

OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

Tuesday, 8th November, 2016

Present:-

Councillor P Gilby (Chair)

<p>Councillors J Barr Borrell Callan Catt T Gilby +</p>	<p>Councillors Miles Flood Perkins Sarvent</p>
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Anita Cunningham, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Rachel Lenthall, Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Donna Reddish, Policy and Communications Manager +

+ Attended for Minute No. 25

23 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Derbyshire, V Diouf and Dyke.

25 **DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING - COUNCIL PLAN AND PERFORMANCE**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and the Policy and Communications Manager attended to provide a report on the progress made during the second year of delivery of the Council Plan 2015 – 2019.

The Deputy Leader advised that significant progress had been made with 85% of the key deliverables being achieved during year one of the four year plan. The plan was revised and approved by full Council in February, 2016 to take into account new data available during 2015/16 which included the indices of multiple deprivation and the new health profile.

The second year of the plan was the half way point and 54 key activities had been identified for priority delivery in 2016/17. The Policy and Communications Manager added that 35 of these key activities had either been completed or were still on target for completion during 2016/17.

The Policy and Communications Manager noted that there were 15 key activities RAG rated as amber and 5 rated as red. The contributing factors to the awarding of an amber or red rating included a reliance on external funding which was becoming harder to get, risks and uncertainties around government legislation and a reduction in financial and human resources. A Corporate Cabinet/CMT Away Day was held on 8 November, 2016 which looked at priority areas that needed focus in the next two years.

Members were aware of the difficulty accessing external funding and concerns were raised that community groups were not winning funding bids if there was a connection to the Council. The Policy and Communications Manager replied that a link between external bodies and the Council was being created by including activities in the council plan and the Council needed to be aware of the effect this may have on external bodies applying for grants. Members suggested that a better option could be that the Council gave advice and support to groups requesting funding rather than supporting the specific bid. In addition, there had been issues with information being requested on leases and terms of ownership as part of funding applications.

The Policy and Communications Manager added that there were a lot of activities on the council plan that required external funding and careful consideration was needed to prioritise commitments where there was a greater need of funding.

Members thanked the Deputy Leader and Policy and Communications Manager for attending and providing the update.

RESOLVED –

1. That the progress to date be noted.
2. That the work undertaken on the Corporate Cabinet/CMT Away Day on 8 November, 2016 to prioritise the remaining targets be noted.
3. That the funding concerns be reported back to the Scrutiny Project Group on Friends of Groups.

26 FORWARD PLAN**RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

27 SCRUTINY MONITORING**RESOLVED –**

That the Scrutiny Monitoring Schedule be approved.

28 CORPORATE WORKING GROUP PROGRESS UPDATES

Councillor J Barr as lead member for the scrutiny review of concessions on fees and charges and scrutiny committee appointee to the Concessions Policy Working Group provided an overview of the work undertaken by both the project group and the corporate working group.

The Scrutiny Project Group (SPG) was set up in 2015 following concerns raised by officers about the non-standardisation of concessions across the Council and the issues created by concessions when services were under pressure to reduce budgets. The SPG used a document published by the Audit Commission called “Positively Charged” and carried out research into the concessions offered by other councils. Cabinet members were consulted along with officers from all the departments that offered concessions for Council services. The SPG was conscious that the Council needed to be financially self-sufficient by 2020 and that service manager’s needed to achieve budget savings. The group came up with the idea of formulating a corporate policy for concessions.

A report from the scrutiny review was submitted to Cabinet with 10 recommendations which sought to ensure that the concessions made on fees and charges enabled service costs to be covered and proposed that a member officer working group be established to develop a corporate policy on concessions.

Members asked how many of the recommendations had been maintained in the policy. Councillor Barr replied that though there were concerns over changes to over 60s concessions, consultation with community forums

had been positive and all of the recommendations had been incorporated into the policy.

Members asked if the input from scrutiny had been appreciated. Councillor Barr answered that it had been appreciated and basing their findings on detailed research had given weight to the recommendations. There had also been an appreciation from officers who recognised the work scrutiny had put in to improve the concessions situation.

Members raised a concern over an inconsistent concession that was being offered on the removal of waste that was not covered in the new concessions policy. Councillor Barr suggested speaking to the Senior Environmental Health Officer regarding this issue.

The Chair thanked the Members that represented scrutiny on the Corporate Working Group.

RESOLVED –

1. That the incorporation of the recommendations from the scrutiny review on concessions on fees and charges into the corporate Concessions Policy be noted.
2. That monitoring a report be brought to the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum in January, 2016 to confirm that all the recommendations from the scrutiny review have been resolved.
3. That the members of the Scrutiny Project Group on concessions on fees and charges meet to review how the group operated and provide feedback to a meeting of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum early in 2017 on what was positive about the review and what could have been improved.

29 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

The Work Programme for the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum was considered. The Chair advised that an extra meeting of the Forum had been arranged for 22 November, 2016 to receive an update on the Budget Monitoring position.

The next Scrutiny Project Group was due to start soon and would review the future of the old Queen's Park Sports Centre. The scrutiny review into Friends of Groups was putting together a draft report which was expected to be received in January, 2017 by the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee.

The item on Constitution Reform had been moved to the work programme of the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee as it fell within the remit of that committee.

The Chair and the Policy and Scrutiny Officer attended the Corporate Cabinet/CMT Away Day on 8 November, 2016 to deliver a presentation on overview and scrutiny work programming. At the away day senior cabinet members, their assistants and senior officers were reminded of the work that took place on the work programme planning days that were carried out earlier in the year and there was the opportunity for discussion to find ways to improve the process. The overview and scrutiny management team consisting of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and the Policy and Scrutiny Officer had identified three key ways that the process could be improved:

1. Better alignment of work programme planning with corporate priorities and budget setting timetables.
2. Prioritise the long list and be strict about the short list.
3. Allow more time after work programme planning to formulate and consult members and officers before gaining approval from Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum.

The work programme planning days were generally supported, there had been good feedback received in the evaluation and bringing cabinet members together with scrutiny members and senior managers was valued. Suggestions were received from the away day which included:

- The timetabling of the planning days with the budget decisions worked well however the planning days could be brought earlier to get ahead of budget decisions.
- The planning days had improved cabinet members' and officers' understanding of scrutiny.
- The format and scheduling of the planning days worked well.
- Cabinet members needed to be made more aware of key dates and timetables from senior and service officers so they could get involved in work programming.

The Chair added that it was important to involve back benchers in the consultations on the work programme planning days as there were good opportunities for back benchers to be involved in scrutiny work.

RESOLVED –

1. That the slides from the presentation on work programme planning be shared with scrutiny members' groups to invite suggestions for improving the work programme planning.
2. That an item be included on the agenda for the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum on 22 November, 2016 to take suggestions and discuss ways to improve work programme planning.

30 JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

No issues were raised for Joint Overview and Scrutiny.

31 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS

a) Report from 'Scrutiny and Effective Challenge' Training Session

Councillor Sarvent provided a report following a training session called "Raising the Bar in Scrutiny and Effective Challenge" run by East Midlands Councils and facilitated by Dr Stephanie Snape. The session sought to explore the relevance of scrutiny, discuss new opportunities for scrutiny and review the pivotal influencing role of scrutiny.

The attendees were asked to consider how scrutiny had reacted to changes, how many of these changes scrutiny had examined and did scrutiny add value. Councillor Sarvent shared with the group the work that scrutiny members at Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC) had undertaken for the scrutiny review on concessions on fees and charges which had resulted in a policy being created and adopted.

The relevance of scrutiny was discussed, particularly which topics were trending and how scrutiny decided which topics it would review. Councillor Sarvent explained the work programme planning sessions CBC held and received positive comments from attendees from other authorities who were keen to promote this approach.

Due to the reductions in levels of funding from the government, the group discussed commercialisation and financial drivers. With Councils looking to maximise income, the group shared examples of how scrutiny had impacted on managing the budget and discussed the commercialisation work being undertaken by other councils.

Finally, the session looked at the influencing role of scrutiny and how different influencing styles helped with the scrutiny function. The group discussed how teams that included different styles of person had a greater capacity to influence.

Councillor Sarvent reported that she felt reassured that CBC was moving in the right direction and scrutiny was having a positive impact. Members agreed that pre-decision scrutiny was successful and had reduced the need for call-ins.

The Chair noted that Councillor Sarvent's report would be received at the next Member Development Working Group to discuss the potential to convert it into a short induction session on scrutiny for all councillors. Members thanked Councillor Sarvent for the report.

b) Report on Questioning Skills and Procurement Training Plans

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer updated members on the status of training in relation to questioning skills and procurement included in the member development plan. A local external provider had been approached to provide questioning skills training and it was proposed to hold the training in January or February 2017.

A conversation had taken place with the Customers, Commissioning and Change Manager to discuss whether the procurement team would facilitate training for scrutiny members on procurement. Members felt that they would benefit from a more in-depth training session though this would not be available straight away.

c) Sheffield City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee Progress Report

The Chair reported back as a member of the Sheffield City Region (SCR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). As a non-constituent member of SCR, CBC has 1 place on the OSC. The committee had received reports from the SCR Executive Team including from CBC's Chief

Executive, Huw Bowen as the SCR Lead on Housing Strategy, and the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones on a range of topics including devolution deals, large projects that SCR are involved in and the SCR infrastructure fund.

The OSC have discussed how they would like to operate; currently there is no resource to carry out any project group work but it is hoped that this would change if the next devolution deal is granted. The Chair added that it would be beneficial to look at how to align SCR scrutiny work with the scrutiny work carried out at CBC. Members acknowledged that it would be useful to know how other councils operated their scrutiny function.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report provided by Councillor Sarvent from the Raising the Bar in Scrutiny and Effective Challenge training be noted.
2. That Councillor Sarvent's report be taken to the next meeting of the Member Development Working Group.
3. That an update be taken by the Policy and Scrutiny Officer to the next meeting of the Member Development Working Group on the plans for questioning skills and procurement training.
4. That a link to the Sheffield City Region Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting papers website be shared with members of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum.

32 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.