

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Tuesday 8 December 2020 at 6.00pm, which was broadcast live via the Council's YouTube Channel.

Present: Councillor Milton (Chair); Councillors; Cullinan, Davison, A Dearing, Jacques, Kohler, Margrave, Noone, Norris and Russell.

Also Present: Councillors Day and Rhead.

31. **Apologies and Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Redford and from Councillor Wright, who had been due to substitute for Councillor Redford.

32. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

33. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 November 2020 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

34. **Executive Agenda (Non-Confidential items and reports) – Thursday 10 December 2020**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Thursday 10 December 2020.

Item 4 – General Fund Financial Update

The Committee recognised the challenge of achieving financial savings whilst retaining the public facing service levels, wished to see more detail about how this balance would be achieved and agreed it would scrutinise proposals thoroughly as and when the details were available.

Item 7 – Climate Emergency Action Programme (CEAP) Review

The Committee supported the Climate Emergency Action Plan being an item in the Council's proposed budget for next year. It suggested that a "Plan for Good News" should be established to ensure residents could appreciate achievements. There was a general desire that the Council aimed high at the start of new projects and this should be set out as an ambition from the outset.

(Councillors Day and Rhead left the meeting.)

35. **Review of the Work Programme, Forward Plan and Comments from the Executive**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2020-2021, the Forward Plan and the response from the Executive to its comments in November.

Councillor Kohler asked Committee Members how they felt the Committee should be monitoring Service Area performance subsequent to stopping the annual reports and now relying on performance data provided on the Dashboard. The Chair stated that this was something he had spoken about to Committee Services and he suggested that it be further discussed with staff in the department. He was aware that the data provided by the Dashboard did not always identify issues and he gave the example of noise nuisance and the changes that had been made investigating fly-tipping subsequent to the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. He felt that more work was required on the data being provided to ensure that "red flags" were shown early on.

Councillor Davison asked whether the Committee should be looking at service changes arising from the budget paper and whether this could be done before they occurred. The Deputy Chief Executive (BH) informed Members that currently there were no proposals to scrutinise in respect of services because until the budget figures were approved, officers could not look at how their Service Areas would adapt. Overview & Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to scrutinise reports that went to Executive but any reports dealing with staffing establishment would go to Employment Committee and did not need to go to Executive unless there was a financial implication. It was assumed that proposals would come forward after the budget had been approved in February 2021. The Chair suggested that it would be helpful for the Committee to be informed of likely proposals so that it could suggest ways to maintain service levels.

The Chair offered to speak to Committee Services about the Work Programme, with a view to clearing the decks around March 2021 so that the Committee would have enough time to examine any Service Area proposals arising from the budget figures approved in February. The Deputy Chief Executive (BH) informed Members that proposals would not come all at once, so before speaking with Committee Services, it would be appropriate to speak with SMT to get an idea of timings.

Councillor Davison raised a concern about the transparency of what services the Council was unable to provide because of the pandemic. He asked Members if this was something they should consider scrutinising, and if so, the timing of when this would be done; would after the pandemic was no longer an emergency be an appropriate time for learning points, or should it be done sooner? The Chair suggested that examining services that the Council had not been able to provide during the lockdown, should be added to the work being done on the Step Back Review and form part of this Task & Finish Group's report. He asked the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) to add this to the agenda for the next meeting of the Task & Finish Group.

The Chair asked that an officer attend the February 2021 meeting to answer questions on the Noise Service and Night Noise reports that were scheduled for that meeting.

Appendix 4 to the report, Update on the decisions made in respect of the Task & Finish Group, Role of the District Council Chairman, had been deferred because the content of the report would very much depend on the outcome of the budget proposals for 2021/22.

A draft report had been completed for the Step Back Review, with the Group's findings and recommendations. Documentation gathered as evidence would form appendices to the report but Committee Services was currently checking that there would be no confidential information within these. The Deputy Chief Executive (BH) informed Members that CMT would have the opportunity to respond to the draft report findings and recommendations and this too would form an appendix to the report that would then come to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, for approval to go forward to Executive for consideration.

The Task & Finish Group, Equality & Diversity had nothing further to report since the last meeting when there was a slight change to the membership. Members had been unable to find a convenient date to meet. The Group had sought quotes for independent research work concerning staff, to interview them and understand their experience working for the Council. It was hoped that this would take place in January and the report on matters concerning staffing would be presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the March 2021 meeting.

Resolved that

- (1) the following appendices to the report be noted:
 - Appendix 2 – Comments from the Executive; and
 - Appendix 3 – Public Convenience Review Update – Briefing Note;
- (2) the Update on the decisions made in respect of the Task & Finish Group, Role of the District Council Chairman be deferred pending the finalisation and approval of the Council's budget 2021/22; and
- (3) the Task & Finish Group, Equality & Diversity report on the internal/staffing matters be put on the work Programme for March 2021.

(The meeting ended at 7.26pm)

CHAIR
9 February 2021