

OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

Thursday, 25th June, 2020

Present:-

Councillors Catt and P Innes (Chair)

Councillors	Blakemore	Councillors	Kellman
	Borrell		Snowdon
	Caulfield		Kelly
	L Collins		Coy
	Flood		Brittain
	Hollingworth		

Huw Bowen, Chief Executive +
 Councillor Tricia Gilby, Leader +
 Charlotte Kearsey, Democratic and Scrutiny Officer
 Ade McCormick, Executive Director +
 Councillor Amanda Serjeant, Deputy Leader +

+ Attended for Minute No. 47

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

No declarations of interest were received.

46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dyke and Fordham.

47 LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER - OVERVIEW OF CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

Huw Bowen, Chief Executive, delivered a presentation on Chesterfield Borough Council's (CBC) response to Covid-19.

The council made an early decision on 16 March, 2020 to turn off services and require staff and members to work from home.

The council had responsibility for the provision of essential services and a large amount of work went into adapting and delivering these services.

- Within two weeks the ICT Team enabled the contact centre staff to work from home while the contact centre received double the usual number of calls.
- Careline received 6k calls in one month, 500 of which were emergencies.
- The Revenues and Benefits Team processed a 275% increase in Council Tax Support applications and a 39% increase in new benefits claim applications.
- Almost 3k emergency repairs were carried out to properties.
- The full Waste Collection service continued throughout lockdown.
- Staff were redeployed to assist significantly affected teams, such as at the Crematorium where almost all of the cremator technicians were vulnerable and had to shield at home.
- Different arrangements were put in place for Travellers because of their vulnerability.
- All of the rough sleepers in the borough were taken off the street in compliance with the deadline and were supported through the pandemic.

A number of CBC staff had been involved with a range of groups including the Derbyshire Local Resilience Forum Strategic Coordinating Group to represent Chesterfield's interests.

CBC had provided support to the community during the pandemic:

- Four members of CBC staff were embedded within Derbyshire Voluntary Action to connect referrals from the Derbyshire Community Support Unit to local volunteers. The volunteers provided support with shopping, collecting medicines and making welfare calls. Support was also provided for new and existing community response services to establish Covid-19 secure operations.
- Eight members of staff were redeployed to support local pharmacies with medicine deliveries, a total of 7,041 of which were carried out.
- Leisure and cultural staff were redeployed to make food deliveries and support the operation of local testing facilities.

CBC had also provided support to businesses in Chesterfield:

- 661 businesses had received £18m in business rates relief for 2020/21.
- CBC had paid out £25.070m in small business grants to 2147 businesses.
- CBC was processing discretionary grant fund payments to 178 businesses.
- Rental payments from commercial tenants had been deferred for the period April through June and would be recovered over an 18 month period.
- Normal payment terms had been suspended.

The Committee was informed that the Council had continued building projects because of the benefits for local labour workers and the local supply chain.

The process of turning services back on was complicated and challenging but progress was being made. Work had been undertaken to reopen Chesterfield town centre safely, including the implementation of new signage, floor markings and safety barriers. Council staff were redeployed as town centre ambassadors to assist the public during the first few weeks of reopening.

The Chief Executive informed the committee about the economic assessment of Chesterfield in light of the pandemic. Chesterfield's economy had a higher degree of employment resilience than the national average and 85% of employment was in sectors which were theoretically operating. However, it was expected that the Chesterfield adult unemployment rate would increase from 3.2% to 8.4% and the young people rate would increase from 5.8% to 15%.

The Committee were also informed about the impacts of the pandemic on CBC finances. An additional £0.987m had been spent by the Council to respond to Covid-19 and £4.878m of income had been lost. The Council had received funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which totalled £1.097m. The decision had been reluctantly taken to furlough some members of CBC staff because of concerns about balancing the budget. It was uncertain whether the Council would receive further Government funding and whether the Council would be able to operate on a deficit.

The priorities in the Economic Recovery Plan and Community Recovery Plan were detailed.

The Chief Executive was asked about the reopening of public toilets because of issues at Somersall Park and advised that a phased approach was being taken as the toilets needed to be made Covid-19 secure.

Members expressed their appreciation of the swift and comprehensive work undertaken by officers, working with other partners and volunteers, to respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Chesterfield.

The Chair thanked the Leader, Deputy Leader, Executive Director and Chief Executive for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED -

That the work of Chesterfield Borough Council in responding to and supporting the recovery from the impact of Covid-19 be noted and endorsed.

48 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer presented the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20.

The report would be submitted to Full Council for approval on 15 July, 2020.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20 be approved for submission to Full Council on 15 July, 2020.

2. That authority be delegated to the Joint Scrutiny Chairs and the Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer to make any late amendments to the Annual Report.

49 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

The Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer submitted a report which included the details of the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Interim Work Programme for 2020/21.

The interim work programme included the following items for the next scheduled meeting of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum on 17 September, 2020:

- Climate Change Action Plan
- Northern Gateway / Elder Way developments.

It was noted that further work was scheduled to finalise the scrutiny work programme for the whole of 2020/21, prior to submission to the scrutiny committees in September, 2020.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21 be approved and recommended to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs).
2. That the items from the interim work programme for the Committee's next scheduled meeting on 17 September, 2020 be approved.

50 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

51 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Committee considered the Scrutiny recommendations implementation monitoring schedule.

It was noted that monitoring of the implementation of some recommendations had been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but that this would be resumed and rescheduled.

RESOLVED –

That the Scrutiny monitoring schedule be noted.

52 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS

The Joint Scrutiny Chairs would be participating in the virtual East Midlands Scrutiny Network on 26 June, 2020.

53 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum held on 23 January, 2020 were presented.

RESOLVED –

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