

MINUTES OF BROOKE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 JULY 2016

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Claire Edwards (Chair), Mrs A'Barrow, Cade, Mrs Garcia, Mrs New, Mrs O'Rourke, Poole (substituting for Councillor Miss Lawrence) and Sandison

Officers:

Mannie Ketley (Head of Corporate Resources), Paul Ansell (Scrutiny and Policy Officer) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

In attendance:

Councillor Leigh Hunt (Communities and Homes Portfolio Holder)

NOTE: The Chair placed on record her thanks to the Scrutiny and Policy Officer for all his work over the years in supporting the scrutiny function and wished him a happy retirement.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 March 2016 and 19 May 2016 were approved and signed by the Chair.

5. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Miss Lawrence and Dr Williams.

6. COMMUNITIES AND HOMES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 4) concerning the performance and future strategy in the Communities and Homes portfolio.

Councillor Leigh Hunt attended the meeting to update the committee on her work and answer questions.

The Communities and Homes portfolio was established in May 2016 following a senior management restructure.

The portfolio includes the following areas:

- Operational Housing
- Housing Options
- Housing Strategy
- Equality and Diversity
- Crime

- Health
- Local Strategic Partnership
- Voluntary and Community Sector and Grants
- ICT
- Customer Services and Business Support
- Apprentices

The portfolio no longer includes Benefits and Housing Repairs. Both service areas are now within the Corporate Resources portfolio.

Housing

Housing services that were within the former Sustainable Inclusive Communities portfolio remain the same for the time being but changes are imminent.

Equality and Diversity/Crime

Councillor Poole (former Health, Community Safety and Equalities portfolio holder) has agreed to carry on as spokesman for crime and disorder and equality and diversity in view of the depth of his knowledge. He is also the Equality and Diversity Champion.

Health

An audit will be carried out across the organisation to try to identify what sits within each service that impacts or delivers health-related services.

The portfolio holder had attended her first meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board the previous week. The board is going through some changes. It will now meet bi-monthly where a part of the meeting will cover the business of the meeting and a part will focus on development and training for members.

Councillor Garcia is the Council's Health Champion and attends the Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) meetings. She tabled an update on the new Brownsover medical centre that had been presented to the previous week's meeting (annexed to the minutes).

The following points were raised:

- A light-touch scrutiny review of mental health provision for young people in Rugby will be carried out by Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Representatives from NHS England, the CCG and Public Health Warwickshire will be attending the next Brooke Committee meeting to discuss GP provision. The organisations have been provided with a list of topics for discussion.
- Councillor Garcia has attended meetings of the Warwickshire County Council's Ambulance Task and Finish Group and informed the committee that an investigation into the responsibilities of nursing homes will be carried out. Ambulance Services will be reviewed further at a future meeting of the Brooke Committee.
- The Chair has asked for regular feedback from the Health Champion and the portfolio holder on county level health related issues relevant to Rugby.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The Regeneration Strategy has recently been refreshed.

The LSP has undergone some structural changes. The Board which is strategic remains in position. Sub-groups have been replaced with an officer-led coordinating group. Under the coordinating group, short-lived task and finish groups will ensure more dynamic action plans.

Voluntary and Community Sector and Grants

The Council has excellent relationships with the voluntary and community sector. Cabinet had allocated grants for 2016/17 in June.

The council has service level agreements (SLAs) with some organisations. The SLAs were scheduled to be reviewed by April 2016 but due to Warwickshire County Council undergoing a review of their own this had to be postponed. A review is anticipated later this year in time for budget setting next year. The review will involve a lot of consultation with organisations themselves.

Actions are tied in closely to the Regeneration Strategy, the Corporate Priorities and to the local needs in the communities.

ICT

The portfolio holder highlighted the following areas:

- digitalisation – improved customer services and internal cost savings
- council's website
- kits used by members and owned by the council
- members' IT
- Office 365 (being tested at present and will eventually be rolled out across the organisation)

Customer Services and Business Support

Customer Services had recently had an increased workload associated with the referendum. The team is well trained. The portfolio holder will be looking at how administration works across the organisation, what equipment and tools are used and what is the best way of working is.

Apprentices

Some of the past apprentices now work in the council and are building their careers in local government. New apprentices will be starting in September.

Miscellaneous matters

Further to the verbal update, the following questions were asked:

What effect will the right to buy for housing association tenants have on the council in terms of possible disposal of council stock to subsidise the right to buy? Are we going to be responsible for all right to buy?

No guidelines have yet been received from Central Government.

Are we able to estimate how many of our tenants exceed the £31,000 household income threshold that will bring them into 'pay to say'? How will we find out which of our tenants are liable?

No guidelines have yet been received from Central Government. The council has no way of knowing the tenants income.

In anticipation of the regulations on fixed term tenancies, what are your thoughts as to the length of tenancy hat the council is likely to offer?

No regulations are yet available. Upon receiving any guidance on any of the housing issues raised, the topics will be made a subject to the housing member conversations.

Are you able to update the committee further to your answer to the question to Council on 19 April about the operation of the Multi Storey Charter? Is it on hold at the moment?

People in need are put into temporary accommodation where available. The charter is not on hold. The main concern is the part of the charter referring to families moving out after two years as children should have somewhere to play. However it is up to the tenants to approach the council and ask for a move.

I was not aware that the council has agreements with other authorities for temporary accommodation if there is none available in Rugby.

We can do but we try not to unless there are certain reasons like domestic violence.

Is there a rise in hate crime following the referendum vote? Are there any complaints coming in?

To Councillor Poole's knowledge, no complaints have been recorded since 23 June. There has been no recorded evidence in an increase of hate crimes.

Councillor Poole informed the committee that the council is undergoing Equality and Diversity reaccreditation on 23 and 24 May. A training session was attended by six councillors yesterday. Equality and diversity training on transgender is compulsory for all councillors. We all need to know the rules and regulations on how to deal with any issues. It was suggested for members to have the training at a group meeting.

The Communities and Homes Portfolio Holder placed on record her thanks to Councillors Garcia and Poole for their work.

RESOLVED THAT – the Communities and Homes Portfolio Holder be thanked for her attendance and update.

7. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2015/16 QUARTER 4

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 5) on the Council's spending and performance position at the end of 2015/16.

A member referred to the importance of assessing the risk associated with deferral of capital schemes to a later year.

A member raised a concern regarding the lack of connection between members and officers during budget setting. The Head of Corporate Resources advised the committee that political groups were welcomed to invite officers to group meetings prior to budget setting and for other financial processes.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

8. BENN HALL – TWO YEAR MARKETING AND BUSINESS PLAN

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 6) about the work of the Benn Hall sub-group.

The two year marketing and business plan proposed by the sub-group had been agreed by Cabinet on 27 June.

A member said that the future of the Benn Hall was tightly linked with the future of the Town Hall which was currently unclear. However, it was pointed out that this had no bearing on a two-year plan.

RESOLVED THAT – progress on the adopted marketing and business plan be reported to the committee on 8 December.

9. REVIEW OF WELFARE REFORM

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda Item 7) concerning on the current position on matters within the remit of the Welfare Reform Task Group.

Because of the gradual, phased introduction of the Summer Budget 2015 measures, it would be impossible for the task group to assess the measures' impact in the near future. The appropriateness of monitoring impact by means of a task group was therefore questionable.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the Welfare Reform Task Group be disbanded; and
- (2) the members and officers involved be thanked for their work.

10. REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 9) concerning the draft one page strategy for the review.

It was suggested that, rather than setting up a task group, the review will be carried out as a sub-group of the Brooke Committee. An invitation will be extended to all members. This will ensure that all expertise available is utilized.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the draft one page strategy for the review of homelessness be agreed,
- (2) committee members be invited to serve on the sub-group; and
- (3) the invitation be extended to all non-executive members to serve as co-optees.

11. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda Item 9) concerning the progress of task group reviews within its remit and the forward work programme.

1. Scrutiny Reviews Progress

1.1 Welfare Reform

The review was discussed in detail as a separate item on the agenda.

1.2 Systems Thinking

In the light of the current restructure, work on this review had been deferred.

2. Work Programme

2.2 8 December

The committee asked for Town Centre Strategy to be added to agenda items for 8 December.

The Chairs and Vice Chairs would be meeting shortly to finalise the work programme for the next two meetings of each overview and scrutiny committee.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the Systems Thinking review be removed from the work programme; and
- (2) the forward work programme and progress in reviews be noted.

CHAIRMAN

7 July 2016

Stakeholder Briefing

Update on new medical centre in Brownsover, Rugby

We are writing to let you know that NHS England (West Midlands) today approved the outline business case to build a new medical centre in Brownsover, Rugby.

This follows our authorisation earlier this week for NHS Property Services to start initial land surveys at Bow Fell, Brownsover. Over the coming weeks, residents can expect to see people on this land surveying the site area and taking core samples using specialist equipment. The surveyors will be carrying out all the checks that are essential to inform the design of any future building, such as drainage and whether there are any contaminants that need to be dealt with.

The next stage is for NHS Property Services to approve the outline business case and then this will go back to NHS England's performance appraisal unit in London. We will then be able to start work on the full business case.

We will continue to work with patients as we develop a detailed plan for the completion of the full business case. In particular, we will arrange a public meeting to discuss the proposed building with Brownsover residents. We are keen to hear local people's views and will advise the date, time and venue when the timetable for the full business case has been confirmed.

We know that the people of Brownsover are eagerly awaiting a new surgery. We are committed to ensuring patients have access to local, high-quality GP services and look forward to working with local residents as the work moves forward.

While it is too early to set a final date for completion, we expect the new building will be ready some time in 2018.

We have spent a considerable amount of time exploring the possibility of setting up a temporary practice at the former surgery premises in Brownsover with the landlord. Unfortunately, there have been a number of significant issues outside our control and we are talking to patients about the next steps.

In the meantime, a free bus service for patients continues to run from Brownsover to Rugby Town Medical Practice in Lower Hillmorton Road, Rugby.

We will keep you updated on further developments. If you have any specific queries, please contact NHS England by email at england.contactus@nhs.net

David Williams, Lead Director for Primary Care
NHS England (West Midlands)