

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12th February, 2013

Present:- Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Shenton – in the Chair

Councillors Councillor George Cairns, Councillor Colin Eastwood, Councillor Mrs Ann Heames, Councillor Mrs Hilda Johnson, Councillor David Loades, Councillor Ian Matthews, Councillor Mark Olszewski, Councillor Miss June Walklate and Councillor Mrs Gillian Williams

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Clarke and Councillor Sweeney.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Chair provided the Committee with a verbal update regarding the Community Centre Review. The task and finish group had undertaken a tour of all fifteen community centres on 7th and 8th February and all centres had been asked to complete a questionnaire from the group. The task and finish group were well received at the centres and provided assurance that centres would not be closed. Some management committees were aware that there would not be closures, but others were not. The task and finish group would meet in the next few weeks to discuss the findings from the tour.

Task and finish group members felt the tour had been a worthwhile exercise, with a lot of information collected from the centres and the centres also appreciated the investment in time by Members to undertake the tour. The diversity within the centres was noted; they were diverse in such areas as the facilities they offered, their constitutions and the management structures that were in place. Some community centres were working very well, with one having bookings into 2014, with others needing a helping hand. Members noted how much effort the people running the centres were putting into what they were doing and were impressed with the individuals who gave their time. There were Members of the Committee who sat on community centre management committees who advised that there were no concerns amongst their management committees with regard to the task and finish group tour.

Members not on the task and finish group were of the opinion that there was a need for community centres to diversify and questioned whether there were any examples of best practice nationally which could be used. This was considered a good point by the Chair and would be referred back to the task and finish group. One possibility was that a guide could be produced of how to run a community centre for new management committees, as currently new management committees were left to hit the ground running. A new energy rate for Newcastle Borough Council had been negotiated, but the community centres were not included in this, which was another area that could be included in best practice.

Members of the task and finish group informed the Committee of their concern at visiting one centre and realising that six burners on a gas stove were lit to try and warm the kitchen. There were no health and safety signs up in most of the centres and a lack of burglar alarms, but the centres had had their electricity check. Members noted that a lot of centres had installed burglar alarms themselves, and it was noted that for the centres without alarms, insurance premiums would be being paid for no benefit if there was not an alarm.

The questionnaire that had been distributed to the community centres prior to the tour and the timetable for the task and finish group tour were distributed to the Committee for their consideration.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **WORK PLANS FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The work plans for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Health Scrutiny Committee were discussed.

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee provided an update on the Committee's work. Combined Healthcare (CHC) and the speed of the closure of beds were still being monitored and updates regarding this were still required. This was considered a big concern by Members of the Health Scrutiny Committee, as there was a risk that CHC may not get foundation status and could be taken over by the Staffordshire Mental Health Trust (SMHT). The situation of existing CHC staff was questioned by Co-ordinating Committee members. Staff numbers had been reduced and a reduction in administration support might be seen. It was considered likely that it would be taken over, and if it was, standards needed to remain the same. The Health Scrutiny Committee would continue to voice their concerns.

There were still concerns regarding the University Hospital of North Staffordshire (UHNS). Health Scrutiny Committee members were due to visit the new Accident and Emergency department on 5 March, where they would tour the department and receive a presentation. It was hoped that the new interim Chief Executive would be in attendance in order to communicate the Committee's views to him. It was felt that there were too many people attending A & E instead of going to see their doctor or to a walk-in service. People could not be turned away from the accident and emergency department, but LINK were conducting a survey at the A & E department at Burton-upon-Trent hospital to ascertain why people were using the A & E. There were also concerns that walk-in services, as some were not operating as a walk-in service, with them being unable to see patients if they were not registered with them. Members noted that the new A & E had been in the news as waiting times were high and Members understood that cases were being taken from Leighton and Stafford. Members were concerned that the A & E was not set up to cope with patients from additional hospitals and that if the department was already struggling, treating more patients would make the situation worse. It was noted that staff were motivated but were experiencing difficulties. Members raised concerns regarding the cost of parking charges at the hospital, which were expensive if you were visiting a patient frequently and also that disabled people would be charged for parking from April. It was thought that a multi-storey car park was to be built. When the proposals for the new A & E were put forward, Newcastle Borough Council as a consulting authority

noted there was a reduction in car parking spaces but as the Council was not granting the planning permission for the new A & E, these views were not taken on board.

Cardiac rehabilitation at Jubilee 2 was going well. With regard to the Health and Well Being Strategy, Newcastle Borough Council was unable to produce their strategy until Staffordshire County Council had produced theirs. There were concerns about the north of the county not being adequately represented on the Health and Wellbeing board. With regard to infant mortality, there had been a presentation from Dr J. Harvey to the Health Scrutiny Committee in December. Dr Harvey had provided up to date data, where previously out of date data had been received, and advised that there had been a decrease in infant mortality. However the Committee considered the figures for the Borough were unacceptably high compared to national figures. The figures in question were very small numbers, however the Chair considered that one death was too many and the Committee would continue scrutiny of the issue.

The Chair of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided an update on the Committee's work. The Chair considered that the Bateswood Local Nature Reserve item would remain open. The task and finish group for the Allotments Review had recently had its first meeting. There had been no reports received regarding Kidsgrove Sports Centre and the centre was now open and its facilities available for use. Local Sporting Opportunities and Achievements was discussed, with the Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee sharing that there was a 'Star Squad' that the Head of Culture and Leisure would have more information about. It was agreed that the community centre review item would be moved to a new work plan for the Co-ordinating Committee.

The Chair of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided an update on the Committee's work. The move of the Police into Kidsgrove Town Hall and the Civic Offices had gone well, and the Committee had received two presentations from Chief Inspector Hulme. The new Police and Crime Commissioner would be invited to a future meeting of the Committee. The move of Fenton Magistrates Courts to Newcastle had been monitored by the working group, who had agreed that a newsletter providing information be distributed to town centre businesses. There had been a good response to the newsletter and there were no current problems. The working group would meet in six months to review the situation, unless any problems arose. Members noted the significant number of extra staff at the courts due to the move, and that there were benefits to the move. Although other Members felt that the Section 30 in the town centre dispersed youngsters to the suburbs, thereby creating problems there. There would also be a report on the Let's Work Together initiative at the next meeting on 28 February.

The Chair of the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided an update on the Committee's work. There would be a re-scoping of the broadband provision item as it was felt there was still life left in the issue. The HS2 working group were meeting on February 20th and it was proposed that there should be a new priority colour on the work plan of red for urgent items, which was agreed. The HS2 item would be changed from amber to red. A meeting of the Town Centre Car Parking working group was scheduled for 26th February.

The Chair of the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided an update on the Committee's work. The Revenue and Capital Budget would be considered by Full Council on 27 February. There had been a scrutiny café held on 17 January which allowed all Councillors to ask Cabinet and Officers any

questions they had which had been well received by Members, Officers and Cabinet. A Member who attended felt that it was a good opportunity to ask Officers more detailed questions. It was hoped the scrutiny of the budget would be beneficial when it was received by Full Council, as Members were familiar with the documents and it was in an easy to read format. The Chair was pleased with the work undertaken by Transformation and Resources. Scrutiny of the Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and the Scale of Fees and Charges was time driven and had been undertaken, with Full Council to consider the items on 27 February. The constitution working group was a continual working party. There were not many changes anticipated for the annual Council meeting in May and there was soon to be a consultation on the saying of prayers at Full Council, which the Chair encouraged everyone to return. There would be a sealed ballot box available at the next Council meeting to enable Members to return their responses confidentially. Members questioned if Officers who regularly attended Council were being asked their views on the saying of prayers. A verbal presentation was received at the last Committee meeting on the Council Plan and it was hoped a more substantial document would be received at a future meeting.

The Committee discussed wheelie bin provision, as problems were being encountered with families having small bins. It was thought that the cabinet panel for the Recycling and Waste Strategy would look at wheelie bins as part of their review.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

5. FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was considered by the Committee. The Co-ordinating Committee would consider the Newcastle-under-Lyme Co-operative Strategy 2013-2015 at their meeting on 25 March. This would be considered by the Committee as it would affect all areas of the Council.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

6. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business considered.

COUNCILLOR MRS ELIZABETH SHENTON
Chair