

MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW GROUP
TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2020
Held at 7.00 pm via Zoom

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chairman), B Bansal, A Brennan, N Clarke,
F Purdue-Horan, J Walker and J Wheeler

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
P Linfield	Executive Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
L Webb	Democratic Services Officer
S Whittaker	Financial Services Manager

8 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

11 Implementation of Change

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services noted that the current model of scrutiny would be reviewed later in the meeting.

12 Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen

The Chairman provided feedback to the officers regarding scrutiny reports. The Chairman requested that appendices be attached to the end of agendas and that the reports needed to be shorter and more specific to the topic that is scrutinised.

The Chairman of the Governance Scrutiny Group noted that the Group were presented with the Council's Q4 Internal Audit Report by RSM. The Group were pleased with the feedback from the auditors who stated that the Council were making good progress in implementing actions. It was also noted that the Group were scrutinising the impact of Covid 19 across various service areas

such as economic growth, leisure facilities, front line services and the budget.

The Chairman of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group noted that the Group were delivered a presentation regarding planning enforcement. It was explained that the Group raised concerns that planning enforcement was a discretionary service and that there were low staffing levels to deliver this service. The Chairman also questioned how the Council could enforce planning conditions and raised concerns that upcoming new planning legislation could impact staffing levels further.

The Growth and Development Scrutiny Group also received a presentation regarding digital transformation. The Group were informed that there was now a low demand for the Council to deliver face to face services and that most enquiries were resolved either over the phone, by email or the Rushcliffe Borough Council website. The Group were also looking forward to the implementation of hybrid meetings. The Chairman of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group thanked the Group's Vice Chairman Councillor Abby Brennan who was stepping down in order to become a member of the Council's Cabinet.

The Chairman of the Communities Scrutiny Group noted that the Group had met twice and had scrutinised topics including fly tipping, the Council's waste strategy. The Group also made suggestions for a revised equality scheme and made recommendations to Cabinet for the Council to stop the use of loud fireworks at Council events.

13 Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes and Requests from Councillors

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services which asked the Group to create and receive feedback on the scrutiny group work programmes based on the Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Investment Strategy and Transformation Plan. The Group were also asked to consider potential topics for scrutiny which were submitted by Councillors and Officers.

It was noted that the work programmes for each of the groups during 2020/21 were reviewed in July 2020 to ensure they reflected the current priorities of the Council especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, some changes to the work programmes had been made in order to respond to the ongoing pandemic and its effect on some areas of work. For example, the Rushcliffe Equality Scheme would take into account black and minority ethnicities who had been the most effected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally it was also noted that other items had been delayed such as the 'meet the developer' presentation for the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group.

The Group discussed the suggestions of scrutiny topics put forward by councillors and officers. The Group decided that the topic 'planning: consultation with residents' was not a relevant topic for scrutiny as these concerns were going to be addressed by the government soon. It was agreed that this topic could potentially be scrutinised at a later date.

It was RESOLVED that

- a) The report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services be noted.
- b) The work programmes outlined below be agreed.

Corporate Overview Group

15 December 2020

- Feedback from Scrutiny Chairmen
- Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes
- Finance and Performance Management
- Diversity Annual Report

23 March 2021

- Feedback from Scrutiny Chairmen
- Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes
- Finance and Performance Management

Governance Scrutiny Group

29 September 2020

- Internal Audit Progress Report – 5 month update
- Constitution Follow Up
- Review of Risk Management Strategy
- Work Programme

24 November 2020

- Internal Audit Progress Report
- Treasury and Asset Management 6 month Update
- Statement of Accounts
- Redmond Review Update
- Work Programme

4 February 2021

- Internal Audit Progress Report
- Internal Audit Strategy

- Annual Audit Letter
- External Audit Annual Plan
- Treasury and Asset Investment Strategy Update
- Risk Management
- Work Programme

18 May 2020

- Internal Audit Progress Report
- Internal Audit Annual Report
- Annual Governance Statement
- Work Programme

Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

20 January 2021

- Management of Open Spaces in New Developments – Part Two
- Abbey Road and Crematorium Update
- Work Programme

21 April 2021

- Cycling Networks in the Borough
- Work Programme

Communities Scrutiny Group

7 October 2020

- Flooding and Drainage
- Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy
- Work Programme

28 January 2021

- Dog Fouling, Littering and Fly Tipping – Part Two
- Edwalton Golf Course
- Rushcliffe Equality Strategy – part two
- Work Programme

29 April 2020

- Carbon Management Plan
- Work Programme

14 Finance and Performance Management

The Financial Services Manager presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services which outlined the quarter one position in terms of financial and performance monitoring for 2020/21.

The report presented the budget position for revenue and capital as of 30 June 2020. It was noted that details of the report formed part of the Expected Outturn Budget Report to be taken to Council on 24 September and included the in-year variances along with variances resulting from Covid-19. The Group were informed that the anticipated budget of £0.442m gap caused by the pandemic was partially offset by additional government grants and in-year efficiencies. The Financial Services Manager informed the Group that the Capital Programme showed a planned underspend of £24.8m largely due to slippage in two major schemes (Bingham Hub and Crematorium) and uncommitted funds in the Asset Investment Strategy.

The Financial Services Manager was pleased to note that the Council's discretionary grant scheme had received 189 claims, decided on 159 and had paid 62 totalling £0.814m which equated to 84% of the total available funds. It was hoped that all payments would be made by 30 September 2020.

The Group asked questions regarding the Council's loss of planning income. The Financial Services Manager informed the Group that the Council had lost £200k of income. It was also clarified that a £215,000 capital spend on a resurfacing of all car parks within the Borough was due to commence during 2020/21. The Financial Services Manager also confirmed that there was a budget of £220,000 for the development of a skate park at Rushcliffe Country Park which would be considerably smaller than the one recently built in Radcliffe on Trent.

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services asked the Group to comment on the monitored tasks which were outlined in the Corporate Strategy and the performance measures within the Corporate Scorecard. The Group were reminded that was agreed at the last meeting to omit targets, as a way of measuring performance for those indicators that are being impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. However, targets had been included in this report (for information purposes) to enable members of the Group to see what the impact had been, thereby showing the true performance position for all indicators.

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services was pleased to note that performance during quarter one has been good and of those indicators not identified as being impacted by Covid-19, only one had been identified as an exception. The exception in this quarter was the number of successful

homelessness preventions undertaken. It was explained that this exception was due to the Council not being able to house those in need as landlords were unable to evict tenants and some residents not wanting to move during lockdown.

It was RESOLVED that the Corporate Overview Group note

- a) The report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services;
- b) the projected net effect of in-year efficiencies (£0.624m) and Covid-19 pressures (£2.564m) and Covid Government funding (£1.518m) resulting in an expected net revenue position for the year of £0.422m be noted;
- c) a projected £2.864m net surplus on Business Rates as a result of additional S31 reliefs and that this surplus is to be transferred to the Organisation Stabilisation Reserve to offset the expected Collection Fund deficit in later years;
- d) the capital underspend of £24.8m as a result of planned programme slippage
- e) the projected Special Expenses position with a projected deficit of £0.119m for the year to be financed by a loan from the Council, terms to be consulted on with the West Bridgford CIL and Special Expenses Group; and
- f) considers if scrutiny is required for identified performance exceptions.

15 **Annual Customer Feedback Report 2019/20**

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services which summarised the complaints which the Council received during 2019/20 with a comparison to previous performance. The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services noted the following;

- 45 complaints were received by the Council at Stage 1 of its complaints process
- The percentage of complaints escalated past Stage 1 increased slightly from 17.6% in 2018/19 to 20.0% (9 from 45)
- Consistency in handling complaints had stayed at a high level, as had the number of complaints that are responded to within target time – 42 out of 45
- Analysis of the 45 complaints received in 2019/20 showed that 75.6% were unjustified.
- The Council received 132 compliments about its services in 2019/20 – 27 more than the previous year.

It was explained that the Local Government Ombudsman was a service which investigated complaints from the public about councils when the Council's complaint process had been exhausted and the customer still does not consider that they have achieved a satisfactory outcome. It was noted that in 2019/20 the Local Government Ombudsman issued five decisions on complaints received about the council: one was upheld (the Council complied with the LGO in apologising to the injured party and agreeing for staff training to ensure that the situation did not arise again); two were upheld; one was

referred back for local resolution and one was closed after initial enquires. The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services was pleased to note that the Local Government Ombudsman complaints for Rushcliffe were the lowest in comparison to other local authorities in the immediate area.

It was RESOLVED that

- a) The report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services be noted
- b) The report be accepted as a true record for customer feedback in 2019/20.

16 **Consideration of the Future of Scrutiny**

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services which provided information relating to the operation of scrutiny over the last 16 months with a view to inform debate at the Corporate Overview Group. The Service Manager recommended that the Council continue using the current model of scrutiny as this model had produced high levels of satisfaction with officers and councillors. It was noted that councillors and officers were pleased that the current model of scrutiny was more transparent and that councillors were using the scrutiny matrix in order to suggest new topics that needed to be scrutinised.

The Group were supportive of the transitional model of scrutiny which had been implemented in May 2019. However, members of the Group raised suggestions in order to make the scrutiny process more effective. Members of the Group suggested that presentations and reports be shorter and that more member briefings be organised so that councillors would be able to digest information required before the meeting. The Group also recommended that members of the Cabinet be invited to scrutiny meetings the help inform debate. The Chairman of the Communities Scrutiny Group was pleased to note that the Portfolio Holder for Environment had watched the live streams of the meetings and supported additional recommendations suggested by the Chairman. The Group also asked if scrutiny meetings could be more frequent however, it was agreed that officer resources were currently stretched due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was RESOLVED that

- a) The report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services be noted.
- b) The transitional arrangement for scrutiny be endorsed by the Group in order to become the permanent arrangements as currently stated in the Council's Constitution.

The meeting closed at 8.37 pm.

CHAIRMAN