

**OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP
11TH FEBRUARY 2019**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Capleton)
Councillors Baines, Bradshaw, Gerrard, Paling
and Parsons

Councillors Barkley (Deputy Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Lead Member for Finance and
Property Services) and Mercer (Cabinet Lead
Member for Housing)

Chief Executive
Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Democratic Services Officer (NA)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Brookes and Ranson

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

51. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 14th January 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

52. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTEREST

The following disclosures were made:

Councillor Gerrard declared a personal interest in item 06A.

53. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

54. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions were submitted.

56. LIGHTBULB SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

A report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing was considered (item 06A on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Housing and the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item and gave the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The remit of the support workers was explained to the Group. A Housing “MOT” was carried out to assess what services were required and the Housing Support Coordinator would arrange for the provision of equipment, adaptations and signpost the individual to other services.
- (ii) The 11% increase in service costs was partially attributed to the National Pay Award, which had increased salaries for the staff involved. There had also been increased costs for the central hub management in Blaby which contributed to the 11% increase.
- (iii) It was envisaged that the scheme would produce overall savings to the public purse as more individuals were staying in their homes and not being dependent on social services care. There was also an emphasis on improving care for the individual and providing a more holistic approach.
- (iv) The targets for the scheme were set out to the Group. The Disabled Facilities Grant targets were being met but it was felt they could be improved. The initial target for the Housing Support Coordinators of seeing referred cases within 2 to 3 weeks was not being met although the hope was to decrease the waiting list for the service which would enable the team to meet the 2 to 3 week target.
- (v) The Group was advised that the Scheme would be reviewed again if there was an increase in charges and reassurance was given that this was not an open-ended commitment.
- (vi) The Group discussed how the performance of the Scheme would be scrutinised and was advised that the current scrutiny structure would be changing and the scrutiny for the scheme would come under the Directorate scrutiny committee, to be added to their work programme.
- (vii) Running the Scheme in partnership had increased efficiency of service delivery as the Housing Support Coordinators acted as the single point of contact and could refer the individual to other services. There was an increased focus on joint working between services and offering a better level of support to the individual to remain living independently.
- (viii) The Group was assured that the Council had rigorously evaluated the Business Case for the Scheme before it was agreed to ensure that it offered value for money to Charnwood residents.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Lead Member for Housing and the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet to approve the recommendations set out in the report.

57. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2019/20

A report of the Head of Finance and Property Services to consider the Capital Strategy for approval was presented to the Group (item 06B on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Finance and Property Services and the Strategic Director for Corporate Services attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item and gave the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The Group was assured that the Council would not be “double borrowing” money. There were strict governance procedures in place to track any movement of funds and there were also strict guidelines in place to dictate where funds could be spent. The Council’s policy stated what the priorities for this year were and where money would be spent to reassure Members. The role of the Section 151 Monitoring Officer was also to safeguard against this practice.
- (ii) The need to keep residents’ money secure was echoed by the Lead Member who emphasised the paramount importance of protecting taxpayers’ money. The Council had and would continue to use outside advisors who had experience of commercial markets and property investments and who could advise the Council fully. There was also a plan to upskill officers so that they were better able to understand and advise on any investments made by the Council.
- (iii) The Council was aware of the changing nature of the investment market and was always looking at the measure in place to ensure the Council’s financial position was secure. The Council were risk aware rather than risk adverse as it was accepted that some level of risk was needed to be commercially active.
- (iv) The Group was advised that the Council would consider e-commerce (distribution warehouses) investments but any such investments would need to satisfy the Council’s requirement for security, return and risk. The Council was aware of the decline in the retail sector and would take advice on the type of investments which should be made. The Council had invested in property funds and engaged professional advice to advise on particular investments.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Finance and Property Services, although the Group wished to note their concern over potential “double borrowing” by the Council and wanted the Cabinet to be mindful of making any investments and how they used Council funds.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Lead Member for Finance and Property Services and the Strategic Director of Corporate Services on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet to approve the recommendations set out in the report.

58. OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - CABINET RESPONSE

A report of the Cabinet was considered setting out its responses to the recommendations of the Group on pre-decision scrutiny items (item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet's responses to the Group's recommendations be noted.

Reason

The Group was satisfied that it added value where appropriate and welcomed the Cabinet's consideration of the Group's views and recommendations as part of its decision making process.

59. WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support was considered, to enable the Group to consider its work programme and forthcoming Key Decisions and decisions to be taken in private by the Cabinet in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny and to provide an opportunity for members of the Group to raise suggestions on issues for scrutiny (in addition to pre-decision scrutiny) which fell within the Group's remit, for scheduling by Scrutiny Management Board (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Group considered the report (and further information on the forthcoming Key Decisions and decisions to be taken in private by the Cabinet provided by the Chief Executive at this meeting) and agreed to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny prior to the next Cabinet meeting, but that the following pre-decision scrutiny items should be added to its work programme at this stage:

RESOLVED that the Group's current work programme be noted and updated following this meeting, in accordance with the decisions taken during consideration of this item and at this meeting and any items of pre-decision scrutiny that require changing due to their reprogramming by the Cabinet.

Reason

To ensure effective and timely scrutiny, either to provide Cabinet with advice prior to it taking a decision or to ensure that the Council and external public service providers and partners were operating effectively for the benefit of the Borough.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 25th March 2019 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.

2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Group.