

Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee
Wednesday, 18 December 2013

Present Members: Cllr Reginald Bailey, Cllr George Cairns, Cllr David Loades, Cllr Ian Matthews, Cllr Elizabeth Shenton, Cllr David Stringer and Cllr Robin Studd (Chair)

Present Officers: Dave Adams – Executive Director Operational Services, Andy Arnott – Leisure and Cultural Services Project Officer, Rob Foster – Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, Martin Stevens - Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Colin Eastwood, Cllr Marion Reddish and Cllr Gill Williams.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. Community Centre Review

The Chairman stated that the report by the Community Centre Task and Finish Group was a generic one and did not focus on specific community centres. He therefore hoped that Members would not focus on specific community centres during the debate. The Chairman asked Cllr Elizabeth Shenton, the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to present the report.

Cllr Shenton stated that a huge amount of work had taken place since her report at the last meeting and she thanked Members and Officers for their efforts. She believed the work of the Task and Finish Group represented a very successful model going forward. It was important to note that the Council had a key definition of a Community Centre, which was defined within the report. A public consultation exercise had been undertaken between February and June 2013 and a tour of all fifteen community centres had been undertaken in February. This had been a positive move as it changed the direction of travel for the group. The Task and Finish Group report contained a number of proposals to the issues that they had identified. These included generic proposals that could be applied to and adopted by all management committees and some specific proposals to be addressed with Committees on a centre by centre basis. A report on the outcome of the study would be

received by Cabinet in autumn 2014. Some of the key proposals included producing and implementing a comprehensive community centre guide along with relevant training, in conjunction with strategic partners by July 2014. A simple but effective way of improving communication was a single point of contact for the community centres to liaise with at the Council. Other proposals included improvements in procurement, electricity and bulk purchasing. It was proposed to undertake the proposals identified in section 3 of the report within existing revenue resources. Both Members and Officers would help to implement the proposals. It was worth noting that two community centres did not engage with the Task and Finish Group. The Scrutiny brief had originally been to look at other community facilities but it was decided to focus solely on community centres due to the level of work required.

The Vice Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Cllr David Loades, thanked the Officers and Members who had contributed to the report. He was also grateful to the community centres, the vast majority of which had engaged with the Task and Finish group. There were issues of cost to consider and the potential to do things differently. It was also important to show support to the community centres. He recommended the continuation of the work of the Task and Finish Group to proceed with an assessment of all community centres in all areas to fully understand the situation.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Shenton and Cllr Loades for their contribution. He stated that the review had been long overdue. He believed the work of the group to be a good model for Task and Finish Groups in the future.

A Member commented that communication with the centres was important believing the centres had the potential to thrive with the right expertise. A Member added that delivery needed to be precise and concise. The emphasis on delivery by the Community Centres was important.

There was a discussion about the future format of the group. It was suggested that a Cabinet Panel was the best way forward for the group. The Leader of the Council stated that he would discuss the prospect of delegated authority with the Portfolio Holder. It was also requested that a timeline be constructed by Officers, for implementing the proposals.

RESOLVED:

A) That the Community Centre Task and Finish Review report be endorsed.

B) That Officers establish a timeline for implementing the proposals contained within the report.

C) That a Community Centre Cabinet Panel be established, with the Leader, to discuss the prospect of delegated authority with the Portfolio Holder.

5. Work Plans for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Health Scrutiny Committee

The Chair of the Active and Cohesive Overview and Scrutiny Committee stated that the Allotments Task and Finish Group would be concluding their work in February. The Committee had recently held a successful joint meeting with the Health Scrutiny Committee on the issue of physical activity. He noted that the work plans now listed the remits of each scrutiny committee and he would be working with the Scrutiny Officer to ensure the areas within the remit received appropriate consideration.

The Chair of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee stated that at the last meeting the Committee had considered the membership of the Aspire board. Aspire wished to reduce the number of Borough Councillors on the board from 3 to 1. The Committee endorsed this proposal, but recommended that remuneration should not be offered to the Borough Councillor, that the representative should be a Member of the Executive and that there were appropriate substitution procedures in place. The Housing Capital Strategy had been discussed and the Asset Management Strategy had been considered in some detail. He was keen to ensure that the local Ward Members were informed of the assets that fell within their ward which were on the list. The Committee had received an excellent report on Ryecroft. This was an important project for scrutiny and one which he expected the Committee to complete extensive work on in the future.

Cllr David Loades commented on the work plan for the Health Overview Scrutiny Committee. He stated that it was important to ensure good attendance by Members of the Council and the public to the forthcoming accountability session in January. It was important for the Committee to look at the review of the CCG's clinical priorities in relation to alcohol and suggested that this be added to the work plan.

The Chair of the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee stated that at the last meeting they had considered the Asset Management strategy but without the confidential appendix, which actually listed the potential assets for disposal. It was an item which required consideration, as to how best for it to be scrutinised in the future. One suggestion was for it to be considered in its entirety by just one committee in future. She was hopeful that the Scrutiny Café would be better attended in the New Year. She asked for the Scrutiny of the Post Office Network to be removed from the potential future items box on the work plan as this had already been considered.

The Scrutiny Officer gave an update on the items that had been considered at the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee and the work plan.

6. Forward Plan

The Chair of the Transformation and Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee requested that, 'the Wholly Owned Company for Communication Services,' referred to on page 75 in the agenda documents should be added to the work plan for the Transformation and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair of the Active and Cohesive Overview & Scrutiny Committee stated that he believed the Committee he chaired should meet more frequently. In response the Democratic Services Officer stated that the Committee was able to call extra meetings when needed and this had happened with Keele Golf Course. There had also been an extra joint meeting with the Health Scrutiny Committee on Physical activity. A Member added that there was a limit on resources. The Democratic Services Officer stated that any requests for the Council Diary should be sent to the Democratic Services Manager.

A Member stated that under Allotment Policy in the Forward Plan it listed, "Not Applicable", under the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, where it should have stated the Active and Cohesive Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. Task and Finish Group Status Update

The Chair of the Allotments Task and Finish Group suggested a minor correction to the update document. It was only Officers that had met the Parish Councils and not the group itself.

The Chair of the Constitution Review Working Group stated that a report from the group would be received by the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January. The Working Group were considering a number of areas including:

- The introduction of a Vice-Chair for the Health Scrutiny Committee and increasing the Membership of the Committee.
- The future of the Overview and Co-ordinating Committee and its possible replacement with a Scrutiny Chair / Vice Chairs group.
- The remits of the Scrutiny Committees with particular focus on the Health Scrutiny Committee.
- The possible introduction of a public question time at Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet.

- There was a general agreement that Portfolio Holder Question Time was working well and so the Group wanted it to be referenced in the constitution.
- The importance of training for Chairs and Vice Chairs.
- Formalising the concept of pre-cabinet scrutiny.
- Grants Assessment Panel.

The Chair thanked the Officers who had been supporting the Working Group who had provided excellent support. She asked Members to feedback to her on any suggestions for changes to the remits of the Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair of the HS2 Working Group stated that he was really pleased with how the group had worked and Full Council had received a preliminary report from the group. He thanked the two Scrutiny Officers who had supported him. He expected the group to continue over the next two years to look at specific issues as required.

8 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business within the meaning of section 100 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chairman and the Committee thanked, Martin Stevens (Democratic Services Officer) for the work he had completed for the Borough Council during his Secondment and wished him well for the future.