COMMUNITIES & HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 18 September 2017
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Christine Corris (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Julian Lewis-Booth (Vice-Chair); Councillors Geoff Abell, Becky Crawford, Dickie Davies, Yvonne Guariento, Paul Hadfield, Adrian Nottingham and Mark Weldon.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2017 (copies of which had been circulated) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. SAFER STOCKPORT PARTNERSHIP - ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

A representative of the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the first Annual Report produced by the Safer Stockport Partnership. The report aimed to tell the story of change for the Partnership in 2016/17; reviewed progress against the performance framework used by the Partnership to monitor achievement of its 2016/17 priorities; and looked ahead to the planned work and context informing the development of future Partnership Priorities.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to present the report and respond to councillors’ questions.

Councillor Bailey commented that in response to complaints from members of the public and councillors, she had written to the Mayor of Greater Manchester expressing her concern in relation to the operation of the 101 police non-emergency telephone number, with particular regard to the length of time it was taking for such calls to be connected to an operator. Councillor Bailey undertook to report back to the Scrutiny Committee when a response had been received.

Steve Skelton (CSS Strategic Head of Service, Stockport Council) and Chief Inspector Richard Timson (Greater Manchester Police) also attended the meeting to make a presentation to the Scrutiny Committee highlighting some of the key issues to arise out of the Annual Report.
The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The reopening of Hazel Grove Police Station was welcomed.
- It was suggested that Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology could be deployed on the new A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road.
- Stockport was considered an attractive location for acquisitive crime due to its relative affluence.
- It was suggested that the increase in the level of recorded crime was largely due to improvements in how the police recorded their activities to give a more accurate representation of the level of crime.
- There had been a rising trend in the level of hate crime across Greater Manchester, with the majority relating to race. It was suggested that this may partly be due to the impact of the referendum on leaving the European Union. It was further commented that the rise in Stockport had not been significant which may be due to the demography of the Borough.
- Demand on policing services had remained relative static, however at the same time resources had decreased and the increase in the level of work associated with the recording of crime meant there was less availability of policing resources.
- A new initiative had been introduced through the office of the Mayor of Greater Manchester to provide mental health professionals in custody suites to provide assessments of children and adults.
- Concern was expressed that the reported decrease in levels of anti-social behaviour did not correlate with members understanding of the rate of such incidents.
- It was commented that there was a lack of a collaborative approach towards children missing from home or care outside ‘working hours’ which was when most incidents occurred. In response it was stated that improvements had been made to provide a seven day co-ordinated response service until 11 pm to reflect the fact those most incidents occurred at weekend and evenings.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

5. STOCKPORT SAFER PARTNERSHIP DRAFT ASB STRATEGY

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing a draft version of a renewed Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy which had been developed by partners within the Safer Stockport Partnership.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to present the report and respond to councillors’ questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that a different approach to tackling anti-social behaviour had been developed following a piece of work that had been undertaken in the town centre to resolve problems associated with young people using local buses to travel to other areas to cause problems.
- A theme of the Strategy was to ensure that local communities were resilient and able to challenge poor behaviour.
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- It was commented that elected members were often powerless to assist residents in relation to an active anti-social behaviour problem as Council resource at times when problems occurred and it was notoriously difficult to get through to the police non-emergency telephone number.
- There was a lack of provision for young people which it was suggested contributed to problems of anti-social behaviour.
- Young people often either did not want to take part in organised activity, or otherwise found the cost of entry to such activities prohibitive.
- Concern was expressed in the relation to the attitude of the police towards the use of off-road bikes and quad bikes within local communities which reduced the quality of life for residents. In response, it was stated that the police had recently re-established an off-road bike unit.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. MTFP CABINET RESPONSE

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining a summary of the suite of proposals relevant to this scrutiny committee which form part of the Cabinet’s response to the Medium Term Financial Plan as well as an overview of the ambition and work proposed on Inclusive Growth. The proposals would deliver savings against the non-pooled budget and form a pipeline of proposals, with an initial wave presented at the Cabinet meeting in July and a further wave anticipated in October.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to present the report and respond to councillors’ questions.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That it be noted that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee providing a further detailed update on the proposals relevant to this Scrutiny Committee.

7. WALKING & CYCLING UPDATE

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the strategic framework underpinning the Council's approach to cycling and walking, and the various programmes of work which are currently being delivered to further support cycling and walking across Stockport.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to present the report and respond to councillors’ questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- A discussion took place in relation the mandatory use of helmets when cycling. It was suggested that the public should be encouraged to use helmets, and this should be reinforced through safety courses. It was further noted that Chris Boardman, Greater
Manchester’s Walking and Cycling Champion, had previously suggested that helmet use was one of the least important cycling safety measures and put people off taking up cycling.

- The investment in infrastructure needed to make cycling safe and attractive was significant.
- The announcement that the mobike initiative currently in operation in Manchester would be extended to Stockport was welcomed.
- There needed to be improved provision for cycle parking.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8.  ARMED FORCES COVENANT UPDATE

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the support offered to current and former members of the armed forces, reservists and their families as part of the Council’s commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to present the report and respond to councillors’ questions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9.  AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Democratic Services Manager submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the planned agenda items for the Scrutiny Committee’s next meeting and any relevant Forward Plan items.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.01 pm