COMMUNITIES & HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 8 June 2020
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Roberts (Chair) in the chair; Councillor John McGahan (Vice-Chair); Councillors Dickie Davies, Charles Gibson, Janet Mobbs, Tom Morrison, Adrian Nottingham, Andy Sorton and Kerry Waters.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 2 March 2020 were approved as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interest 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. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication, the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any of the exempt information in Agenda Item 7 – 'MDC Strategic Business Plan 2020-2025' and Agenda Item 8 – 'Land at London Road, Hazel Grove' should it be necessary for the Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on these aspects of the report.

5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing a summary of progress in delivering the portfolio priorities, reform programme and other key projects since the final update report, with a focus on the fourth quarter of the year (January to March). The report included out-turn performance and financial data (where this was available) for the Portfolio, along with updates on the portfolio savings programme.

The Cabinet Members for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) and Inclusive Communities (Councillor Amanda Peers) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

Sustainable Stockport Portfolio

- It was noted that there had been a 10% increase in fly tipping and it was queried whether this could be attributed to the changes made by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to the number of trips that could be made to Household Waste Recycling Centres. It was suggested that the short term closure of the Centres and changes made to the waste collection service during the early weeks of the coronavirus pandemic may have also had an impact on these figures.
- It was confirmed that the aim was that once staffing levels had stabilised, the collection of blue bins would return to fortnightly from the current four weekly collection.
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to extending the current suspension of parking charges in the town and district centres to aid the recovery of the high street.
- Further information was requested on the percentage of new residential development in the Borough that had been built on brownfield sites.
- Further clarity was requested on sickness levels at TLC, and it was suggested that this measure could be better expressed as the average number of days lost per employee.
- Members expressed their thanks and gratitude to those Council staff and those working on behalf of the Council who continued to undertake their duties efficiently and effectively during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Social media had been used particularly well by the Council to communicate service changes to residents which was then disseminated widely by local community groups.

Inclusive Communities Portfolio

- The work of voluntary, community and social enterprise sector during the coronavirus pandemic was acknowledged and welcomed.
- Traffic levels had recently been significantly reduced, and children and young people may have become acclimatised to cycling and walking in these conditions. It was suggested that additional communications should be provided to alert families to the increased danger posed as traffic returns to more normal levels over the coming weeks.
- Further information was requested on the incidence of domestic violence and whether this had been affected by the current 'lockdown'.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an overview of the Council's response to date to the Covid-19 pandemic, building on regular updates received directly by members and including detail relating to the remit of this committee, and a view of how this response would be developed over the coming weeks and months.

The Cabinet Members for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) and Inclusive Communities (Councillor Amanda Peers) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- Financial support, advice and guidance was available to local businesses including how businesses could reopen safely.
- The speed with which the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector had provided support was commended and it was noted that there was now a new generation of volunteers that had needed to be recruited as many existing volunteers had been required to shield under government guidance.
- While communications with councillors had been effective and frequent, there remained scope for more localised information particular to specific wards.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That it be noted that further reports on this issue would be submitted to future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

7. MDC STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN 2020-2025

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Stockport Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation's (MDC) Strategic Business Plan which would formally guide the MDC's activity and act as the document against which the MDC's effectiveness could be assessed.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- There was an opportunity to generate energy from the River Mersey that flowed through the Town Centre.
- It was important that explicit reference to the value and opportunities that might be afforded to the voluntary, community and faith based sectors as part of the future development of Stockport Town Centre West was enshrined in the Strategic Business Plan.

(NOTE: This item included a 'not for publication' appendix that had been circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. LAND AT LONDON ROAD, HAZEL GROVE

The Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration submitted a joint report of the Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration, Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Director of Public Health (copies of which had been circulated) detailing a proposal for release of funding for the sum identified in the appendix from the Housing Revenue account to enable the acquisition and development of the site at London Road, Hazel Grove for social housing comprising 34 units all for social rent.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

(NOTE: This item included a 'not for publication' appendix that had been circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee only).

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was commented that the proposed development fell within the proposed Stepping Hill Parking Zone and consideration needed to be given as part of the development of the site to make sufficient provision for parking on site.
- There was a lack of affordable housing in the Hazel Grove and this development would provide welcome additional social housing in this area.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. WORK PROGRAMME AND AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Deputy Chief Executive 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 – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Deputy Chief Executive be recommended to programme the following items into the Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the 2020/21 Municipal Year:-

- Update on Homelessness in the Borough.
- The outcome of investigations into recent incidents of flooding in the Borough.
- Update on the work of the Council's Climate Change Task Force.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm