

OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP – 16TH OCTOBER 2017

Report of the Cabinet

ITEM 07 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 September meeting of the Group, the Cabinet has considered the following items on which the Group undertook pre-decision scrutiny:

A. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2017 – 2021

B. CHARNWOOD CAMPUS OPTION LAND (Exempt Report)

Details of the Group's consideration of the items as reported to the Cabinet on 21st September 2017 are set out in the appendix to this report.

The Chair of the Group, Councillor Smidowicz, attended the Cabinet's meeting on 21st September 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:

Communications Strategy 2017 - 2021

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

Charnwood Campus Option Land

The Cabinet adopted the officer recommendations, which the Group had supported as set out in the exempt minute 32E (included with the previous minutes).

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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COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2017 – 2021

Recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group

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 Communications Manager on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate to approve the recommendations as set out in the report.

Meeting Discussion

Following questions from the Group, the Communications Manager provided the following responses:

- (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.