

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 5 December 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **5 December 2023** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Vice-Chairman: Cllr N J Booth

Cllr Mrs D L Belton	Cllr R Milne
Cllr A G Cross	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr R Lambourne	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr E O K Mason	Cllr S E Wootton
Cllr Mrs C M Mason	

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs J R Gooding and L J Newport.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs E P Gadsdon, J N Gooding, G W Myers and Mrs S J Page.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr D S Efde - for Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon
Cllr R C D Linden - for Cllr Mrs S J Page

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Summers - Strategic Director
T Willis - Interim Director, Resources
S Worthington - Acting Service Manager, Democratic Services, RDC & BBC
W Szyszka - Democratic Services Officer

OTHERS PRESENT

D Kealy - Acting Chief Inspector, for Item 7

241 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Cllr Mrs J E McPherson moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr Mrs D L Belton, that the order of the agenda be amended to Item 7 being considered prior to Item 6 and this was agreed unanimously.

242 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Members considered the report of the Director of Communities & Health updating Members on the delivery of the joint Castle Point and Rochford District Community Safety Partnership (CP & R CSP) priorities and actions.

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In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the data at paragraph 1.3 of the report included Parish Councils as well as Town Councils.

Members noted that Parish and Town Councils were encouraged by Essex Police to urge residents to continue reporting crimes to the Police following a decline in crime reporting during earlier years. The Inspector also advised Members that community meetings were regularly held and as a result, public confidence in reporting crime increased.

A query was raised relating to paragraph 1.4 of the report as to how much was spent on each item as per the funding breakdown.

A further query was raised in relation to the grant funding amount remaining unchanged for several years.

Officers advised that responses to Members' queries above would be provided outside of the meeting.

A question was asked regarding the statutory membership of CP & R CSP as to whether all partners attended meetings of the CSP and whether there were any organisations that were not invited to these meetings.

In response, officers advised that the meetings were indeed statutory and invitations were extended to all organisations. The current objectives of the CSP focused on refreshing the partnership. Members noted that further information on CSP objectives would be provided to Members outside of the meeting.

Members requested that a report be brought back to the Committee on statutory partners that did not attend the CSP meetings. Officers confirmed that this would be actioned.

A question was asked relating to provisions for initiatives by Parish and Town Councils to continue with community safety taking into account how the CSP prioritised crime within the District.

Officers responded that CSP was being refreshed and its priorities were based on statistics; however, criminal activity could be considered at the next Working Group meeting. Further information would be brought back to the Committee outside of the meeting.

A question was raised relating to methods of reporting crime and how it was decided that some reports were not given a crime reference number. In response, Members were advised that online reports were forwarded to a central database system during which the report would be audited and a crime reference number automatically provided via letter or email.

A query was raised in relation to taxi training referred to on page 7.3 of the report as to how awareness was being measured. In response, officers advised

that actual means of quantifying awareness was challenging and not always possible to determine.

A suggestion was made that a self-evaluation assessment be carried out before and after the awareness training and officers advised that this could be looked into in greater detail.

In response to a Member query as to whether reports were circulated back to Members, officers advised that this was not currently in place; however, this would be considered and information provided outside of the meeting.

The following Member points were noted:-

- In relation to paragraph 5.1 of the report, Members wished to see an increase in funding;
- In relation to page 7.3 of the report and the Bar'n'Bus initiative, a query was raised whether this covered the whole District with officers advising that this would be expanded to cover the whole District, and;
- Members requested that night-time economy be investigated to support Project Minerva and that nightclubs which were not part of the initiative be advised to join.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted. (DCH)

243 MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Members considered the report of the Interim Director, Resources providing an update of the Council's Treasury Management activity for the period April 2023 to September 2023 in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy and good practice in treasury management.

A Member query was raised as to why there was an increase in capital expenditure relating to S106 monies. Officers clarified that S106 monies were allocated to appropriate projects thus an increase in the capital expenditure; however, noting that the money could only be allocated to projects that met specific purposes defined in the agreement between the Council and landowner/developer. As a result, this could cause some delay in the allocation of funds.

A question was raised relating to the £777k sum at paragraph 2.9.1 of the report as to why it continued to be reported back to Members. Officers responded that the sum would continue to be reported back as it was part of the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). Members noted that the figure was a historic transaction and not external borrowing. Officers further advised that Link would be commissioned to investigate the origin of the sum subject to the fee of commission.

Recommends to Council

That the Council's Treasury activities for the period ending 30 September 2023 be noted.

(10 Members voted in favour of the recommendation, 0 against and 3 Members abstained.)

244 REGULATORY INVESTIGATIVE POWERS ACT (RIPA)

Members considered the report of the Director of Communities & Health updating Members on the use of RIPA over the past year and to allow for the review of the Council's RIPA policy.

A Member raised a query relating to what instances would trigger the use of RIPA. Officers advised that RIPA was usually instigated for fraud where normal information could not be provided in a transparent manner.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted. (DCH)

245 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S OUTSIDE BODIES

Members considered the report of the Outside Bodies Task & Finish Group providing an update on the review of the Council's Outside Bodies.

In response to a Member query as to whether the review could distinguish between bodies where the Council had voting and/or managerial rights, officers advised that the terms of reference for each outside body would be appended the final report for Members' information.

Officers further added that the Finchfield and Dutch Cottage Trusts were charitable trusts and were dealt with separately to outside bodies; however, if it was deemed appropriate, a request could be made for these to be examined separately.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted. (A/DPG)

246 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee noted the contents of the Key Decisions Document.

A request was made for the content of items to be checked prior to the next meeting.

A query was raised relating to Key Decision Reference 01/23 on page 2 as to why this was reinstated on the Key Decision Document and it was noted that

the item should be amended in the next iteration of the document to show the Clements Hall location.

A Member raised concerns regarding Key Decision Reference 05/23 on page 2 due to timing implications of the project relating to S106 funding and officers advised that they would report back to Members on this outside the meeting.

247 WORK PLAN

The Committee noted the contents of the Work Plan.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Chairman

Date

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