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COMMUNITIES & HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 27 February 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Amanda Peers (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Oliver Johnstone (Vice-Chair); Councillors Christine Carrigan, Graham Greenhalgh, Steve Gribbon, Oliver Harrison, Rory Leonard and Catherine Stuart.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 16 January 2023 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.

The following interest was declared:-

Personal

Councillor

Interest

Oliver Johnstone

Agenda Item 7 – ‘TLC Transformation Programme’ as a member of the Contributors Committee

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. WATER SUPPLY DISRUPTION - NOVEMBER 2022

Representatives of United Utilities attended the meeting to discuss issues relating to the resilience of water supplies in the borough following disruptions to supply in parts of the borough on 11 November 2022.

The following comments were made/ issued raised:

- United Utilities stated their regret for the disruption to water supply in November 2022.
- The issue in November took place at Wybersley water treatment works and was caused by a combination of a power outage and the on-site generator being unable to run at full capacity.
- In terms of improving resilience, United Utilities had provided a new more powerful generator at the site and had invested in new technology.
- A second incident took place in December which was caused by a national freeze and thaw incident; it led to many leaks and the need to supply an additional 400 million

litres of water per day United Utilities stated that rapid temperature fluctuations had been unprecedented and that they had attempted to respond quickly and to communicate with residents;

- It was noted that during these incidents some vulnerable customers were unable to travel to the water bottle depots and did not receive deliveries of water.
- It was reported that during these incidents some residents had attempted to volunteer to deliver water to vulnerable people but had been turned away at depots.
- United Utilities stated that these incidents are the subject of a review and they intended to work closely with local resilience forums, including the Council in order to share data;
- United Utilities reported that a five year investment programme was designed to optimise the network and enable it to produce water at the required capacity, along with planning ahead for climate change and extreme weather conditions.
- It was noted that an incident had taken place at Lancashire Hill last month where over 400 properties had been affected by a leak leading to some residents being without water for up to two weeks and further information was requested in relation to how this matter could have been handled better by the agencies involved.
- It was suggested that a future scrutiny review could investigate the resilience of the water supply for Stockport Homes tenants.
- United Utilities were requested to return and provide an update to this committee in twelve months.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

5. PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORTS: QUARTER 3 UPDATES

The Director of Place Management and Director of Strategy submitted a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the Quarter 3 Update Portfolio Performance and Resource Reports (PPRRs) for the Communities & Housing, Climate Change & Environment and Highways, Parks & Leisure Services Portfolios.

The Portfolio Reports were based on the 2022/23 Portfolio Performance and Resource Agreements (PPRAs), which were considered by the Committee on 5 September and approved by Cabinet on 28 September 2022.

The Quarter 3 update focused on highlights and exceptions in relation to delivering the portfolio priorities since the Mid-Year Report presented to the committee on 21 November 2022 . It included forecast performance and financial data (where this was available) for the portfolio, along with an update on the portfolio savings programme.

The Cabinet Members for Climate Change and Environment (Councillor Mark Roberts); Communities & Housing (Councillor Helen Foster-Grime); and Highways, Parks and Leisure Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

Communities and Housing

- It was noted that the report stated that the council would come under increased pressure to deliver housing on greenfield land whilst the position of undersupply remained a challenge, however this contrasted with statements made in Liberal Democrat campaign literature which stated that they had been successful in protecting the greenbelt. In response, it was stated that there was an anomaly within the figures quoted in the report as the values referred to were as at 31 March 2021 and it was stated that further clarity would be provided on this point. It was further noted that the Council largely did not generate development applications and was required to respond to those submitted by individuals and developers.
- It was queried what work had been done to assess the impact of increased parking charges in district centres. In response, it was stated that as the charges had not yet been implemented it had not been possible to assess its impact.
- Concern was expressed in relation to information being presented within the report which was had been stated was not within the remit of this scrutiny committee to comment on.
- Whilst it was noted that the numbers of affordable homes available in the borough had increased in the preceding year, it was commented that there was not a five-year housing supply and it was suggested that there was an insufficiency of viable brownfield sites within the borough to deliver on the demand for new housing.
- The Council's approach to rough sleepers within the Borough had been to ensure that everyone was offered accommodation, however underlying individual complex issues meant that these offers were often declined. Whilst the numbers of rough sleepers within the borough remained low, concern was expressed that this figure was increasing.
- It was recommended that the data contained within the report should be recorded in a way which was more meaningful and represented the current position, otherwise it could not be effectively scrutinised;
- Concern was expressed the presentation of the report and the responses provided to members questions had been suboptimal and had hindered efficient and effective scrutiny.

Climate Change and Environment

- It was reported that the School Climate Assemblies that had been held in Stockport were due to feature as a UK100 case study of best practice.
- It was commented that the introduction of the Climate Action Now funding had been a positive initiative, however more information was requested in relation to its effectiveness and impact.
- It was stated that the 'Your Home Better' scheme was a great service which allowed savings and investment in residents' own properties such as insulation and solar panels.
- It was confirmed that further information would be provided to the CAN Steering Group in relation to progress on measuring greenhouse gas emissions and carbon budgeting.
- There was a query about why bin collection services figures had gone down this year. In response it was stated that where there was a pressure on collections, the focus was on ensuring consistency of collection of black, blue and brown bins as these were collected less frequently than green. It was further noted that where a bin collection

was missed, a crew would normally return to collect the bin. However missed green bins are collected the following week due to the higher frequency of these collections which had resulted in performance showing a reduction in this area. Work was taking place address performance on green bill collections.

- There was a query about the reduction in levels of recycling throughout the borough; In response it was stated that way residents recycled had changed post-pandemic due to increased home working.
- In terms of a bottle-deposit scheme, the Council is awaiting further information from government on how this would be introduced and implemented.
- It was noted that there would be challenges to implement all elements of the national waste strategy with particular regard to the increased separation of waste at source.

Highways, Parks and Leisure Services

- A query was raised about the data on the number of fly-tipping incidents and how performance was being measured. In response, it was stated that the figure contained within the report represented a nine-month period and the full year figure was likely to be approximately 3,150 incidents. It was highlighted that performance was improving year-on-year.
- The importance of clearing cycle lanes of leaves was recognised as a priority.
- There would continue to be investment in children's play areas into the next financial year.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the number of blocked grids and gullies across the borough and it was suggested that this was an area that should be targeted for future investment. In response it was commented that capital funds were available to carry out investigations and repairs in addition to the routine maintenance programme. A change to the cleaning regime was underway which would target particular sites such as pooling close to bus stops or areas with a history of nearby flooding.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6. RESPONDING TO OUR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN: PHASE TWO CONSULTATION REPORT

A representative of the Director of Development & Regeneration submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a further update on the outcome of Phase Two of the public consultation in relation to the Dialstone (Offerton) Leisure Centre.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Parks and Leisure Services (Councillor Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- It was noted that 70 per cent of the respondents to the consultation were opposed to the permanent closure of the Dialstone Leisure Centre.
- It was further noted that more than 50 per cent of the Centre's users had not been reallocated to alternative facilities during its temporary closure.
- It was noted that the site had been subject of antisocial behaviour the cost of renovating and bring the site back into use would be significant.

- It was suggested that the consultation process had been disingenuous and a formality in the process of seeking the closure of the centre.
- It was noted that the proposed closure of the centre had been included within the budget proposals approved at the last Council Meeting, and as such retaining services within the centre would result in a savings gap in the revenue spend for the Highways, Parks and Leisure Services portfolio.
- The centre was only intended to be a temporary facility and it had ran the course of its life. It was suggested that if further money was spent to keep the centre open, then residents would still be left with a dilapidated facility.
- The facility was currently closed and so there was no immediate pressure to make a decision on this matter, however it was in everyone's interests that the matter reached a conclusion as soon as possible.
- Local residents should have the right to a viable long-term solution to the provision of high-quality local leisure services.
- Alternative provision was being considered and an update to this report would be presented to a future meeting of this scrutiny committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. TLC TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the progress to increase the resilience of the council's key public realm services through its wholly owned company Totally Local Company (TLC).

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Parks and Leisure (Grace Baynham) attended the meeting to answer councillors' questions.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- Some of the services provided by the TLC have been deemed not viable, particularly those provided outside of the Borough.
- Work was underway to consolidate the services provided by the TLC and the Council to ensure that there was not an excess of resources.
- Some roles within the TLC might be at risk and the Council has begun the process of consulting with unions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. FUTURE PROVISION OF BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

The Director of Place Management submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing a proposal to seek delegated approval to implement new arrangements for managing the borough's bereavement services.

- An agreement had been reached with a provider of bereavement services in 2003 which had not allowed the Council to benefit from memorialisation as it should have

done and nor did it have complete control over the cremators and the condition of the cremators.

- It was noted that the current service was poor with only one cremator out of three working within the borough and residents having to wait up to six weeks for a funeral.
- It was proposed that a tendering exercise be carried out to provide a single team for the provision of bereavement services which would be tested to ensure tight controls and service standards would be met.
- If the Council could not be satisfied of such controls and standards, it was suggested that the Council could provide those services in-house;
- Any service provider should be able to cover its own costs, but should not profiteer from bereavement.
- It was suggested that it would not be sensible to enter into a further 20 year contract in the light of the Council's experience with the current contract.
- The provision of bereavement services was considered to be specialist and might be expensive for the Council to provide in-house.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. AGENDA PLANNING

A representative of the Assistant Director – Legal & Democratic Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out planned agenda items for the Scrutiny Committee's next meeting and Forward Plan items that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:

- A report on the successor to the highways investment programme was requested.
- An updated report on the clearing of grids and gullies was requested.
- A report on District Centre cleansing was requested.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.08 pm