

**OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP
13TH NOVEMBER 2017**

OSG 11TH
DECEMBER
2017
ITEM 02

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Taylor)
The Vice-chair (Councillor Bebbington)
Councillors Bradshaw, Capleton, Gerrard and Jones

Chief Executive
Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Community Wellbeing
Head of Leisure and Culture
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Team Leader for Regeneration and Economic Development
Democratic Services Officer (MH)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Sutherland

Following the publication of the agenda, but prior to the meeting, changes to the membership of the Group were agreed at the Full Council meeting on 6th November 2017.

42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 16th October 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

43. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

The following disclosures were made:

- (i) by Councillor Taylor – a personal interest in item 6A, Superfast Leicestershire Broadband, as a member of Leicestershire County Council.

44. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

45. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

46. SUPERFAST LEICESTERSHIRE BROADBAND

A report of the Strategic Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration, and Regulatory Services was considered, (item 6A on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Team Leader for Regeneration and Economic Development attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item and gave the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The funding was designed to achieve superfast broadband speeds (defined as at least 24 Mbps) to local service cabinets. The broadband speed achieved at individual properties would depend on the distance of the property from the cabinet and the equipment that was used in the property.
- (ii) The Government defined what the superfast broadband standard was. It had changed that standard from 15 Mbps to the current 24 Mbps.
- (iii) It was not possible to say how many properties in Charnwood would benefit from the further round of funding, or where those properties would be, until the contract for the work had been procured. The contractor would look at where the best results could be achieved. It was known which cabinets remained to be upgraded.
- (iv) The network infrastructure was owned by BT but there was an open access agreement which enabled other providers to access the network.
- (v) The deadline for obtaining match funding from the Government had passed but Leicestershire County Council believed that the Government would continue to honour its previous commitment to provide match funding for schemes. The recommendations in the Cabinet report included providing delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to enter into an agreement with the other authorities involved following a value for money assessment. By the time that assessment was carried out the amount of any Government funding would be known.
- (vi) Provision of superfast broadband was not currently required for new housing developments through planning conditions or Section 106 Agreements. The Government expected that market forces would encourage developers to provide this. That tended to be the case for larger developments but not necessarily for smaller ones. The issue could be considered as part of the current review of the Local Plan and the Team Leader for Regeneration and Economic Development undertook to make relevant officers aware that the issue had been raised by the Group.
- (vii) There were advantages to customers and service providers in enabling more transactions to take place online. In particular those related to greater convenience for customers and reduced transaction costs for service providers. This was consistent with the Council's approach to enhancing the ability of customers to access Council services online.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Strategic Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration, and Regulatory Services.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Team Leader for Regeneration and Economic Development on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet to approve the recommendations set out in the report.

47. CARILLON TOWER WAR MEMORIAL REFURBISHMENT

A report of the Head of Leisure and Culture was considered (item 6B on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Community Wellbeing and the Head of Leisure and Culture attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item and gave the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The building was structurally sound and the work would safeguard the building for the future.
- (ii) The cost figures in the report were estimates based on the condition survey. In order to proceed there would be a tender exercise and the costs from that tender exercise would form the basis of the grant application to the War Memorials Trust. The Council was not expecting the costs from the tender exercise to be higher than those quoted in the report.
- (iii) The Council would also look at other sources of funding in addition to the War Memorials Trust. Those could include crowd funding, the national lottery and other grants for work to the bells and the clavier. The Council would use its best endeavours to obtain external funding but the full cost of the works had been allocated in the Capital Plan to ensure that the work could proceed.
- (iv) As part of the tender process, the specifications for the work, for example the timber to be used and other materials, would be specified by the architect. This was to ensure that the requirements of the War Memorials Trust and Historic England were met.
- (v) Any costs for dismantling exhibits would not form part of the grant application but were likely to be small.
- (vi) The work would require scaffolding to be erected around the tower. Security of the scaffolding and the site during the work would be built into the price that would be quoted by the contractor.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendation as set out in the report of the Head of Leisure and Culture.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Community Wellbeing and the Head of Leisure and Culture on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet to approve the recommendation set out in the report.

48. BUY BACK OF FORMER COUNCIL PROPERTIES

A report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing was considered (item 6C on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Councillor Bradshaw arrived at 6.45pm.

The Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item and gave the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The Council looked at a number of factors before deciding whether or not to repurchase a property that it was offered. Those included the demand for the type and location of the property being offered, the costs of any refurbishment work that was required and whether there were any management issues associated with the type and location of the property. The greatest need was for two-bedroomed houses.
- (ii) No specific budget had been allocated for repurchasing properties. The availability of funding would be considered as each case arose. Government regulations prevented the Council from using right to buy receipts to repurchase former Council properties within the first 10 years after the property was sold. However, after that period the costs of refurbishment to bring the property up to an appropriate standard could be greater.
- (iii) The Council would not normally consider repurchasing properties that would require conversion or reconfiguration because of the costs involved in carrying out that work.
- (iv) Since 2014/15 the Council had been offered 21 properties because there was a covenant requiring that the Council be offered the option to repurchase it and 15 other properties. Only one of those had been a two-bedroomed house. It had not been considered appropriate to repurchase that property because of its condition.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendation as set out in the report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet to approve the recommendation set out in the report.

49. 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).

The Chair referred to the fact that one of the items considered by the Group for pre-decision scrutiny, Future Cemetery Provision for Loughborough, had subsequently been called-in. She stated that the Group had asked questions about whether other sites were available.

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.

50. 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 Amendment Reports – where the Chair and Vice-chair identify that there are particular issues that require scrutiny in that quarter's report;
- Amendments to Annual Procurement Plan Reports – where the Chair and Vice-chair identify that there are particular issues that require scrutiny in that quarter's report;
- Charnwood Grants Strategic Partners (2018/19 to 2019/20) – at the Group's meeting scheduled for 15th January 2018, with the format and methods to be used for the item to be determined later.

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 and any items of pre-decision scrutiny that require changing due to their reprogramming by the Cabinet.

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 22nd January 2018 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.