

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Update on the Work of the Policy Advisors

Date: 16 February 2023

Author: Chief Executive

Wards Affected

Borough-wide

Purpose

To update Cabinet on the actions and activities that the Policy Advisors have undertaken since the last report to Cabinet in February 2021.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

Members are recommended to note the content of the report, and the actions and activities undertaken by the Policy Advisors since February 2021.

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 five 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 At the Annual General Meeting in May 2022 the number of Policy Advisors was reduced to four and the areas of focus were changed as follows:

Policy Advisor for Regeneration, Recovery and Rural Affairs - Councillor Julie Najuk
Policy Advisor for Equalities, Diversity and Young People – Councillor Kathryn Fox
Policy Advisor for Environment and Climate Change – Councillor Sandra Barnes
Policy Advisor for Heritage and Homelessness – Councillor Des Gibbons

- 1.4 In July 2022, a report made under the Leaders delegated authority - *Changes to the appointment of Portfolio Holders and Policy Advisors* – the number of Policy Advisors was reduced to two:

Policy Advisor for Environment – Councillor Sandra Barnes
Policy Advisor for Heritage and Homelessness – Councillor Des Gibbons

- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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 by the Policy Advisors since February 2021.
- 1.7 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.

1.8 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 (renamed Regeneration, Recovery and Rural Affairs) - Councillor Julie Najuk until July 2022

- Engaged with local groups on the use of the Town Centre and new AMP building and public space.
- Attended the Gedling Business Partnership meetings and built relationships (this engagement was particularly important during Covid-19 as many businesses were significantly impacted).
- Supported the delivery of school based employability events.
- Engaged with discussions and plans for the Christmas activities programme.
- Worked with officers on the Economic Bounce-back Plan which covered initiatives that restored business confidence, and delivery on regeneration projects.

Policy Advisor for Young People and Equalities (renamed Equalities, Diversity and Young People) – Councillor Kathryn Fox until July 2022

- Worked on the creation of the Young Persons Survey, devised its questions and objectives, and worked on its outcomes with the portfolio holder and officers.
- After scoping all UK councils for best practice, as tasked by the portfolio holder, worked on the creation of the Equalities framework and creation of its action plan and priorities.
- Worked on the creation of the Strategic Equalities & Diversity Group, its terms of reference, objectives and actions.
- Made the vice chair of the Strategic Equalities & Diversity Group and attended all meetings continuing to work with on all its objectives with the portfolio holder, SLT, cabinet, councillors and partners.
- Worked on the scoping of a Young Persons social media 'platform'.
- Worked on a calendar of Young Persons events for school holidays and other special events.
- Worked on the creation of the Bonington Theatre Young Persons cinema club with social media promotion.
- Attended portfolio scrutiny meetings and the Youth Council meetings.

Policy Advisor for Environment – Councillor Ron McCrossen until May 2022

- Held 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.
- Continued to be the 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.

- Gained a wider understanding of how our waste is recycled, and the detrimental impact that bin contamination has on our recycling targets, and continued to represent the council at the Joint Waste Management Group meetings.
- Participated in the review of the Green Space Strategy and Play Areas.
- Worked with the team in the production of the Carbon Management Strategy and Action Plan.

Policy Advisor for Environment – Councillor Sandra Barnes since May 2022

- Attended the depot on numerous occasions and thanked the staff for their hard work and dedication to the council and borough.
- Gained an understanding of the issues affecting the service under the new Environment Act, in particular the collection of food waste.
- Discussed how we would cope with the introduction of new services such as food waste, and what changes would be needed to our vehicle fleet and depot provision.
- Welcomed the introduction of new 'Friends of'...groups at Lambley Lane and Valley Road.
- Pleased to see progress in the 'Green Lung' work at Digby Park, including the new information QR codes and further tree planting initiatives.
- Urged the need for more electric charging points in the borough, including the completion of installations at Gedling Country Park and the Civic Centre.
- Welcomed the Shared Prosperity Funding earmarked for the Lambley Lane changing rooms, and the opportunities to develop further wild flower meadows in the borough.
- Been briefed on the air quality control issues facing the borough, how the council measures pollutants, and what enforcement measures the council can employ where necessary.

Policy Advisor for Health and Well-being – Councillor Rosa Keneally until February 2022

- Attended 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.
- 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 seminars on Working with Children and Young People impacted by domestic violence.
- Continued engagement with the University of Nottingham on the current provision of therapeutic and restorative service provision for survivors of domestic abuse.

Policy Advisor for Housing and Homelessness (renamed Heritage and Homelessness) – Councillor Des Gibbons

- 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 and Housing Allocations Policy.
- Worked with 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, and the actions and activities undertaken by the Policy Advisors since the last update report to Cabinet in February 2021.

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 previously nominated a Policy Advisor to be specifically responsible for equalities, namely the Policy Advisor for Young People and Equalities. However, since the reduction in the number of Policy Advisors, this responsibility now rests jointly with the Portfolio Holders for Young People and Equalities, and Diverse Communities and Life Changes.

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, in particular the actions and activities undertaken by the Policy Advisors since they were last reported to Cabinet in February 2021.

Statutory Officer Approval

Approved by: Chief Financial Officer
Date: 8 February 2023

Approved by: Monitoring Officer
Date: 30 January 2023