

OVERVIEW SCRUTINY GROUP – 11TH MARCH 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. LIGHTBULB SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

B. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2019/20

Details of the Group's consideration of the items as reported to the Cabinet on the 14th February 2019 are set out in the appendix to this report.

The Chair of the Group, Councillor Capleton, attended the Cabinet's meeting on the 14th February 2019 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:

Lightbulb Service Implementation Update

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

Capital Strategy 2019/20

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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LIGHTBULB SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

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 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.

Meeting Discussion

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.

CAPITAL STRATEGY 2019/20

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 Finance and Property Services.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Lead Member for Finance and Property Services and the Strategic Director for 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 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.

