

Review Committee – 12 June 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **12 June 2018** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J C Burton
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Cllr J D Griffin
Cllr B T Hazlewood
Cllr N J Hookway
Cllr M Hoy

Cllr M J Lucas-Gill
Cllr Mrs C A Pavelin
Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr P J Shaw

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs D Hoy, I H Ward, A R Williams

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs C M Mason, J R F Mason, Mrs J E McPherson and C M Stanley.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr T E Mountain	-	for Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr S A Wilson	-	for Cllr J R F Mason
Mrs C A Weston	-	for Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr C C Cannell	-	for Cllr C M Stanley

OFFICERS PRESENT

M Harwood-White	-	Assistant Director, Commercial Services
A Law	-	Assistant Director, Legal Services/Monitoring Officer
M Thomas	-	Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services
R Snape	-	Building Control Team Leader
J Stacey	-	Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Democratic Services Officer

113 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

114 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Mrs D Hoy and M Hoy each declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6, Performance of Building Control, by virtue of having engaged the Council's Building Control Service.

115 PERFORMANCE OF BUILDING CONTROL

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services, which provided an update on the current performance of the Council's Building Control Service, further to a report presented to the Committee on 7 November 2017 following the restructure of the Service.

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- Interviewing for the post of Senior Building Control Officer would be taking place the following day.
- Reports that had come to the Review Committee outlining how the Service would be delivered covered Business Plan objectives, including recruitment, training and marketing of the Service. A business plan formalising these aspects could be produced.
- Since the Committee's meeting in November 2017, the smartphone app and online payment of fees had been introduced.
- Low staffing levels in Customer Services continued to be an issue in terms of Building Control related calls. Builders were asked for feedback in respect of the Building Control service and, where necessary, provided with assistance on site in using the app. Although the Council had no actual work flow system, the Building Control inbox ensured that any action taken on a case was appropriately marked to ensure Customer Services aware.
- The Council's payment system could be reviewed to ensure that icons were included to enable the Building Control fee to be paid easily within the system and that Customer Services staff were aware of the multi-channel approach now available.
- Projected income of £265,000 from the Service for the current year was based on a 70% market share for the District. This target had been negatively affected by extremely bad weather experienced over the winter, which affected the construction industry as well as having an impact on recruitment and retention of staff, which resulted in the Service having to turn work away.
- The pilot Quality Management scheme was operated by the LABC, which uses process maps to remove the risk of variable quality within Building Control. The Council's Building Control Service had audited against the processes with a view to achieving accreditation as part of the pilot scheme.
- 'On the job' staff training was provided in-house.
- There was currently no opportunity for the Council to take on apprentices as there is only a proposed statutory training scheme for Building Control

staff, co-ordinated by the University of Wolverhampton, which cannot yet be supported in-house. The Local Authority Building Control body was seeking to achieve a nationally agreed modular scheme.

- The Service had to recover the cost of the fee earning element of the work being cost neutral, although fee income is possible.
- Delays in recruitment of Building Control staff were due in part to the Council's recruitment processes including the need to gain approval to be able to offer a market force salary supplement and relocation fee to the package (the Service would not have been able to recruit to the posts without it). Business cases had to be put forward before the recruitment process could begin. In any event, very few applications had been received; employment agencies had been asked to provide feedback on the possible reasons for this. Issues highlighted were lower salary levels compared to neighbouring authorities and geographical location.
- The improved service since the introduction of the phone app was measured by the number of formal complaints recorded having fallen significantly, as well as direct feedback from builders. Positive feedback had been received from builders in terms of the processes, including the phone app, now in place.

It was agreed that this item would not be brought back for review by the Committee during the current municipal year.

Resolved

That progress made in implementing the new structure to stabilise and improve the performance of the Building Control Service be noted. (AD-P&RS)

116 EMERGENCY PLANNING AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Commercial Services, which provided further information regarding Emergency Planning and Business Continuity as sought by the Committee at its meeting on 9 January 2018.

It was noted that paragraph 4.3 of the report should read 'The Leader or the Deputy Leader, if they are available, will be the official spokesperson for the Council'.

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- Media training had been provided for the Leader, Deputy Leader, Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman to cover how they would be expected to interact with the media in the event of a large-scale emergency incident. The training had been delivered by an experienced journalist with the Mosaic company. A similar session had been provided to certain senior officers as they could be called as spokespersons for the Council in the

aftermath of an incident.

- Emergency Planning training for all Members had been held previously, which had covered the general response of the Council following an emergency and how this would link with the role of the Member. A similar session covering various aspects of Emergency Planning could be offered again to all Members. Cllr Mrs C A Weston would refer the matter to the Member Learning and Development Working Group for consideration.
- There is information on the Council's website advising residents of the process that would be followed in the case of an emergency situation. Whilst residents should be aware of where to go in the event of an emergency so that in the immediate aftermath of an event confusion is avoided, arrangements would be incident specific and coordinated by the Emergency Services whose instructions should be complied with. The Emergency Services were aware of the location of the Council's primary rest centres. The Council was part of the Essex Resilience Forum, which looked at community resilience, including how to get key messages to the public. The Emergency Planning Officer would respond to any requests for specific training.
- The Council's Emergency Planning officer worked closely with Parish/Town Councils and had attended their meetings to engage them in producing their own plans and to feed back into the District Council's Plan. Contact details for Parish/Town Council Members were kept up to date.
- The Essex Resilience Forum, which included Southend and Thurrock Borough Councils, was focussed on authorities providing mutual aid in an emergency, as no single authority would be able to deal with very large situations. The authorities followed the same procedures and used the same kit, which allowed mutual aid to be effective.
- The Council recognised the need to increase resilience in its Communications team and in other key areas. Other staff would receive training to assist the Communications team.
- London Southend Airport had been identified as a key risk, and emergency responses had been identified and tested. A multi-agency Emergency Planning Group had been established specifically for London Southend Airport.
- The Council had officers on call 24 hours a day who had authorisation for spending to a certain level in an emergency. There was always an on-call duty Assistant Director who would have authorisation for larger amounts of expenditure.
- Training was offered to all Council staff to deal with emergency situations. The Council's designated rest centres could be operational within a short space of time following an emergency situation.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted. (AD-CS)

117 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Committee considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which contained proposed changes to the Council's Constitution following meetings between the Review Committee project team and the Monitoring Officer.

Members referred to the wording in paragraph 6 of the Review Committee (Overview & Scrutiny) Procedure Rules relating to the appointment of the Chairman of the Review Committee. Cllr T E Mountain moved a motion, seconded by Cllr M Hoy, that the wording be amended to read that the nominee for the Chairman of the Review Committee should be put forward by Opposition Councillors only. The Administration Group should not be able to nominate the Review Committee Chairman, albeit from the Opposition Councillors.

Speaking against the Motion, some Members felt that the current arrangements, whereby all political groups were permitted to nominate to the Review Committee and that these nominations were the subject of a vote at Annual Council should be retained. In support of the Motion, it was felt that, if the Review Committee Chairman had been nominated by the Administration Group, it might be perceived by the public as an appointment rather than a nomination. It was noted that, although there was nothing in statute to say that the Chairman of the Review Committee had to be an opposition Member, the Council provided for this.

On a show of hands, the motion was declared defeated.

(Note: Cllrs C C Cannell, N J Hookway, M Hoy, T E Mountain and S A Wilson wished it to be recorded that they had voted in favour of the Motion. Cllr J C Burton wished it to be recorded that he had abstained from the vote.)

Recommended to Council

That the proposed changes to the Constitution, as detailed in the appendix to the officer report, be adopted. (AD-LS)

118 OVERALL WORK PROGRAMME AND METHODOLOGY

The Committee deliberated on a number of topics to be considered for the 2018/19 programme. Some of these topics had been included in the Review Committee's 2017/18 Annual report as possible topics for consideration by this year's Committee.

It was noted that the following were compulsory Agenda items for the Committee: Review of Treasury Management reports; the Community Safety Partnership and the Council's use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

Review Committee project teams were already established and undertaking the following reviews: 'The Voice of the Councillor', 'The Council's ICT Contract' and 'The Council's Constitution'.

Cllrs R R Dray, N J Cooper, Mrs J R Lumley and R Milne, who were no longer members of the Committee, would be asked if they would like to continue to be members of the reviews they had been involved in during 2017/18. A meeting of the Voice of the Councillor project team would be held on 21 June to look at the first section of the report. The next meeting of the ICT project team would be rescheduled and previous minutes would be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

Additional topics suggested by Members: 'Enforcement of Dog Fouling', 'Operation of the Development Committee' and the 'Section 151 Officer contract with Essex County Council' needed more information on the aspects to be reviewed and would be considered at the July meeting of the Committee.

In addition, the following were added to the list of possible topics and would be considered at the July meeting:

- Issues in respect of ongoing maintenance to the Greater Anglia railway line running through the District.
- Update on possible closure of Castle Road recycling centre in Rayleigh.

It was agreed that the following reviews would be undertaken by the Committee:

- Housing and Homelessness Strategy - a consultation was taking place between July and September 2018 on the new Strategy. It was felt that it would be timely to include this review at the Committee's September meeting as feedback on the responses from the consultation would be available by then and the Committee could have input prior to the Strategy being finalised.
- How the removal of payment machines at Council premises had impacted on residents. Cllr Mrs L Shaw had been in discussion with officers on this matter and would provide a verbal report to a future meeting on the outcome. The Committee would then be in a position to decide the scope of the review. Members could email Cllr Mrs Shaw with any questions they would like put to officers.

The Committee considered a suggestion of looking at the recent consultation by the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) in respect of the hospital mergers. It was noted that Southend, Essex and Thurrock had established a statutory Joint Committee to scrutinise the mid and South Essex STP. At their meeting of the 6 June they had agreed the terms of reference for the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The joint Scrutiny Committee was advised last week that the CCG Joint Committee

would meet on 6 July to take decisions on the service changes proposed in the consultation. This meeting would be held in public.

Members felt that it would be useful if the STP and the CCG Joint Committee representatives could be invited to a meeting of Full Council to outline the changes they had decided on following public consultation. It was felt that the Chairman of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee could also be invited to this meeting to provide a different perspective on the matter. This would give all Members the opportunity to ask questions.

Recommended to Council

That representatives from the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership and the CCG Joint Committee be invited to a meeting of Full Council to outline the changes they had decided on following the public consultation.

119 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee considered the Key Decisions Document and noted its contents.

The meeting closed at 9.54 pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.