

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 29 March 2017

Present: Councillor Smith (in the Chair);
Councillors R Cathcart; T Cummings; E Fitzgerald; M
Hankey; M James; R Skillen; J Walker; R E Walker and S
Wright

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Tariq –Cabinet Member for Communities and
Safer Neighbourhoods

Councillor Walmsley– Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing
and Support Services

Apologies for absence: J Black

OSC.655 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Wright declared a personal interest in any matter relating to staffing
as his wife is employed in a Bury School

OSC.656 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting, held on 16 February 2017, be agreed as a
correct record.

OSC.657 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of the last meeting.

OSC.658 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present at the meeting to ask questions
under this item.

OSC.659 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT – CHILDREN’S SERVICES

A report from Jane Whittam, Assistant Team Manager – Information, was
submitted looking at complaints related to Children’s Social Care Services. The
report covered the period April 2015-March 2016 and provided Members with the
opportunity to see the extent and complexity of Children’s Social Care Services
span of activity and to receive information relating to the quality of the services
delivered.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

OSC.660 LIBRARIES CONSULTATION

Klare Rufo Assistant Director of Learning - Children, Young People and Culture and Councillor Sandra Walmsley, Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing and Support Services attended the meeting to report on the second stage of the libraries consultation which was running until 26 April 2017.

It was explained that the first part of the consultation had been held from June 2016 and had concentrated on the principles that a library service should provide. The consultation asked for residents' input on the principles to ensure that they were in line with service requirements.

Principle 1 – To provide a Library Service across the borough which provides all residents with access to libraries and electronic services sufficient in number, range and quality to support reading for pleasure, lifelong learning, the development of new skills and the effective use of information.

Principle 2 – To ensure that the needs of more vulnerable residents and groups protected by Equalities legislation are taken fully into account in the provision of these services.

Principle 3 – To ensure that the resources committed to the library service are used as efficiently as possible by exploring options to reduce running and maintenance costs and to share premises with other Council services.

Principle 4 – To explore options for investing in technology to improve access to the library service for example, by extending opening hours, increasing digital services and enhancing provision for those with sensory impairments.

Principle 5 – To welcome the contribution that members of the community can make to the borough's library service as volunteers, supporting both traditional and digital services, including training to promote digital inclusion.

Principle 6 - To meet local aspirations for a network of community spaces across the borough in which the council and local communities can work together as partners in meeting local needs.

It was explained that the Council had had its budget cut by £65m to date with a further £32m of cuts up to 2020 at which point the Council will have to be self sufficient. The libraries budget was reduced by £870,000 in 2013/2014 with a further reduction of £1m up to 2018/2019.

Following the initial consultation a number of options were developed for the future delivery of a library service in the borough consistent with the Council's statutory duties.

The current consultation is asking residents to consider 2 options:

Option 1: Retain Bury, Ramsbottom and Prestwich Libraries plus a service wide team.

Option 2: Retain Bury, Ramsbottom, Prestwich and Radcliffe Libraries plus a smaller service wide team.

During discussion of this item, the Assistant Director reported that to date over 2000 responses and 850 comments had been received as part of the consultation process.

Questions and comments were invited from those present and the following issues were raised:-

- Members highlighted the importance of working with the community to source alternative venues for community groups and organisations to meet. It was reported that work was well underway to develop a comprehensive mapping exercise to identify community venues.
- Councillor Fitzgerald stressed the importance of ensuring access to socially isolated residents within communities.
- In response to a question concerning retention of book stock, the Cabinet Members gave a commitment that all stock would be assessed with the best and most appropriate stock being retained within the service as a whole.
- In response to a question from Councillor Hankey, the Cabinet Member explained that any offer by Groups to take over the running of a local library had to be cost neutral to the Council although help would be made available to assist with business plans.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

OSC.661 PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE A NEW NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK IN BURY INCLUDING A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTING GRANT FUNDING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Cabinet Member (Communities and Safer Neighbourhoods) submitted a report introducing a proposal for a new Neighbourhood Engagement framework for Bury including a new framework for investing grant funding in Neighbourhoods. The proposal was developed to support Neighbourhood Working which will mobilise the whole scale system wide transformation required as part of Greater Manchester Devolution between now and 2020 (and beyond).

The new Neighbourhood Engagement Framework will replace the existing Township Forum meetings to offer a new way of engaging the public in a number of different ways to suit them.

During discussion of this item, Members acknowledged the importance of increased partnership and community engagement to empower individuals. However some concerns were raised in relation to the loss of Township Forum and democratic accountability challenges around the issue of participatory budgeting.

OSC.662 VOTE OF THANKS

The Chair, Councillor Smith, thanked all Committee Members for their hard work during the Municipal Year. Committee Members thanked the Chair for her commitment to the role during the Municipal Year.

COUNCILLOR S SMITH
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7pm and ended at 9.20pm)