

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 6 February 2018

Present: Councillor R Caserta (in the Chair)
Councillors T Cummings, E Fitzgerald, M Hankey, J Harris,
M James, Leach, S Smith and S Wright

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor R Skillen and Councillor J Walker

OSC.363 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Wright declared a personal interest in any item relating to schools as his wife is employed at a Bury School.

Councillor K Leach declared a personal interest in any item relating to the NHS as she was employed by the NHS.

OSC.364 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2017 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

OSC.365 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

OSC.366 PROGRESS MADE ON ACTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE NEWSAM REPORT

Karen Dolton, Interim Executive Director of Children and Young People attended the meeting to give an update on the progress made in relation to the recommendations identified in the Newsam Report.

It was explained that in July 2017 the Council had received a report setting out findings and recommendations in relation to actions of both members and officers regarding safeguarding issues.

It was explained that the meeting had resolved that the Interim Executive Director should implement any outstanding recommendations in relation to safeguarding and adoption procedures.

Karen reported that she was satisfied that the failings highlighted in the Newsam Report were not indicative of a wider or systemic problem.

A thorough Ofsted inspection of Bury's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers had been carried out between 22 February and 17 March 2016. Bury had been judged to be good for safeguarding children and judged as having a good adoption service. The judgement was made

after thorough examination and auditing of a number of children's case files and extensive scrutiny of performance information and policies and procedures.

A number of additional measures have also been implemented to give assurance of that practice is of good quality and compliant with procedures.

A new quality assurance framework had been launched in March 2017 which requires monthly auditing by team managers and strategic leads of randomly selected children's file. Each file is given a judgement and remedial actions are followed up to ensure that practice improves.

It was also explained that the Council's whistleblowing policy had been strengthened and all members of staff were aware that if they felt their concerns had not been dealt with adequately they could raise their concerns with Ofsted.

The recommendations were set out within the report and the actions undertaken were explained:

The council to publicise and reinforce the role of the LADO.

It was explained that the role of the LADO was well understood in Bury and the investigation had not revealed any ignorance of the role but a choice not to involve the LADO appropriately. Strategic leads have emphasised the role at a number of meetings with staff. The LADO had also given a presentation to several Councillors and the role of the LADO in relation to adopters had been updated.

Council to ensure all staff are aware of the regulatory role of Ofsted.

It was reported that the adoption procedures have been updated to reflect the content of the regulations and these were set out within the report.

Council to immediately ensure a conflict of interest assessment is undertaken on all Councillors and employees who come to the attention of children's social care.

It was explained that the main policy change related to the Council acting as Adoption Agency where a member of staff or councillor was the applicant. These changes have been put into place.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following were raised:

- Councillor Harris referred to the procedures with regards to the LADO not being followed correctly and asked how it could be ensured that something like this did not happen again.

It was explained that the procedures were in place and were much tighter. There was a lot more awareness of the consequences of what could happen if procedures were not followed and this was reinforced at all levels.

Reference was made to the policy relating to conflicts of interest assessments and Karen reported that the policy was in place and was working as intended.

- Councillor Leach referred to the Interim Practice Improvement Manager and asked whether this position would continue.

It was explained that the role would continue to be filled for the foreseeable future.

- Councillor James referred to the Ofsted inspection and asked whether any systemic problems had been highlighted.

Karen reported that there were no systemic issues raised. It was also explained that there would normally be a requirement to have an annual conversation between the Council and Ofsted but since the investigation and resulting recommendations the Council was now required to have 6 monthly conversations and 2 further monitoring visits before the next big Ofsted inspection which was anticipated to be undertaken in 2019.

- Councillor Caserta referred to Bury Safeguarding Board and asked whether it was right that the Council's Chief Executive appoints the Independent Chair to the Board.

It was explained that that this was normal procedure. The Chief Executive would be one member of a panel made up of a number of professionals from different organisations and agencies.

It was agreed:

That Karen be thanked for the update.

OSC.367 UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION IN GREATER MANCHESTER

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Shori presented a report providing an update on devolution to Greater Manchester.

It was explained that devolution is about local people making more of the decisions on local issues rather than those decisions being made by Whitehall and Westminster.

In 2017 Greater Manchester voted for the first directly elected Mayor. This was one of the conditions of devolution deals with the Treasury. The role of the Mayor has responsibility over transport, housing, policing, fire service provision and industry.

It was explained that the Greater Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham had established a senior leadership team with three Deputy Mayors; Councillor Sir Richard Leese – Deputy for Economic Growth and Business; Baroness Beverley Hughes – Deputy for Policing and Crime and Councillor Rishi Shori – Deputy for Young People and Social Cohesion.

It was explained that each of the ten Council Leaders and Chief Executives was assigned to a Greater Manchester portfolio. Pat Jones - Greenhalgh is lead for Safer and Stronger Communities.

The our People Our Place – Greater Manchester Strategy was refreshed in July and publically launched in October. The document outlines 10 priority areas with each having an implementation plan sitting under it;

- Children starting school ready to learn
- Young people equipped for life
- Good jobs for people to progress and develop
- A thriving economy in Greater Manchester
- World Class connectivity to keep GM moving
- Safe, decent and affordable housing
- Green city region with high quality culture and leisure for all
- Safe and strong communities
- Healthy lives with good quality care for those that need it
- Age- friendly Greater Manchester

It was also explained that Bury's Health and Wellbeing Board had signed off on the Locality Plan which sets out the Transformation proposals for the borough in terms of the integration of health and social care, keeping people well for longer, reducing failure demand and tackling wider determinants of health.

The locality plan is an essential condition of accessing Transformation funding of which £19m has been successfully secured to develop new models of care.

It was explained that work was being carried out to understand the degree to which Bury is represented within the Greater Manchester governance environment. Attendance at regional scrutiny groups by councillors, council officers and other representatives such as colleagues from the CCG, Police or the local business community which will ensure that Bury can take advantage of opportunities within Greater Manchester.

The second version of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework was due to be published in June 2018 with an aim of maximising the regions brownfield sites.

It was reported that Greater Manchester had put itself forward to pilot 100% retention of business rates with effect from April 2017.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Harris referred to Bury's representation and asked whether opposition members would be invited to sit on the scrutiny panels mentioned.

Councillor Shori reported that opposition members were actively invited to sit on these panels. Councillor R Walker is a member of the Economy, Environment and Transport Group.

Councillor Shori stated that he would be more than happy to sit down with the opposition leaders to discuss representation on the groups.

Councillor FitzGerald referred to public transport across Greater Manchester and asked what work was being carried out to improve the offer across the conurbation.

Councillor Shori explained that the GM Mayor had announced plans to utilise transport powers to reform bus services. A public consultation was due to be carried out in the summer of 2018.

- Councillor Hankey referred to the Spatial Framework and the aim to maximise the use of brownfield sites and asked this would be undertaken.

It was explained that there was the 25% affordable housing policy and there could be the possibility of introducing something like a brownfield first policy which could look to work more with developers and introduce timescales etc.

- Councillor Caserta referred to the 100% business rates retention and asked how this was working across Greater Manchester.

Councillor Shori explained that the scheme was being run on a no detriment basis which was a top up and tariff system.

- Councillor James asked whether the business rates retention scheme would continue.

Councillor Shori explained that it was part of the devolution deal so has to be considered as staying.

- Councillor FitzGerald asked how Greater Manchester could ensure that it had good jobs on offer.

Councillor Shori reported that the Mayor had launched a number of strategies which would help to improve skills, living conditions, training options, IT, productivity, creativity and more which will make Greater Manchester more attractive to businesses and investors.

It was agreed:

That Councillor Shori be thanked for the update.

OSC.368 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Councillor Shori, Leader of the Council presented a report providing Members with an update on performance in line with Team Bury's Single Outcomes Framework.

It was explained that under each of the single framework outcomes are a series of indicators and performance measures. These collectively contribute towards the delivery of the respective outcome.

The report and appendices detailed a number of areas where performance has improved or is at a high level and also made reference to areas of performance that were less positive.

It was explained that where performance was declining or below target or another relevant comparator, work would take place to understand what was required to improve performance. This would be done by understanding the partners involved, the true reasons as to why the data was as it was and assess what would be required to improve performance.

It was also reported that work was being carried out within several areas of the Council in relation to refreshing strategies and performance arrangements.

Those present were invited to ask questions or make comments and the following points were raised:

- Councillor Caserta referred to the figures in the report relating to gym use and asked which locations this related to.

Councillor Shori stated that this referred to local authority use.

- Councillor Harris referred to the figures relating to building residential units and the number of affordable houses. She asked whether the affordable housing figure was as well as the unit figure or incorporated within it.

Councillor Shori stated that the affordable housing figure was included.

- The figure relating to missed bin collections had risen, why was this.

It was explained that there had been a spike in sickness within the service which had an effect on the collections.

- Councillor Smith referred to homeless prevention and the improvement in relation to this and asked what was being done.

It was explained that there was a lot of work being carried out between different agencies and early intervention work. There was also help to support people to maintain their tenancies.

- Councillor FitzGerald commented that the section relating to safe place to live with all people protected and feel protected from harm did not contain any figures. She asked if something could be included within this section for future reports.

Councillor Shori explained that the figures received were in relation to Greater Manchester as a whole. He had asked for Bury's figures separately but this was difficult to do. Councillor Shori explained that he was working with Bury Police locally to formulate local figures.

It was agreed:

That the update be noted and that the team involved in producing the report be thanked for their input.

COUNCILLOR R CASERTA
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.35 pm)