

OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP – 8TH MAY 2017

Report of the Cabinet

ITEM 7 OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - CABINET RESPONSE

Purpose of Report

To set out the Cabinet's responses to the recommendations of the Group on pre-decision scrutiny items.

Action Requested

To note the Cabinet's responses to the recommendations submitted by the Group on items considered for pre-decision scrutiny.

Policy Context

One of the principles of effective scrutiny, identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, is "provide a constructive critical friend challenge to the Executive".

Pre-decision Scrutiny

Since the April meeting of the Group, the Cabinet has considered the following items on which the Group undertook pre-decision scrutiny:

A. Business Plan 2017/18

B. Charnwood Grants – Round One – 2017/18 – Community Facilities and Community Development and Engagement Grant Applications

Details of the Group's consideration of the items as reported to the Cabinet on 13th April 2017 are set out in the appendix to this report.

The Vice chair of the Group, Councillor Bebbington, attended the Cabinet's meeting on 13th April 2017 to present the Group's reports to the Cabinet.

Cabinet Response

The Cabinet considered the Group's reports and acknowledged the work undertaken and the views of the Group. In particular, the Cabinet responded as follows to the reports:

Business Plan 2017/18

The Cabinet adopted the officer recommendations, which the Group had supported.

In response to the Group's additional recommendation regarding future Business Plans having more detailed information regarding the impact of the proposed actions, and its own deliberations on the matter, the Cabinet resolved that this and other changes be made to the 2017/18 and future Business Plans as follows:

- a) that the Business Plan be amended where necessary to ensure that the success criteria for the activities in the Plan were related to both the actions and the intended outcomes they were associated with;
- b) that information regarding performance in previous years be included with the Key Indicators and Business Plan Indicators set out in the Business Plan;
- c) that the activities and indicators set out in the Business Plan be classified to differentiate between those that the Council was directly responsible for and those which it could only indirectly influence.

The reasons for these additional resolutions were to provide greater clarity regarding the difference that would be made by the actions being undertaken, additional information that showed the progress over time that was being made in those areas that were being measured, and greater clarity about the role of the Council in delivering different aspects of the Business Plan.

Charnwood Grants – Round One – 2017/18 – Community Facilities and Community Development and Engagement Grant Applications

The Cabinet adopted the officer recommendations, which the Group had supported.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report:

Financial Implications

None.

Risk Management

No risks have been identified in connection with this report.

Background Papers: None

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BUSINESS PLAN 2017/18

Recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group

That the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendation as set out in the report of the Head of Strategic Support.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Head of Strategic Support on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate to approve the Business Plan 2017/18 as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, to identify the key activities and performance indicators for the Council for 2017/18 that support the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan (2016-2020).

Additional Recommendation of the Group

In addition the Group made a further recommendation regarding future Business Plans. It resolved that subsequent Business Plans have more detailed information regarding the impact of the proposed actions. The reason for the recommendation was so that the difference made as a result of the actions could be more clearly demonstrated.

Meeting Discussion

Following questions from the Group, the Head of Strategic Support (and the Chief Executive) provided the following responses:

- (i) It was confirmed that the Business Plan sets out activities and tasks to deliver the aims of the Council's Corporate Plan and that services also may have operational Team Plans. It was commended as a document.
- (ii) In response to the comment made about the low percentage of customers satisfied with the web service they received it was made clear that satisfaction levels were high when people visited the Council offices but the low percentage level for web service was not unusual for councils to receive. There was an emphasis on moving towards improvements to web based services for customers which should achieve higher levels of satisfaction.
- (iii) Members commented on the risk management item in the report as it was felt that the level of risk had been reduced due to work that had been completed recently and it was felt that the risk might now be classed as minor. The Group was advised that risks would be monitored continuously so the risk level identified may change.
- (iv) Clarification was provided regarding the reference to Equality and Diversity included in the Business Plan and how an Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out. The Group was advised that the Assessment would be carried out in specific areas if appropriate, as detailed in the report.

- (v) In response to the query about the Empty Homes target and success criteria the Group was advised that more detailed data was available. The target is specific to homes brought back into use as a result of action by the council.
- (vi) There were similar queries regarding the level of detail in the report. It was felt that there should be more information regarding the expected impact of the actions proposed in addition to the success criteria.
- (vii) The Group asked if more safeguarding training sessions would be made available to Councillors as some had missed sessions and wanted to attend if there were more sessions available. They were advised that they would be made aware of any upcoming training available to them.
- (viii) In response to the query about the difference between minor and major amendments in relation to the recommendations to Cabinet the response was that minor amendments were only possible at this stage as the report was final but an example of a major amendment was changing a target that had already been set. The query was due to a concern that the Business Plan was very target driven and there was a lack of information about what the wider impact would be and lack of detail regarding the data provided. This point was acknowledged and there was a recommendation that next year more information on impact would be provided.
- (ix) There was a query regarding the organisations signed up to the Dementia Action Alliance and the Group was advised that further details could be provided outside the meeting.

CHARNWOOD GRANTS – ROUND ONE – 2017/18 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT GRANT APPLICATIONS

Recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group

That the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendation as set out in the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Head of Neighbourhood Services on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate to approve the recommendations for the grants as set out in the report.

Meeting Discussion

Following questions from the Group, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager (and the Chief Executive) provided the following responses:

- (i) In response to a query regarding any overlap in the projects and the Group was advised that the panel do look at any possible duplication in the applications to avoid that and also to avoid creating competition between groups that apply.
- (ii) Clarification was sought as to whether further support was given to just successful applicants or all applicants who applied for a grant. The Group was advised that all the reasons and recommendations set out in the report relate to all applications submitted so both successful and unsuccessful.
- (iii) There was a comment made that biggest single reason perceived for an application failing was that it did not reach a wide enough area of the community so it was positive to see organisations like the Bangladeshi Society who now have members from other ethnic groups. There was a suggestion for a name change to reflect this but the Group was advised that the organisation could choose their own name.
- (iv) There was a question about the reasons for a specific failed application and the Group was advised it was because the quality of the application was quite poor and the costs to run the project were quite high and did not work.
- (v) The Group sought clarification and explanation of the reasons where applications were recommended for refusal and the Group was advised that the projects had to benefit the community and in some instances this was not the case or the project did not meet the criteria for the grant and would be better suited to another area.