

ACTIVE AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 14th June, 2012

Present:- Councillor George Cairns – in the Chair
Councillors Bailey, Cooper, Mrs Heesom, Holland, Lawton,
Miss Olszewski, Plant, Miss Walklate and Mrs Winfield

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Bannister, Councillor Mrs Cornes and Councillor Mrs Williams.

3. MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2012 be agreed as a correct record

4. UPDATE REGARDING WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE BATESWOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE WORKING GROUP.

Consideration was given to a briefing note updating the Committee on the progress of the working group. A site visit had been conducted by the working group and officers to Bateswood Local Nature reserve on 11th May. This had allowed members to see the current arrangements at the nature reserve. Following this, the working group met with officers on 23rd May to review the results of the consultation exercise and to discuss the site visit. It was agreed to set up a meeting to invite interested parties to present their views to the working party. The groups were: Halmerend Wildlife Trust, The Equestrian Forum and Kidsgrove and District Anglers. Kidsgrove and District Anglers were invited to ascertain how they managed their angling club at Bathpool Park. This meeting had been arranged for 27th June.

The Council's Scrutiny Officer gave a further verbal update which informed the Committee that in addition to the interested parties mentioned on the briefing note, the ward councillors for Halmerend had also been invited to the 27th June meeting.

The Committee also received information regarding consultation/mapping results including a map illustrating the location of respondents to the petition.

RESOLVED: That the information be received

5. THIRD SECTOR COMMISSIONING

The Committee received a report on Third Sector Commissioning, prior to its submission to Cabinet on 20th June 2012. The purpose of the report was to inform

the Cabinet of the work and outcomes of the Third Sector Commissioning Framework Project Group and to identify the opportunities (where available) for joining the collaborative approach being adopted as part of the Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP) work. It was envisaged that efficiencies would be maximised and services jointly commissioned with other organisations, ensuring in the process that there was no detrimental effect on the overall service to residents of the Borough in line with service outlines.

Members questioned where Newcastle would stand with regard to funding, as the Borough would be part of a consortium. It was felt that local services needed to be protected. Contracts would be secured for the people of Newcastle. Money may need to go to Staffordshire County Council to be held centrally, but it did not mean the money would not come back to Newcastle. The aim was to try and get the best value for Newcastle money and joining with two other authorities would help to achieve this. Value for money was the key point, whether this be from a reduction in spend or achieving more for Newcastle's money.

Members were concerned that money may go to 'hotspots', which it was considered there were not many of in Newcastle. Members questioned whether during negotiations it could be requested that only limited amounts of money go to 'hotspots'. A target would be set to guarantee work within the Borough and there would be minimum targets that must be met before money would be paid out.

Members expressed concern that vital services could be lost. There was no suggestion that services would not be provided, but it may be by a different service provider depending on whoever won the contract.

Some Members felt that it would be a positive step to be served by the County Council, as long as it was ensured that money and services went to Newcastle-under-Lyme. It was also highlighted that there would be back office efficiencies through sharing resources such as staff and buildings. It was felt that any saving would be beneficial.

The Committee resolved that Cabinet be informed they were happy to support the recommendations to enter into the bidding process. However, it should be made clear that the needs of Borough residents should be given ultimate priority with regard to the tendering exercise, with the needs of the bidding organisations coming second.

RESOLVED: (a) That the information be received.

(b) That Cabinet be informed the Committee support the recommendations to enter into the bidding process. However, the needs of Borough residents should be given ultimate priority with regard to the tendering exercise. The needs of the bidding organisations should come second.

(c) That the committee revisit this item later in the year.

6. **WORK PLAN**

The work plan was considered by the Committee and items suggested for the forthcoming municipal year.

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The Committee requested that the Co-ordinating Committee determine which committee should scrutinise the Health and Well Being Strategy. This could potentially be a joint project between two scrutiny committees.

Members expressed concern, and questioned what progress had been made, with regard to Kidsgrove Sports Centre and the fact it had been closed for a number of months awaiting repairs to its roof. There was concern that the building had been neglected and not had the necessary money spent on it to maintain it to a sufficient standard. It was felt that the entire building needed refurbishing. Officers confirmed that Staffordshire County Council were committed to repairing the roof and were revising the completion date for the works. Kidsgrove Sports Centre was owned by Staffordshire County Council, and a tri-party agreement for the use of the facility existed between Staffordshire County Council, Newcastle Borough Council and Clough Hall High School. Certain parties may have certain responsibilities as part of this agreement and the maintenance problems may not fall under the remit of this Council. Members questioned whether this Council had asked the County Council to maintain the building or if it had been allowed to degenerate because this Council had not put pressure on the County Council to maintain it. The Chair clarified that problems had been raised previously with the County and County Council officers had ensured that necessary works had been carried out. It was resolved that the works needed to be completed as soon as possible with regular maintenance checks.

RESOLVED: (a) That the work plan be received.

(b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee determine which committee should scrutinise the Health and Well Being Strategy.

(c) That a guarantee be sought from Staffordshire County Council regarding the maintenance and upkeep of Kidsgrove Sports Centre.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business considered.

COUNCILLOR GEORGE CAIRNS
Chair