- Involved in the council's response to the government consultation on Section 21 'no fault' evictions.
- Worked on the refresh of the Homeless Rough Sleeper Strategy.
- Promoted homeless prevention initiatives including school engagement, advertising strategies and use of social media.
- Worked with the officers to develop a temporary Accommodation Strategy.
- Investigated options for Credit Unions to assist in loans for housing related issues.

- Assisted the development of the Housing Allocations Policy.
- Worked to establish two community kitchens in Bestwood village and St Albans.
- Listened to residents' concerns and issues around potential homelessness and signposted these to the relevant support services within the Council.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1 It is proposed that Members note the summary of work undertaken by Policy Advisers since May 2019.
- 2.2 The Leader will take this opportunity to review and refresh the Policy Advisor roles and will confirm any changes verbally at the Cabinet meeting.

## **3. Alternative Options**

- 3.1 An alternative option is to not to update Members on the work undertaken. Whilst Portfolio Holders will be fully aware of the work the Policy Advisor is undertaking within their specific portfolio, this provides an update of work undertaken across all portfolios.

## **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Each Policy Advisor receives a Special Responsibility Allowance as approved annually by full Council as part of the Independent Remuneration Panel report (usually in March). There are no other costs associated with these positions.

## **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **6 Equalities Implications**

- 6.1 It is the duty of all representatives of the Council to be fully aware of the equality legislation. Also as set out in this report, the Leader of the Council has nominated a Policy Advisor to be specifically responsible for equalities, namely the Policy Advisor for Young People and Equalities.

## **7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications**

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications arising from this report. However, the Leader of the Council has nominated a Policy Advisor to be specifically responsible for the environment, namely the Policy Advisor for Environment.

## **8 Appendices**

None.

## **9 Background Papers**

None.

## **10 Reasons for Recommendations**

To share with Members the good work that the Policy Advisors have been undertaking since May 2019 across all portfolios.

### **Statutory Officer Approval**

**Approved by: Chief Financial Officer**  
**Date: 01/02/2021**

**Approved by: Monitoring Officer**  
**Date: 01/02/2021**