

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 19 April 2017** at **4.00 pm** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Diane Hind

Patrick Chung
Paula Fox
Susan Glossop
Angela Rushen
Sarah Stamp

Jim Thorndyke
Frank Warby
John Burns
Tony Brown
Paul Hopfensperger

Substitutes attending:

Patricia Warby

146. **Substitutes**

The following substitutions were declared:

Councillor Patricia Warby for Councillor Simon Brown.

147. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Brown, Jeremy Farthing and Andrew Speed.

Councillors Richard Rout and Clive Springett were also unable to attend.

148. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2017, were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

149. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

150. **Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities**

[Councillor Sarah Stamp arrived at 4.25pm during the consideration of this item]

As set out in the Council's Constitution, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member would be invited to attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee. Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, members were asked to consider the responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities, who had been invited to the meeting.

The Committee was reminded that on 20 April 2016, the Committee received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities, setting out responsibilities covered under the portfolio.

At this meeting, the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities had been invited back to the meeting to provide a follow-up presentation on his portfolio. Report No: OAS/SE/17/012 set out the areas of responsibility and the focus of the follow-up presentation, which was to:

- Outline the main challenges faced during the first year;
- Outline some key successes and any failures during the first year and any lessons learnt; and
- Set out the vision for the Portfolio through to 2019, and whether on target to meet that vision.

Councillor Robert Everitt opened his verbal update by thanking the Committee for the invitation and then provided a number of examples, outlining challenges faced; successes and lessons learnt; and the vision through to 2019, such as:

- Councillors new way of working with the locality budgets. This included the use of locality budgets and the criteria - (challenge)
- Leading the way and best practice in West Suffolk in locality budgets - (key success)
- Partnership working: Integrated Neighbourhood Team, which was a new pilot scheme - (key success)
- Grant funding: £300,000 had been allocated to 16 projects over the last year - (key success)
- Buurtzorg Model (Home Care provider) - this was being piloted in West Suffolk - (key success)
- Keep on doing more of the same - St Edmundsbury Borough Council to continue to lead the way with stronger partnerships across West Suffolk - (Vision)

Members discussed the update and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular the Committee held discussions on the Bury St Edmunds Bus Station and the letting of unit spaces; the work of the customer services team, including the handling of difficult customers and the volume of telephone calls answered.

In response to particular questions raised:

- 1) Members were informed that Buurtzorg was founded in the Netherlands in 2006-2007. It was a unique district nursing system which had garnered international acclaim for being entirely nurse-led and cost effective. From February 2017, the Council would be piloting the Buurtzorg model in West Suffolk, with a small number of nurses working within a small community, which had the backing locally of a number of organisations, including a funding commitment.
- 2) Officers were progressing working regarding Britannia House and were currently looking at the original contract and deeds for the building.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the update on his portfolio.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update from the Portfolio Holder and that a future report on the Buurtzorg Model being piloted in West Suffolk would be presented to the Committee in due course.

151. **Monitoring Community Safety Activities Including Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership**

It is the duty of the Committee, as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee designated under the Police and Justice Act 2006, to scrutinise the work of the Partnership.

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/17/013, which updated Members on the community safety activity in West Suffolk, including the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) from April 2016 to March 2017.

Over the past year the WSCSP continued to meet and discharge its statutory duties by carrying out an annual assessment of crime, producing an annual plan and carrying out Domestic Homicide Reviews, as required. In May 2016, the WSCSP completed and published its partnership plan and project plan for identified community priorities for 2016-2017. Attached as Appendix A to the report, was the WSCSP project plan.

The report also set out the work of the Strong and Safe Communities Group; the multi-agency Anti-Social Behaviour Group and the Public Space Protection Orders.

Members scrutinised the report and asked questions for the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities and officers, to which responses were provided.

Discussions were held on domestic abuse; the Community Safety Plan 2016-2017; drug addiction and vulnerable adults; the West Suffolk Joint Forum for Domestic Abuse; and the number of responses received regarding the consultation carried out on the Public Space Protection Orders.

In particular discussions were held on the numbers involved in domestic abuse; cyber crime, and how it equated with national figures, and any hotspots in the Borough. In response, the Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the Police provide the Community Safety Partnership with figures on a quarterly basis. There were some trends in relation to the crime figures but there was no particular pattern. There were definite links between sexual crime and cyber crime which was sent to the Local Serious and Organised Crime Board. A "deep dive" exercise had recently been completed on domestic abuse and work was about to start on the other workstreams.

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that if they had any concerns about crime in their wards to inform him so he could raise them as the Chairman of the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership.

Finally, the Committee was reminded that the Police and Crime Commissioner was attending Council on 25 April 2017 and all members would be able to ask questions and raise concerns, in particular how useful the Safer Neighbourhood Teams were.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

152. **West Suffolk Housing Strategy: Update on Progress Against Action Points**

[Councillor Paula Fox left the meeting at 5.25pm during the consideration of this item and prior to voting.]

Councillor Paul Hopfensperger left the meeting at 5.40pm during the consideration of this item and prior to voting]

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/17/014, which asked Members to review progress made against the West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2015-2018.

The draft West Suffolk Housing Strategy was considered in detail at a joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting with Forest Heath District Council on 23 July 2014 and was approved by St Edmundsbury Council on 23 September 2014.

The West Suffolk Housing Strategy included a series of objectives against which key actions and targets had been formulated. These actions and targets were reviewed and, if necessary, amended, deleted or added to on an annual basis. The Housing Service reviewed progress against the Housing Strategy actions on a quarterly basis. The Housing Strategy grouped the objectives under the following headings:

- Planning
- Rural housing

- Developers and providers
- Private sector housing
- Adaptations and improvements
- Community
- Energy efficiency
- Land and resources
- Homelessness
- Efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Care and support.

Attached at Appendix A to the report was a detailed update on progress as at the end of December 2016, against 40 objectives under the above headings. The remainder of the report summarised each of the headings, key achievements to date and work underway and highlighted challenges and external factors impacting on delivery.

Members considered the report in detail and asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Service Manager (Strategic Housing) to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular discussions were held on whether there was any demand for self-build properties in West Suffolk; housing need; building to lifetime home standards; current guidance of space standards; bidding for properties through the Home-link system; local lettings agreements; the definition of affordable housing (currently 80% of market rent); and the Cangle Foyer, Haverhill.

In response to particular questions raised:

- 1) Members were informed that job descriptions were currently being drawn up for the Independent Directors for Barley Homes (Group) Limited. These would be advertised over the summer period and appointments made by September 2017.
- 2) Officers were talking with the current providers and owners of Britannia House and Northgate Lodge about the future of those properties. Members were reassured that tenants were not evicted on the date the contract changed (1 April 2017) as there was a transition phase.

The Committee wished to congratulate everyone involved in the Housing Strategy and agreed that it would be useful to continue having a Housing Strategy post 2018 when the current one ends, acknowledging that there was no longer a legal requirement to have one.

Finally, the Committee suggested future workshops on changes being made to housing, and in particular the welfare reform, to which officers agreed to progress.

It was then proposed by Councillor Frank Warby, seconded by Councillor Susan Glossop and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

The Committee:

- 1) Noted the progress made to date against the actions arising from the West Suffolk Housing Strategy 2015-2018;
- 2) Noted the challenges facing delivery of the West Suffolk Housing Strategy; and
- 3) Noted that a further report would be presented to the Committee in early 2018 in order to monitor delivery in 2017.
- 4) That a future members workshop be organised on changes to housing and the welfare reform.

153. **Review and Revision of the Constitution**

The Monitoring Officer provided a verbal update on revisions which had been made to the Constitution during the last quarter. These had mainly been changes made to the officer structure / amendments to job titles.

She explained that in the past the Committee received a report each quarter on minor changes which had been made, and was happy to carry on that process if the Committee found that to be useful, or the Committee might only wish to receive updates when substantial change were being made to the Constitution.

The Committee considered the proposal and felt that it would be helpful to only receive updates on substantial changes being made to the Constitution.

It was then proposed by Councillor Angela Rushen, seconded by Councillor John Burn and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That in future the Committee would only receive updates when substantial changes were being made to the Constitution.

154. **Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications (Quarter 4)**

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources) Order 2010 required that Members should scrutinise the authority's use of its surveillance powers on a quarterly basis.

The Monitoring Officer had advised that in Quarter 4, no such surveillance had been authorised. She explained that these surveillance powers would mainly be used by the Anglian Revenues Partnership (ARP) for carrying out benefits checks.

The Committee felt that it should be informed when ARP used its surveillance powers. Councillor Sarah Stamp then questioned whether the Council scrutinised ARP. It was further suggested that the Committee might wish to receive a presentation from ARP on its work.

The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) informed the Committee that a work programme suggestion form would need to be completed to ensure that the Committee was asking for the all the information it needed before inviting ARP to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee **noted** that the Monitoring Officer would provide the Committee with an update at its July 2017 meeting on surveillance authorisations carried out by the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP).

It was then proposed by Councillor Sarah Stamp, seconded by Councillor John Burn and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Sarah Stamp would complete a work programme suggestion form inviting the Anglia Revenue Partnership to a future meeting of the Committee.

155. Work Programme Update, Formation of a West Suffolk Information Strategy Joint Task and Finish Group and Suggestion for Scrutiny

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/17/015, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2017-2018 (Appendix 1).

The Committee was also asked to consider nominating two members with appropriate skills to sit on a "West Suffolk Information Strategy Joint Task and Finish Group". The purpose of the Information Strategy would be to seek to recognise the strategic value of information to the Council and would promote and facilitate good information management practice, based on:

- a set of underlying data sharing principles;
- seeking to define how we use information currently;
- how we should be using information in the future;
- how this can deliver key outcomes to both our staff,
- our operations and our customers/consumers ; and
- describing where technology can help facilitate this.

The Committee considered the requested made by the Service Manager (ICT) and nominated in the first instance, in his absence, Councillor Clive Springett due to his background in information technology. It also nominated Councillor John Burns and Councillor Diane Hind as a substitute for Councillor Clive Springett to sit on the Joint Task and Finish Group with Forest Heath District Council.

It was then proposed by Councillor Tony Brown, seconded by Councillor Sarah Stamp, and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillors Clive Springett, John Burns and Diane Hind as a substitute be nominated to sit on the West Suffolk Information Strategy Joint Task and Finish Group with Forest Heath District Council.

Attached at Appendix 2 to the Report was a "suggestion for scrutiny" submitted by Councillor Diane Hind, suggesting the Committee might wish to consider *"reviewing the Scrutiny Committee's working practices at St Edmundsbury Borough Council to try and see how the system might be changed or adapted to better meet the needs of Councillors and the democratic process"*

The Committee was asked to consider whether the issue presented would be appropriate for scrutiny, including potential outcomes and if added to the work programme to decide on appropriate timescales.

Councillor Diane Hind presented her suggestion to the Committee.

A debate on the suggestion for scrutiny was held and it was suggested that a round table discussion with all Committee members would be helpful.

The Committee agreed to include this item in its forward work programme, and agreed that the first step would be to hold a dedicated workshop meeting of all Overview and Scrutiny members to discuss all aspects scrutiny in a workshop environment. It was agreed that this should be held on a Wednesday at 4pm.

The Committee **noted** the update on the current status of its forward work programme.

It was then proposed by Councillor Susan Glossop, seconded by Councillor Sarah Stamp, and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED

That a "Review of the Scrutiny Committee's working practices at St Edmundsbury Borough Council" be included in the Committee's forward work programme and the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) be tasked with arranging a dedicated workshop meeting of all Overview and Scrutiny Members to be held on a Wednesday at 4pm.

Finally, Councillor Susan Glossop informed the Committee that at its meeting held on 15 March 2017, it asked about stress at work under the Portfolio Holders presentation, to which an email response was provide to Committee members. However, she felt that the Committee needed more information on the subject. Councillor Susan Glossop, was advised by the Monitoring Officer, that in the first instance she might wish to discuss any concerns she might have with the Assistant Director (HR, Legal and Democratic Services), before progressing to completing a work programme suggestion form.

The Meeting concluded at 6.20 pm

Signed by:

Chairman