

OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP
10TH APRIL 2017

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Smidowicz)
The Vice-chair (Councillor Bebbington)
Councillors Bradshaw, Capleton, Gerrard, Parsons and
Sutherland

Chief Executive
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Head of Strategic Support
Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager
Democratic Services Officer (NA)

92. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 13th March 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

93. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Cllr Smidowicz made a disclosure of personal interest regarding item 6a on the agenda: Business Plan 2017/18, specifically the actions around bringing empty homes back into use.

94. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

95. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

96. BUSINESS PLAN 2017/18

A report of the Chief Executive, to set out the Council's principal activities in delivering the Corporate Plan for the Council Year 2017/18, was considered for pre-decision scrutiny in order to make recommendations as appropriate to the Cabinet (item 6A on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Strategic Support attended the meeting to assist the Group with the scrutiny of this matter.

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.

Cllr Bradshaw arrived at the meeting at 6.15pm, part way through the item.

Recommendation

That subsequent Business Plans have more detailed information regarding the impact of the proposed actions.

Reason

So that the difference made as a result of the actions could be more clearly demonstrated.

RESOLVED 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).

98. CHARNWOOD GRANTS

A report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services, to consider applications for revenue funding received in round one of the Community Facilities Capital Grants and Community Development Grant Schemes for 2017/18, was considered for pre-decision scrutiny in order to make recommendations as appropriate to the Cabinet (item 6B on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Neighbourhoods and Partnerships Manager attended the meeting to assist the Group with the scrutiny of this matter.

Councillor Gerrard made a declaration of personal interest in relation to the first recommendation in the report as she was the ward councillor for East Goscote.

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.

RESOLVED 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.

99. OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY – CABINET RESPONSE

A report of the Cabinet was considered setting out its responses to the recommendations of the Group on pre-decision scrutiny items (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet's responses to the Group's recommendations be noted.

Reason

The Group was satisfied that it added value where appropriate and welcomed the Cabinet's consideration of the Group's views and recommendations as part of its decision making process.

100. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support was considered, to enable the Group to consider its Work Programme and forthcoming Key Decisions and decisions to be taken in private by the Cabinet in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny and to provide an opportunity for members of the Group to raise suggestions on issues for scrutiny (in addition to pre-decision scrutiny) which fell within the Group's remit, for scheduling by Scrutiny Management Board (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Group considered the report (and further information on the forthcoming Key Decisions and decisions to be taken in private by the Cabinet provided by the Chief Executive at this meeting) and agreed to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny prior to the next Cabinet meeting, but that the following pre-decision scrutiny items should be added to its work programme at this stage:

- Capital Plan Outturn 2016/17 (8th June 2017)
- General Fund and HRA Revenue outturn Report 92016/17) and Carry Forward of Budgets (8th June 2017)
- Capital Plan Amendment Report (6th July 2017)
- Amendments to Annual Procurement Plan (6th July 2017)

Following a suggestion from Councillor Smidowicz it was agreed a request be submitted to the Scrutiny Management Board that an item to be added to the work programme in line with the Group's remit to scrutinise external partners, to look at the organisation DASH who work with the Council to accredit landlords operating in the private sector. Councillor Smidowicz was nominated to take the lead preparing the scope of the proposed item and would liaise with the Democratic Services Manager following the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Group's current work programme be noted and updated following this meeting, in accordance with the decisions taken during consideration of this item and at this meeting.

Reason

To ensure effective and timely scrutiny, either to provide Cabinet with advice prior to it taking a decision or to ensure that the Council and external public service providers and partners were operating effectively for the benefit of the Borough.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 24th April 2017 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of the minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Group.