

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 12 July 2018** at **6.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Simon Cole
Vice Chairman Rona Burt

John Bloodworth
Christine Mason
Robert Nobbs

David Palmer
Nigel Roman
Reg Silvester

Substitutes attending:

Sara Mildmay-White, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing
Robin Millar, Cabinet Member for Families and Communities

241. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutions declared.

242. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Barker and Brian Harvey.

243. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2018 were confirmed as an accurate record, and signed by the Chairman.

244. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from the public.

245. **Announcements from the Chairman regarding responses of the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other updates from the Chairman**

The Chairman advised that he attended the Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee on 25 June 2018, and presented the Committee's report on items it considered on 7 June 2018, which was noted.

246. **Annual Presentation by the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing**

[Councillor Robert Nobbs arrived at 6.13pm during the consideration of this item.]

The Committee was reminded that on 20 July 2017, it had received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Housing, setting out responsibilities covered under her portfolio.

At this meeting, the Cabinet Member had been invited back to provide her annual update, and Report No: OAS/FH/18/019 set out the focus of the update. The Cabinet Member was also provided in advance of the meeting with some key questions identified by scrutiny members on areas they wished to be appraised on during the annual update, which were included in the report along with responses.

The Committee acknowledged the comprehensive responses provided to questions set out in the report on homelessness.

Members asked follow-up questions relating to homelessness; anti-social behaviour; outreach work and the funding awarded to the council for 2018-2019, which would provide towards the recruitment of five additional posts to support outreach work, including mental health and substance misuse specialists.

In response to a question raised regarding Newmarket and the Winter Comfort Campaign charity, members were informed that the Winter Comfort charity did not operate in Newmarket, only in Cambridge. Officers confirmed that they had spoken to the Town Council earlier in the year and at which point the Town Council confirmed that the charity was not doing any outreach work in Newmarket.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance and **noted** the update.

247. **Evaluation of the Families and Communities Approach**

Prior to receiving the report, the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities wished to clarify the exempt appendices attached to the report. He advised that after further consideration, the FirstCare Summary Report (Exempt Appendix B) did not contain any sensitive information, therefore he was happy for this to be brought forward and considered in public.

The Committee then received Report No: OAS/FH/18/020, which followed on from the Cabinet Members' presentation to the Committee on 20 April 2017, at which the Committee asked for further information on evaluation of the Families and Communities approach, to better understand whether it was making a difference to communities and residents.

Since the development of the first West Suffolk Families and Communities Strategy in 2013, Councillors and staff had been mindful of the need to measure and monitor the outcomes of the work. This was inherently challenging as measuring change in communities could not be done in the

same way as output measures. Therefore, work began in late 2016 on the development of a bespoke evaluation approach, which included the following key stages:

- Forming a cross-departmental working group with representatives from the Families and Communities and Policy teams.
- Undertaking desktop review of literature and best practice
- Meeting with academics from University Campus Suffolk to gain insight into possible methodology.

The report summarised progress to date; key points to note; methodologies used; and next steps. Also attached to the report were a number of appendices:

- Exempt Appendix A – Evidencing and Evaluating the Families and Communities Approach;
- Appendix B – FirstCare report summary;
- Exempt Appendix C – Officer toolkit and guidance;
- Appendix D – Evidence from evaluation exercise; and
- Appendix E – Case study examples.

The report also provided examples of how the evaluation model had been used and tested and sought the committee's input into the further development of the model to evidence and evaluate the Families and Communities approach.

The Committee considered the report in detail, and noted the exempt Appendices A and C. However no reference was made to specific detail contained in the exempt appendices.

The Committee asked a number of questions of the Portfolio Holder and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In response to question raised relating to the revision of the Families and Communities Strategy, members were advised that the evaluation approach would support the revision of the Strategy, which was due to start in late 2018. The revised Strategy would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its comments, prior to being presented to Cabinet. The revised strategy would include a detailed delivery plan which would include the incorporation of the approach into the new single council for West Suffolk.

The Chairman, and the Committee members were pleased with the report and acknowledged the difficulties to measure, score and evaluate projects to evidence the difference made to communities and residents. It was in agreement that the council should continue refining the evaluation approach and developing the methods and ethos. It was a vital piece of work and the

council was leading the light in evidencing and evaluating the families and communities approach.

The Committee felt this work was so important that it should be embedded in the Council's strategy, as its importance was beyond political.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** progress made so far in the development of an evaluation model for the Families and Communities approach.

248. Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities

The Committee was reminded that on 20 April 2017, it had received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Families and Communities, setting out responsibilities covered under his portfolio. At this meeting, the Cabinet Member had been invited back to provide her annual update, and Report No: OAS/FH/18/021 set out the focus of the update.

The Cabinet Member was also provided in advance of the meeting with a key question identified by scrutiny members on areas they wished to be appraised on during the annual update, which was included in the report along the response relating to Community Chest Funding. Attached at Appendix A to the report was the Community Chest application form and guidance, and at Appendix B a selection of Community Chest case studies where funding was granted in 2017-2018 by Forest Heath District Council.

The Cabinet Member highlighted some key points set out in the report, which included grant funding allocations; monitoring of the fund and next steps.

The Committee asked follow-up questions on the Community Chest Funding, to which the Cabinet Member provided comprehensive responses.

The Cabinet Member, Councillor Robin Millar wished to thank officers for all their work over the past year in making the Community Chest Funding a success.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance and **noted** the update.

249. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/18/022, which asked Members to pursue the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019, on items it would like further information on or might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and did not request any further information on items contained in the Plan.

There being no decision required the Committee **noted** the contents of the 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019 Decisions Plan.

250. **Shadow Executive (Cabinet) Decisions Plan: 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/18/023, which informed Members on forthcoming decisions to be considered by the Shadow Executive (Cabinet) for the period 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The Committee considered the Shadow Executive (Cabinet) Decisions Plan and did not request any further information on items contained in the Plan. There being no decision required the Committee **noted** the contents of the 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019 Shadow Executive (Cabinet) Decisions Plan.

251. **Work Programme Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/18/024, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2018-2019 (Appendix 1). The Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) informed Members of an additional item to be included in its work programme for its meeting on 10 January 2019, being:

- West Suffolk Customer Access Strategy, Business Case and West Suffolk Digital Strategy.

The report also requested that Members identify questions they would like the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth to cover in his annual report to the Committee on 13 September 2018.

The Committee considered Appendix 1, and at the time of the meeting had not identified any questions they wished to put to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth, but would submit questions following the meeting to the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) by Monday 23 July 2018.

There being no decision required the Committee **noted** the update and the additional item to be included in its forward work programme for January 2019.

252. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

See Minute Number (253) below.

253. **Exempt Appendices A, B and C - Evaluation of the Families and Communities Approach**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered Exempt Appendices A and C to Report No: OAS/FH/18/020. However, no reference was made to specific detail, and therefore, this item was not held in private session.

The Meeting concluded at 7.05 pm

Signed by:

Chairman