

MINUTES OF: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 6th June 2022

Present: Councillor Johnson (Chair)
Councillors Cheetham (sub), McMahon, Marriott, Morris, Procter and Thompson

In attendance: Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Mandy Lewis, Director of Economic Development
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager

Also Present: Councillors Ashworth and Lythgoe.
3 members of the public
1 press
By remote access – Councillors Smith and Walmsley.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Eaton, Foxcroft (Councillor Cheetham subbing) and Rooke.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2022 be approved as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

- Councillors Cheetham and Johnson were Council representatives on the East Lancashire Railway Trust Board.

4. Urgent Items of Business

The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items of business.

5. Question Time

A member of the public asked a question relating to the Housing Action Plan and Housing Strategy following a recent decision made by the Development Control Committee.

Details of the relevant material considerations were requested regarding the decision to override the officer's recommendation to refuse an application. It was agreed that a direct response would be provided following the meeting and an update would be provided by the Chair at the next meeting.

6. Chair's Update

6.1 That Chair informed that the co-opted member, Zeida Ali, had retired at the end of her term in May. She thanked Zeida for her contributions during her time as a co-opted member and agreed to write a letter of thanks on behalf of the committee. The vacancy was currently being advertised on the website and details could be obtained from Committee and Member Services.

6.2 At the last meeting a query had been raised regarding why the sport of rounders was not included in the Play Pitch Strategy. KKP had confirmed that the Play Pitch Strategy only accounted for marked pitches for formal sport. Rounders was typically a summer sport which could be played on existing pitches so sites were rarely officially marked for the sport. If rounders was included in the Play Pitch Strategy, it would conclude that there was

sufficient provision available within each settlement area relative to open space/cricket sites, which could accommodate it.

- 6.3 Members had been contacted regarding their subject preferences for further overview and scrutiny training, members were reminded to submit their preferences no later than Friday.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

7. Quarter 4 performance report and RIPA update

- 7.1 The committee considered the Quarter 4 performance report and RIPA update, which was presented by the Head of People and Policy.

- 7.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:

- There was a claim being managed regarding the Empty Homes Scheme and the Head of People and Policy agreed to get an update regarding the projected cost, or whether the amount set aside had been increased.
- There were currently 160 FTEs (full time equivalents) in the authorised establishment of staff.
- The figures of leavers included temporary contract workers whose contracts had come to an end, this including temporary covid workers and those on the Kick Start project.
- Reasons for leaving were provided in the exit interviews and it was confirmed that morale had not been a quoted reason for leaving. The exit interview information indicated the majority of staff had left voluntarily, e.g. early retirement, or for career progression.
- Other local councils were also experiencing similar issues with recruitment and retention and Rossendale was having to try to compete with their offer, e.g. with flexible working.
- Staff could work flexibly from home two days a week. If working on a large project or big piece of work they could apply to work more flexibly, however this needed to be authorised via the line manager for the duration of the specific project/work.
- There were further issues when recruiting to specialised and professional posts such as in Planning, because of the competition and employment offer available at other local authorities.
- More needed to be done to try to attract people to train for such professions.
- Bin collections were an ongoing challenge particularly with inconsiderate parking which prevented collections through blocked access. Crews were circling back on areas missed and continuing to check whether access could be gained to complete the collections. Missed collections could be reported to the Corporate Support Team
- In relation to driver shortages, puller-loaders had been upskilled so there was less reliance on agency drivers.
- Whilst the annual housing target of 180 had not been met, the 61 house completions this quarter reflected a positive trajectory towards achieving the housing target going forwards, especially now the approved Forward Plan could provide some certainty for developers.
- There would be additional benefits to come once the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan was reproduced and the service was also reviewing back office mechanics to provide more focus on development.
- A response would be provided regarding whether medical waste was collected in the borough and whether there was a review of collection frequency on litter bins and differences between Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter collections.
- In relation to waste awareness, the Education Officer was going out to schools and meeting young people to keep them informed. A new Town Centre Caretaker was also being recruited.
- In relation to compostable waste, the details of the Environmental Bill were awaited.

- The Housing Delivery Test Action Plan would include some of the metrics of housing delivery against the amount of planning applications approved. This would be going online shortly.
- An update would be sought on the timescale for the arrival of the benches on the Town Square.
- The 11 garage sites referred to (3.5 page 10) were likely to be part of a ward asset review, rather than being assets previously transferred to Together Housing. It was agreed that ward members would be kept informed of the asset reviews for their ward and the process for doing this would be confirmed.
- There was no legislation or sanctions that could be used to enforce commencement or completion of development following planning consent. This would be something that would need to be introduced nationally. Planners had been lobbying for commencement and completion certificates, but without success. Council's continued to work with developers as persuasion was the only option.
- There was only limited action that could be taken in relation to bringing empty properties back into use and in taking action on landlords.
- In relation to contacting officers, it would be reiterated to members how best to contact each department with enquiries.
- It was confirmed that the tendering exercise for enforcement related to street enforcement only.
- A compliment was made in relation to the great improvements in response to fly tipping, and it was agreed that this would be fed back to the team.

Resolved:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the update.
2. It was agreed that responses would be provided to the following queries:
 - Projected amount regarding the expected claim concerning the Empty Homes Scheme, or the amount set aside to deal with this and whether it had increased.
 - Whether medical waste was collected, any plans for compostable waste collections, and whether a seasonal review was conducted for litter bin collection frequencies.
 - The timescale for the arrival of the benches on the Town Square.
 - The process for keeping members informed of the asset review for their wards and information clarifying what the 11 garages related to.
 - How to best contact departments and officers with enquiries would be reiterated.
3. That the compliment relating to fly tipping would be fed back to the Operations Team.

8. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Work Programme

- 8.1 The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny introduced the Annual Report for 2021/22 and draft Work Programme for 2022/23.
- 8.2 In response to members' questions the following clarification was given:
 - In relation to the update report on Climate Change, officers would be asked to keep informed of the Greater Manchester plans and ensure the Council was included in the consultation as a neighbouring borough, as there was potential for their plans to impact on the surrounding areas. This would need to be taken into account in the Climate Change Strategy Update.
 - A response would be provided regarding whether there were any plans or strategies to persuade parents to turn off their engines when dropping off/picking up their children around school times, particularly to benefit those suffering from respiratory conditions.
 - It was confirmed that Cabinet members were invited to each committee and would attend where there was something relevant to their portfolio area to add to the discussion where appropriate.

- The role of the committee was to assess policy and performance and make recommendations to Cabinet for further improvement/ examination where required.
- Where further investigation or improvements were required, this work was undertaken through task and finish groups, and would be scoped appropriately. Cabinet member involvement would include taking part as a witness.
- Questions could be asked of Cabinet members at any time and any proposed changes to the remit of Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet would need to be put to Full Council.

Resolved:

1. The Annual Report and Work Programme was noted and recommended to Full Council for approval.
2. It was also agreed to:
 - Feedback the comments on the Greater Manchester plans to the Climate Change Officer and take account of this when preparing the Climate Change Strategy Update.
 - To find out if there were any plans or strategies to persuade parents to switch off their car engines during school drop off/pick up times.

9. The Forward Plan

9.1 Members were updated on the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, which has also been discussed as part of the previous item.

9.2 In response to a member's question the following clarification was given:

- In relation to the Manchester airport consultation on flight pathways, it was agreed that the Director of Economic Development would check the Council was aware of this and would be responding where appropriate.

Resolved:

1. The Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme items were noted.
2. It was agreed that the Director of Economic Development would check the Council's awareness and involvement in the Manchester airport consultation on flight pathways.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.50pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date