

ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 3rd December, 2020

Present:-

Councillor Catt (Chair)

Councillors Caulfield
Dyke
Coy

Councillors Hollingworth
Snowdon
Brittain

Carl Griffiths, Housing Options Manager +
Liz Cook, Service Director for Housing +
Christine Durrant, Executive Director ++

+ Attended for Minute No. 3
++ Attended for Minute No. 6

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

Councillor Coy advised the committee that she was a trustee of the homeless charity Pathways. As no decisions were to be made concerning the report at item 3 it was determined that Councillor Coy could still take part in discussions.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ludlow and Dean Epton.

3 CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING - ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY AND COLD WEATHER PROVISION

The Service Director for Housing introduced a report to the committee on the Rough Sleeper Strategy and Cold Weather Provision. It was noted that one positive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic had been the acceleration of the delivery of actions/commitments contained within the Rough Sleeper Strategy. A Homelessness Action Plan had also been developed in response to the pandemic. The Government had introduced an 'Everyone In' scheme due to the vulnerability of homeless people and once the initial lockdown period ended the Council, in partnership with other Derbyshire authorities developed a new initiative called 'Keeping Everyone In'. The Council worked with local homeless charities such as Pathways and P3 and

developed a Housing First model alongside colleagues from South Yorkshire Housing Association. As a result, there had been a significant improvement in partnership relationships and a huge amount of investment in homelessness and rough sleeping had been realised.

The Housing Options Manager presented an overview of the Council's Cold Weather Provision. In recent years a night shelter had been provided with Derby City Mission but due to the COVID-19 pandemic that had not been possible for 2020. The committee heard that a mixture of alternative accommodation options had been sourced; included bed and breakfasts, some of the council's own units for emergency use and a facility in the Derbyshire Dales.

This facility comprised of 35 self-contained COVID secure units would be open 15th December to 31st March 2021 and be used by authorities across Derbyshire. Concerns were raised by the committee over moving people out of town and whether they would access to amenities and services. It was explained that during the first lock down there had been significant successes when engaging with the users in a self-contained location. The aim was for the users to move on in a positive way and hopefully leave the facility to go into more long-term accommodation. It was agreed that the exit report for the Cold Weather Provision would be circulated to committee members.

A question was posed regarding the vaccination programme and how homeless people would fit into the plans if they had no address. The Service Director for Housing reassured the committee that when that stage was reached the Council would work closely with its partners to ensure that this vulnerable group would be able to access the vaccine. The Housing Options Manager confirmed that all rough sleepers will be registered with a GP's practice if they are not already registered.

A committee member asked if there was a summary available of what the cost had been to the council of these activities and what grants would be available for the coming year. It was explained that the central government funding was often short-term in nature and the next tranche of funding had not yet been confirmed. The officers agreed that the long-term solution would be more capital investment into supported accommodation which would in turn reduce the need for emergency accommodation. It was noted that bailiffs were to recommence their work 7th January 2021 and it was anticipated that this would affect housing needs.

The Housing Options Manager highlighted the exceptional work that had been carried out by the Council's partnership agencies during this difficult time. The Derbyshire Homeless Officers Group was also commended for providing a mechanism for sharing expertise and also increasing value for money.

RESOLVED –

That the committee note the report.

4 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations monitoring schedule. It was noted that an update on the Skills item and the Future Use of the Former QPSC Site were overdue as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was agreed that any future delays would be noted on the monitoring form prior to publication of the agenda pack.

RESOLVED -

That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.

5 FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the four-month period 1 December, 2020 to 31 March, 2021 was presented for information.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

6 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The 2020/21 Work Programme for the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee was reported for information.

The Executive Director attended the committee to provide further information on the Commercial Services item on the Work Programme. It was explained that the Operational Services Depot team had not been engaged in any commercial activity since prior to March 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown. There was now a backlog of repairs and routine maintenance to be completed and therefore it was not envisaged that commercial work would be commenced any time soon. The CMT restructure involved merging the Commercial Services department with the Housing team and this process needed time to bed in.

It was anticipated that a new piece of work would be undertaken to look at commercialism in its wider sense with a more strategic view and the involvement of the scrutiny function was welcomed in the development of the new strategy.

Discussion took place around the work that had already been carried out by scrutiny in this area and the questions that had been raised previously. This work was acknowledged and the consensus was that it would be incorporated into the new item.

RESOLVED –

1. That the work programme be noted and updated to include the decisions of the current meeting.

2. That the new Commercialisation Strategy be added to the work programme and the previously requested data be provided as part of the work.

7 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

The Minutes of the meeting of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October, 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.