

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 5 July 2023

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

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

Cllr Mrs D S Belton	Cllr G W Myers
Cllr A G Cross	Cllr Mrs S J Page
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr J N Gooding	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr R Lambourne	Cllr S E Wootton
Cllr R Milne	

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs J R Gooding and R Linden.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs C M Mason and E O K Mason.

OFFICERS PRESENT

E Yule	- Strategic Director
G Campbell	- Director, Policy & Delivery
T Lilley	- Director, Community & Health
C Mayhew	- Acting Joint Director, People & Governance
T Willis	- Interim Director, Resources
S Worthington	- Acting Service Manager – Democratic Services, RDC and BBC
K Redston	- Strategic Partnership Officer
W Szyszka	- Democratic Services Officer

OTHERS PRESENT

B Mahmoud	- Active Essex
V Marzouki	- RRAVS
J Sawford	- MegaCentre
S Williamson	- MegaCentre

125 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

126 COST OF LIVING

Members considered the report of the Director of Community and Health providing Members with an update on the work undertaken by officers to respond to the cost-of-living crisis.

The Chairman welcomed guests from RRAVS, Active Essex and the MegaCentre to address the Committee and provide Members with update presentations on the cost-of-living crisis within the district.

In response to a Member question, officers advised that resident communication was implemented imminently upon the Council's declaration of the cost-of-living crisis. Officers worked to ensure that the Council's website was regularly updated with clear signposts to the Council's partners that offered resident support. Officers also clarified that the information was provided to residents in all formats, i.e., digitally; via leaflets and posters displayed in community hubs and GP practices and face to face. A Working Group of key partners had been established to ensure continuity of messages and support for those in most need.

A Member queried whether a cost-of-living leaflets were delivered to every household to ensure accessibility.

In response, officers clarified that paper format information was likely to have been out of date very quickly due to the changing landscape and support being offered. Officers explained they were continuing to work closely with partners to ensure residents received information through existing connections, community groups and signposting. It was also noted that communication was regularly reviewed through the working group.

A concern was raised in relation to paragraph 1.2 on page 6.1 of the report and that the Council's website contained information from 2022 and was therefore no longer relevant.

In response, officers advised that the officer responsible for this information did not have the capacity to regularly research and upload information due to constant changes; however, officers requested that should Members notice any out-of-date information to report this to the Director of Community and Health to be reflected on the Council's website.

A Member queried information at paragraph 1.3 on page 6.2 of the report and requested further clarity as to why this related to an event in that took place in 2022. A further question was raised as to why events were not taking place across the whole District.

Officers responded advising that it was an error and should have read 2023. The event was a Health & Wellbeing event to launch the joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy for Castle Point & Rochford. Officers took the opportunity to use the event to promote and support the Council's work around the cost of living.

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Officers further explained that due to limited resources it would not be possible to run events across the district, but a further event was planned for September 2023 at Mill Arts & Events Centre.

A Member queried whether the action plan as outlined at paragraph 1.8 on page 6.3 of the report could be shared with Members. Officers responded that the action plan for 2022/23 would be circulated to Members.

A Member raised a concern as to why Foulness and the Wakerings had not been involved in the initiative.

Officers agreed that this would be dealt with outside of the meeting.

A Member queried what the budget was in relation to paragraph 2.1 on page 6.3 of the report.

Officers responded that £5,000 was allocated from the Leader's pot as well as there being additional resources from Rochford District Council to facilitate this work. It was noted that resources required further work and support.

A Member asked whether the Council and residents had access to all types of partners that could aid with various issues.

Officers advised that the Council was able to signpost residents to the appropriate partners whenever it was necessary noting that no residents were overlooked.

Resolved

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

127 COST OF LIVING PAYMENTS TO RESIDENTS

Members considered the report of the Interim Director of Resources inviting Members to consider the creation of a working group.

It was agreed that the following Members be appointed to the Working Group:-

Cllrs Mrs D L Belton; N J Booth; Mrs E P Gadsdon; Mrs J E McPherson and D J Sperring.

Cllr Mrs D L Belton requested that Cllr M Hoy be included in the Membership of the Working Group and this was agreed by the Chairman.

It was requested by the Chairman that a report of the Working Group be brought back to the Committee in September 2023.

Resolved

That the Committee creates a Working Group as set out in the report. (IDR)

128 ONETEAM TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL QUARTER 1 UPDATE

Members considered the report of the Director of Policy and Delivery providing Members with a quarterly update on the progress of the OneTeam Transformation Programme.

A Member queried what steps the Council was going to take to minimise risk resulting from having interim directors appointed.

Officers responded that a succession plan had been implemented resulting in one of the directors staying at the Council for a longer period of time to minimise the risk of the Council not having a statutory officer appointed. Other interim positions were filled up with a permanent director or split across two acting up directors.

In response to a Member question, officers advised that there was no adverse impact on service delivery due to the savings accrued as a result of the Partnership. It was also noted that Members would be notified should there be instances where service delivery was affected. Officers further added that performance measures were implemented and would be added to the business case.

Resolved

That the Committee notes the progress of the OneTeam Transformation Programme. (DPD)

129 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2022/23

Members considered the report of the Interim Director of Resources setting out a summary of the Council's Treasury Management activity for the 2022/23 financial year.

In response to a Member question, officers advised that the Council had a variety of counterparties that the Council could invest in; however, is limited to due to the rules implemented by the Council. Members noted that no investment was fully safe; however, current investments were very safe and the Council would be open to investment with major banks based on Central Government guidance.

Recommended to Council

That the content of this report be recommended to Full Council. (IDR)

130 APPROVAL OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT

Members considered the draft Annual Report to be submitted to Council detailing the work undertaken during the past year.

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Recommended to Council

That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report be received.

131 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee noted the contents of the Key Decisions Document.

132 WORK PLAN

The Committee noted the contents of the Work Plan.

The Chairman asked that September's meeting be moved to 13 September 2023 and this was agreed.

The Chairman agreed that a Review of Outside Bodies and External Partnerships Task and Finish Group be constituted. The following Members were appointed:-

Cllr Mrs J E McPherson;
Cllr R Milne, and
Cllrs Mrs S J Page.

The Chairman agreed that a review of the work of the Highway Rangers be constituted. The following Members were appointed:-

Cllr A G Cross;
Cllr R Lambourne, and
Cllr D J Sperring.

It was agreed that the two Task and Finish Groups would report back to the Committee in the latter part of the year.

It was also agreed that a report reviewing the Parks for Nature initiative be presented before the Committee in September.

Members provisionally agreed that a report on Planning Enforcement be brought to the Committee in November 2023.

The meeting closed at 9.41 pm.

Chairman

Date

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