

**OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP  
18TH SEPTEMBER 2017**

OSG 16TH  
OCTOBER  
2017  
ITEM 02

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

Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Community Wellbeing  
Head of Strategic Support  
Communications Manager  
Team Leader Regeneration and Economic Development  
Democratic Services Officer (NA)

APOLOGIES: Chief Executive

26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group reviewed the previous minutes and wanted to ask some questions of the Private Sector Housing Team in relation to the information they received from Linda Cobb of DASH (Decent And Safe Homes) at the last meeting. The questions were as follows:

- Is there an existing working relationship with the revenue and benefits team at Charnwood Borough Council and if not could there be?
- What would the team consider as sufficient evidence to support the mandatory licensing scheme?

The Democratic Services Officer advised they would ask the questions and get a response for the Committee.

The minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 31st July 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

27. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

28. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

29. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions had been submitted.

### 30. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

A report of the Head of Strategic Support was considered, presenting a Communications Strategy for approval (item 6A on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Head of Strategic Support and the Communications Manager attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item.

They gave the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The Socitm rating (Society of information Technology Management) had risen to a three star rating after a drop last year which was due to a number of reasons, mainly not meeting the criteria every time when looking at the customer experience and journey when using the website. Since last year there has been an improvement which resulted in the improved rating.
- (ii) The Council's website was explained as having bolt on sites which were run by the individual services such as planning explorer run by the planning service. The improvement of that particular website had been described to one Member in the past as having a low priority. The Group was advised that the Communications Team was actively trying to encourage other services to make the necessary improvements to their sites to improve the overall Council website experience.
- (iii) The use of the Council's website externally and via the internal system VDI appeared to produce a change in service, in particular the speed of operation of the website This is an issue for the IT department and not the Communications Team, however the Communications Manager advised he would pass the comments on to the IT team.
- (iv) The use of Facebook accounts was raised as the strategy aimed to encourage more members to make use of their account and raise their profile. More training sessions and encouragement were considered the most effective way to increase users.
- (v) There was a discussion about how information reached the residents and especially hard to reach groups. This was done through different methods including use of the Charnwood residents' newsletter, writing to specific groups and holding events where residents could attend.
- (vi) The number of people without any internet access was currently around 12% but the Group was advised that figure was expected to reduce making it easier to communicate with people.

- (vii) The collection of residents' emails was highlighted as a good way to improve communication. The Group said they could be helpful in dropping off leaflets or encouraging residents to provide their emails for communication purposes.
- (viii) There was also a discussion about asking residents how they wanted to be communicated with and ensuring the use of non-discriminatory terms when addressing anyone.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations 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 and Communications Manager on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for Cabinet to approve the recommendations set out in the report.

### 31. 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 item should be added to its work programme at this stage:

- Carillon Tower War Memorial Refurbishment – 16th October 2017

The Group were interested in scrutinising the Future Cemetery Provision item but wanted to know if it had been added to any other work programmes before they made a decision. The Democratic Services Officer would check the Scrutiny Work Programme and report back at the pre-brief 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.

### 31. EXEMPT INFORMATION

**RESOLVED** that members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

*Councillor Bradshaw left the meeting at 6.40pm.*

### 32. CHARNWOOD CAMPUS OPTION LAND

An exempt joint report of the Head of Finance and Property Services and the Head of Planning and Regeneration was considered, determining the Council's response to a request from the Charnwood Campus Ltd. (owners of the former Astra Zeneca site) for the Council to enter into negotiations to purchase an area of land under option adjoining the site (item 9 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.

A summary of the Group's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Overview Scrutiny Group Minute 32E 2017/18).

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations as set out in the exempt joint report of the Head of Finance and Property and the Head of Planning and Regeneration.

## Reason

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

## NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 6th November 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.

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2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Group.