

OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP – 14TH JANUARY 2019

Report of the Cabinet

OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY – CABINET RESPONSE

Purpose of Report

To set out the Cabinet’s responses to the recommendations of the Group on pre-decision scrutiny items.

Action Requested

To note the Cabinet’s responses to the recommendations submitted by the Group on items considered for pre-decision scrutiny.

Policy Context

One of the principles of effective scrutiny, identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, is “provide a constructive critical friend challenge to the Executive”.

Pre-decision Scrutiny

Since the May meeting of the Group, the Cabinet has considered the following items on which the Group undertook pre-decision scrutiny:

A. CHARNWOOD GRANTS – ROUND THREE 2018/19

B. WRITE OFF REPORT FOR BUSINESS RATE PROPERTIES

Details of the Group’s consideration of the items as reported to the Cabinet on the 13th December 2018 are set out in the appendix to this report.

The Vice Chair of the Group, Councillor Ranson, attended the Cabinet’s meeting on the 13th December 2018 to present the Group’s reports to the Cabinet.

Cabinet Response

The Cabinet considered the Group’s reports and acknowledged the work undertaken and the views of the Group. In particular, the Cabinet responded as follows to the reports:

Charnwood Grants

The Cabinet adopted the officer recommendations, which the Group had supported.

Write off report for Business Rate properties

The Cabinet adopted the officer recommendations, which the Group had supported.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report:

Financial Implications

None.

Risk Management

No risks have been identified in connection with this report.

Background Papers: None

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CHARNWOOD GRANTS – ROUND THREE 2018/19**Recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group**

That the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Neighbourhood Services.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Lead Member for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and the Neighbourhood and Partnerships Manager on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet to approve the recommendations set out in the report.

Meeting Discussion

The Lead Member for Community, Safety and Wellbeing and the Head of Neighbourhood Services attended the meeting to assist with consideration of the item and gave the following responses to issues raised:

- (i) The Group was happy to see new applicants applying for grants and a more diverse range of groups approaching the Council.
- (ii) There was some inconsistency in the report which the Panel had taken into consideration. The main focus of the Panel was regarding the type of organisation that was applying for funding and their service users, whether it was an organisation with a wide customer base or whether they had a specific group of users. This meant that there was a variation in the number of people benefitting from each grant.
- (iii) The Group was assured that there was a robust monitoring and evaluation procedure in place to ensure the money was spent within the Charnwood area. The terms and conditions of the grant made it clear to applicants how the money should be used and that it was to be used for projects within the borough.
- (iv) The Grants Panel were trying to develop the grants scheme by looking at repeat applications to see why they required the money and what it would be used for. They also considered whether the applicant could receive funding elsewhere.

WRITE OFF REPORT FOR BUSINESS RATE PROPERTIES

Recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Group

That the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Customer Experience.

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.

Meeting Discussion

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

- (i) There were provisions in place each year to cover the potential write offs that may be submitted. This was due to an assumption that there would always be irrecoverable debts despite the Council's best efforts to recover them.
- (ii) The County Council and the fire authority were informed as to the amount of write offs throughout the year but there was no requirement for them to separately authorise write-offs.
- (iii) A range of actions had been undertaken by the Council to recover the debts. Some of the actions had been ongoing for a period of time and as soon as any arrears appeared on the account action was taken to try and resolve it.
- (iv) The Group was assured that it was not in the Council's interest to see businesses fail in the Borough but the debts do have to be addressed as it was not appropriate to keep bad debts on the Council's asset list.

