

Review Committee – 3 March 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **3 March 2020** when there were present:-

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

Cllr Mrs D L Belton
Cllr C C Cannell
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Cllr B T Hazlewood

Cllr Mrs D Hoy
Cllr M Hoy
Cllr Mrs C A Pavelin
Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr P J Shaw

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs D S Efde, J E Newport, Mrs C E Roe, C M Stanley, M J Steptoe and M J Webb

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr A H Eves - for Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr Mrs C A Weston - for Cllr R Milne
Cllr D Merrick - for Cllr Mrs J E McPherson

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton - Managing Director
L Moss - Assistant Director, People & Communities
D Tribe - Assistant Director, Transformation & Customer
M Power - Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT (for item 7)

Inspector C Calder - Castle Point & Rochford Community Policing Team

42 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43 'CONNECT' CULTURAL AND TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic Services on the call-in of an Executive Decision.

Members outlined the reasons for the call-in of the decision. It was felt that the report was generic, with little detail or specific reference to Rochford District Council. There was also concern that it would not be possible to quantify the

financial benefits that could be achieved by the programme until the planning phase; the plan was to spend £140,000 before it was known the return that would be available. It was felt that more work should be done on this prior to committing to this level of expenditure. It had been understood that this would be considered by the Investment Board, as a project, not the Executive.

The Managing Director responded that it was essential the Council invested in the way it delivers services that best reflect the current demands and needs of residents and the way the Council's assets and buildings are used. Individual elements of spending were detailed in the report.

The Council's IT system was now in the cloud, enabling it to be accessed remotely, which would provide new opportunities in the way services are delivered. The challenge faced in identifying what the financial benefits would be was an issue faced by many Local Authorities.

Members felt that the asset delivery programme, agreed 18 months previously, had identified opportunities for better working and cost savings following the move to the Freight House, including the opportunity for 'hot desking'; there should therefore be a clear idea of what the savings would be. It was pointed out that, although the asset delivery programme did contain detailed financial data, the Connect programme was a different piece of work but would build on what would emerge from the asset strategy.

The opportunity to modernise systems in conjunction with the move of Council offices to the Freight House site was acknowledged. The concern was the initial cost and that the aims were unclear. There was no information in the Outline Business Case about which, if any, services were not being delivered effectively or where residents felt services could be improved.

It was easier to measure progress if there were specific aims laid out at the start of the project. There was also the question of whether the Council would exploit all the opportunities available in Office 365 and whether potential already available could be unlocked.

Most staff would be able to work remotely because of the Council's investment in software applications in the azure cloud. The Council would make the best use of the software and would be looking at opportunities for 'smarter' working. External support would help to identify investments in staff projects, each of which would have a business case for consideration by the Investment Board. The consultant advised that the Council had no choice but to undergo a change programme such as this; this was reiterated during the recent peer review. The peer review report had recommended that a change programme was needed; however, its role was not to advise on how this could be achieved.

The Connect Programme would be linked with the Asset Delivery Programme to ascertain how progress is being made and be subject to external review under the corporate change programme.

In response to a question as to why the Asset Delivery Programme had been undertaken before the Connect Programme, Members were advised that the ADP specification included detail on what was required in terms of IT systems and workforce requirements. The Connect programme focused on how the workforce would operate in the new premises provided in the ADP. The two aspects were connected and the Connect Programme had been running alongside the ADP. Advice had been taken from other councils undertaking similar projects during the past two to three years of planning.

The Connect Programme, as shown on the timeline in the report, was on target and regular updates would be made to the Investment Board. The information in the report in respect of the budget was correct at the time of printing.

Members had been impressed during their visit to East Suffolk Council, which had recently implemented a cultural change programme. Particularly impressive was the welcoming and positive atmosphere in the offices and the positive interaction between Members and staff.

The benefits of the Connect Programme would include the customer webchat facility and increasing the ways and times that residents would be able to contact the Council. It was considerably cheaper to have automated transactions and residents often prefer this. As part of the Connect Programme, there would be engagement with stakeholders to ensure that the Council was getting it right, including the alignment of access to services with what the customers want.

The £293,000 funding coming from underspend reserves in 2019/20 would fully fund the programme. Projects that emerge from the programme would be dependent on a business case and considered through the normal budget process as they arose.

The Managing Director would advise the date that the Connect Programme would be presented to the Investment Board.

The Chairman stated that, although the report could have contained more detail and information, it appeared to offer a clear starting point in terms of ambition and aim. Cllr T G Cutmore moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr Mrs L Shaw, that the Executive decision be accepted. Members could request detail of what had been done to date with the IT programme from the Portfolio Holder for IT and Communications and Deputy Leader.

The motion passed on a show of hands.

Resolved

That the report be accepted and the Executive decision made.

44 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, People & Communities, which provided an update on the delivery of the joint Castle Point and Rochford District Community Safety Partnership priorities and actions.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

Funding for 2020/21 was anticipated to be the same as in 2019/20, that is, £12,337.

Inspector Calder advised that the annual strategic assessment had identified three priority areas for 2020/21: protecting vulnerable people, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and violence against the person. Burglary dwelling which had been a priority area in 2019/20 was not to be included in the coming year. According to a Police survey, 84% of residents in Rochford said they feel safe in the area during the day. 36% of residents believe ASB has become more of a problem in the last 12 months (although ASB incidents reported to Essex Police have decreased by 7.4% in the Rochford District). There had been an increase in hate crime reported across the Essex Police area of 20.7%; this compared with an increase of 26.2% in the Rochford area. Essex Police had encouraged the public to report hate crimes, which may have had an impact on these figures. Some of this crime was considered to be 'low level'.

There had been some good successes in tackling ASB in the Rochford District during 2019/20. The local policing team now had a dedicated CPS lawyer assigned to cases, which meant better results in court. Inspector Calder emphasised that residents must be encouraged to report every incident.

A proportion of anti-social behaviour was connected to drug-taking. Although there was a focus on Canvey Island, the policing team was working to ensure time was spent across both districts.

It was felt that residents were being deterred from reporting crime because they received no feedback. Inspector Calder advised that a Facebook account had been established specifically for the Rochford and Rayleigh area, which enabled the Policing Team to post updates.. It was requested that details of this Facebook page be shown on the Rochford District Council website as well as the Council Facebook page.

Although there was no CCTV in the District, there were strategic ANPR points across the District, which assisted the Police in identifying vehicles; there had been a lot of work in the area of thefts of and from vehicles, resulting in successes and arrests.

There would be two new 'children and young people' officers starting in April for the policing area, one specifically for the Rochford District. A large part of their work would take place in schools.

There was liaison between partners in respect of allocation of funding where the aims of each respective organisation overlapped. Because Rochford was a small District, often there were the same people sitting on a number of local groups and funding would be challenged if not linking to the CSP priorities. For note, applications for the Essex Community Development Fund must be approved by the CSP. From a partnership perspective, there were several joint projects, e.g., Sanctuary, Youth Service and other well-being partners.

The Community Safety Partnership strategic assessment determined what the priorities would be each year, based on a process of risk assessment and ranking. The three priorities for 2020/21 continued to have higher statistics for incidents. Violence against the person had increased by 31.1% and so remained a priority.

It was recognised that residents must take responsibility for security at home, including ensuring that all windows were closed.

The six Town Team officers that had started in the District in July 2019 had increased policing visibility in the area and had engaged with residents.

Resolved

That the progress made against the 2019/20 Rochford District Community Safety Partnership action plan be noted.

45 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

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

46 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its work plan.

- Carbon neutral group –The Overview & Scrutiny Officer to confirm to Members of the Committee that a report on the work of the Carbon neutral group would be considered by the Committee prior to Full Council.
- It was requested that the report on Emergency Planning due at the 2 April 2020 meeting include information on the procedures in place to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 virus as it continued to escalate over the next few months.
- A future review of the impact of Brexit on the way the Council delivered services could be considered by the Committee in the new Municipal year.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Chairman

Date

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