

MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW GROUP
TUESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2020
Held at 7.00 pm via Zoom

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chairman), B Bansal, N Clarke, D Viridi, J Walker and J Wheeler

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
S Maher	Strategic Human Resources Manager
L Webb	Democratic Services Officer
S Whittaker	Financial Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors F Purdue-Horan

18 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

18 Minutes of the Meeting 22 September 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

19 Diversity Annual Report

The Strategic Human Resources Manager presented the report of the Executive Manager – Transformation which provided the Group with an update about the Council's performance against the objectives set out in the Council's equality scheme which were to:

- Monitor the demographic make-up of our residents and our workforce
- Consult customers and staff where appropriate
- Carry out equality impact assessments as part of our four-year plan.

It was noted that the information in the report compared the demographic information for the Borough, using the latest census information, with that of our workforce with this information being taken from the HR /Payroll system. Additionally, although there was no legal duty for local authorities to collect and

use equality data, authorities must understand the impact of their policies and practices on people with protected characteristics. Therefore, collecting, analysing and monitoring information is an important way to develop this understanding.

The Strategic Human Resources Manager was pleased to note that the Council broadly reflected the demographic of the Borough with 93% of Rushcliffe Borough Council employees in the white British or white other ethnic group which is the same as for the residents of the Borough (white 93%). It was also explained that the figure for the Borough was higher than that for the East Midlands (89%) and nationally (85%). The Strategic Human Resources Manager informed the Group that the Council was currently reviewing its recruitment policies and would ensure that these continue to operate fairly and encourage applications from under-represented groups. It was also noted that the Council's age profile and members of staff who had declared that they had a disability were similar to the population of Rushcliffe.

The Group were informed that gender pay reporting legislation required employers with 250 or more employees to publish statutory calculations every year showing how large the pay gap is between their male and female employees. The Strategic Human Resources Manager was pleased to note that since diversity was last reported to the Group in ? 2019 the gender pay gap had reduced from 8.9% to 1%, reflecting an increase in the proportion of women at higher levels of the organisation.

The Council's employees had regular opportunities for training and development in support of equality and diversity. Training courses which had been attended by the Council's employees included: unconscious bias training, coercive control training and mental health first aiders training.

The Chairman thanked the Strategic Human Resources Manager for providing an update to the Group.

It was RESOLVED that the report of the Executive Manager – Transformation be noted.

20 **Feedback from Scrutiny Chairmen**

The Group welcomed Cllr Viridi to the Corporate Overview Group who had replaced Councillor Abby Brennan as Vice-Chairman of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group.

The Chairman of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group noted that they had not yet received a presentation from the developers of the site at Abbey Road, West Bridgford as contracts had not been signed yet. It was hoped that the developers would be able to attend the next Growth and Development Scrutiny Group in January. The Group also received a progress update on the Crematorium in Stragglethorpe and was pleased to note that the operation of the crematorium would be in-house. Additionally, the Group scrutinised the Council's planning enforcement policy and made recommendations for the revised policy which were approved by Cabinet on 8 December 2020.

The Chairman of the Communities Scrutiny Group informed the Group that in

September they had received three presentations regarding flooding and drainage from Nottinghamshire County Council, the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board and the Emergency Planning Officer at Rushcliffe Borough Council. The Chairman noted that it provided the Group with an insight to the roles and responsibilities of each organisation and that the Group had encouraged them to work more closely together. The Group had also scrutinised the draft Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy and recommended to Cabinet that the free tree scheme be extended.

In the absence of the Chairman of the Governance Scrutiny Group, the Chairman of the Corporate Overview Group provided an update. The Corporate Overview Group were informed that the Governance Scrutiny Group had noted an internal audit progress report and a treasury and asset investment six month update. The Governance Scrutiny Group also approved the recommendations in the report regarding the statement of accounts 2019/20.

21 Consideration of Scrutiny Group 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.

The Group discussed the current scrutiny work programmes. Councillor Walker suggested that the pedals community group attend the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group in order to increase public engagement. The Chairman agreed to discuss this suggestion with the Executive Manager – Communities.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Overview Group would require the Group to discuss a list of potential items for scrutiny from May 2021. Councillors raised concerns that most of the items were for the Communities Scrutiny Group to be scrutinised and that meetings had been very long and items towards the end of the agendas felt rushed. The Group suggested that more meetings for the Communities Scrutiny Group be added to the timetable of meetings for 2021/22 to ensure that all items were scrutinised thoroughly. The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services suggested that the scrutiny groups should consider items which were time critical such as policies and also proposed that the Corporate Overview Group could scrutinise additional items on behalf of the Communities Scrutiny Group. The Chairman noted that on-going issues such as dog fouling and littering were time critical for residents and should therefore also be prioritised for the scrutiny work programmes.

Items for the scrutiny work programmes which had been suggested by councillors included; 'Update on current performance and resources for Rushcliffe' which would enable the Communities Scrutiny Group to be provided with updates regarding resource deployment and project work for example,

operation Reacher and the Group would also be able to scrutinise crime and community safety performance over the last 12 months. It was agreed that this would be added to the Communities Scrutiny Group work programme for 2021/22.

Following a discussion, it was concluded that inclusive language was covered by the revised Rushcliffe Equalities Scheme for January 2021. Additionally, the topic of 'an energy self-sufficient Borough' would initially be discussed as part of the Carbon Management Plan Update in April 2021 and could be discussed further in 2021/22 based on future recommendations.

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

23 March 2021

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

Governance Scrutiny Group

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

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

22 **Finance and Performance Management**

The Financial Services Manager presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services which outlined the quarter two position in terms of financial and performance monitoring for 2020/21. This report presented the budget position for revenue and capital as at 30 September 2020. This report provided an update to the report to Cabinet on 8 September 2020 and included the in-year variances along with variances which had resulted from Covid-19. It was noted that this report did not take into account the effects of the implementation of further restrictions from 26 November and 2 December and did not include potential income from the reimbursement of lost fees and charges.

It was noted that for this financial year the budget gap including Covid related pressures and in-year efficiencies is expected to be at least £0.244m. The financial position to date also reflected a number of positive variances totalling £0.890m however, there were also several adverse variances totalling £2.667m. The majority of the adverse variances were from lost income from reduced demand relating to Covid such as facility hire (£0.139m), planning applications (£0.200m), reduced car parking income (£0.310m) and additional payments to Parkwood (£1.008m).

Additionally, the original Capital Programme of £18.936m has been supplemented by a net brought forward and in-year adjustments of £19.435m giving a revised total of £38.371m. The net expenditure efficiency position of £23.8m is primarily due to the projects of Bingham Leisure Centre and the crematorium. The Group were also informed that the Council was due to receive capital receipts of £20m in the year, primarily from the disposal of surplus operational and investment property: Abbey Road Depot, Land at Hollygate Lane and also from an overage agreement in place for Sharphill Wood site. However, Covid-19 had impacted on the progress of these schemes with receipts projected to be £4.4m in 2020/21.

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 some targets had been omitted as a way of measuring performance for those indicators that are being impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. There were two exceptions within the operational score card:

- LICO41 Percentage of householder planning applications processed within target times
- LINS19a Number of household waste collections missed twice or more in the last 3-month period

The Service Manager – Finance and Corporate Services explained that despite the percentage of householder planning applications processed within target times being an exception for this quarter, this was a direct result of the planning officers hitting targets for major applications and developments. The Group were also informed that additional resources were going to be assisting the planning team over the next couple of months in order to focus on householder planning applications. It was explained that the number of household waste collections missed had increased due to an increased number of agency staff who have had to be recruited in the absence of the Council's refuse staff who had been off sick or isolating and that additional training had been provided so that the new staff were more familiar with properties which required assisted collections.

The Service Manager also asked the Group to note the Council's external recovery plan which was an internal document which would be regularly updated regarding how the Council will assist local businesses in recovery from the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Members of the Group urged the Council to refurbish the toilets of the Gamston Community Hall as soon as possible as it was a performing asset of the Council. The officer also agreed to amend the report to note that the 'eat out to help out' scheme took place in August, not in June. The Financial Services Manager also clarified that the support for registered housing providers had remained the same but was split over two years as there was a delay in delivering the programme.

The Group were informed that the adjustments to capital projects would increase spending potential in other areas or would be used to relieve financial pressure in other areas. It was also noted that due to a lack of casual swimmers at Parkwood Leisure Centre, they could not pay capital receipts as part of the management agreement with the Council. The Councillors also raised concerns about the projected £3.017m net surplus on Business Rates as a result of additional S31 reliefs and that this surplus would be transferred to the Organisation Stabilisation Reserve to offset the expected Collection Fund deficit in later years. The Financial Services Manager stated that the Council would replenish the reserve over the next five years. Councillors agreed to monitor the replenishment of the organisation stabilisation reserve. The Financial Services Manager also informed the Group that £500k would be match funded by all parties involved in the development corporation and that the government were prompt in reimbursing grants.

It was RESOLVED that

- a) the projected net effect of in-year efficiencies (£0.497m) and Covid-19 pressures (£2.355m) and Covid Government funding (£1.614m) resulting in an expected net revenue deficit for the year of £0.244m be noted;
- b) a projected £3.017m net surplus on Business Rates as a result of additional S31 reliefs and that this surplus be transferred to the Organisation Stabilisation Reserve to offset the expected Collection Fund deficit in later years;
- c) the capital underspend of £23.8m of which £18.465m be carried forward: £17.965m to 2021/22 Capital Programme and £500k to 2022/23 Capital Programme;
- d) the projected Special Expenses position with a projected deficit of £0.082m for the year to be financed by a loan from the Council as agreed by the West Bridgford CIL and Special Expenses Group be noted;
- e) the 6-month trial to engage Waste Investigations Support and Enforcement to deliver enforcement of environmental crimes (following on from Communities Scrutiny Group discussions) be noted and
- f) the identified performance exceptions be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN