

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 25 March 2014

Present: Councillor M Hankey(in the Chair);
Councillors D Cassidy; S Carter; A J Cummings; J Daly; L
Fitzwalter; M James; P Heneghan; D O’Hanlon and T Tariq

Public in attendance: 1 member of the public was present at the
meeting.

Also in attendance: Councillor Campbell– Cabinet Member for Children and
Families.

Apologies for absence: Councillor S Nuttall

OSC.913 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Heneghan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute OSC.916 below, LGA Safeguarding Diagnostic and OFSTED Update as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families and took no part in discussions on this item.

Councillor Heneghan also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute OSC.920 below, School Admissions Overview Project Group as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families and took no part in discussions on this item.

OSC.914 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting, held on 12 February 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OSC.915 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions asked by members of the public present at the meeting.

OSC.916 LGA SAFEGUARDING DIAGNOSTIC AND OFSTED UPDATE

Further to Minute OSC.306 of the meeting of this Committee, held on 4 September 2013, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families presented a report setting out details of the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework published in December 2013. The report outlined the new Inspection process, the judgement criteria used and the experiences of Local Authorities who had recently been inspected under the new framework.

A copy of the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) Action Plan was appended to the report setting out progress made since the last report to the Committee in September 2013.

The Executive Director of Children's Services reported on the outcomes and findings from the recently completed Ofsted Early Help Thematic Inspection and Local Government Association Safeguarding Diagnostic.

Questions and comments were invited and the following issues were raised:

- In response to questions relating to workload, the Executive Director explained measures being taken to ensure manageable and safe caseloads across social work teams. The Executive Director referred to the issue of statutory thresholds of work and highlighted the importance of having adequate administrative support to relieve pressure on Social Workers.
- With regard to the issue of Management Information, the Executive Director reported that systems had been improved but acknowledged that there was still further scope to maximise the gains achieved from the IT software through increased staff training and liaison with other Authorities.
- In response to a question concerning the general level of progress made by the Department, the Executive Director highlighted the difficulties faced, which included changes to legislation and frameworks; previous investment issues in relation to management; increasing demand aligned with a reducing level of resource. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families referred to the positive work being undertaken and recognised the improvements made and the increase in levels of self awareness within the service.
- Councillor O'Hanlon highlighted the importance of listening to children and suggested providing examples of individual complaints, and increased performance information within the Action Plan. It was explained that the Action Plan was a high level summary document which looked to reference specific plans, actions and initiatives.
- Members of the Committee recognised the improvements made in relation to the SIF Action Plan and noted the challenges faced under the new Inspection framework. Discussion took place about the role of the Committee in monitoring progress and challenging performance.

It was agreed:

1. That this Committee endorses the SIF Action Plan and recognises the progress made since September 2013
2. That, as part of this Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15, an Overview Project Group be set up to monitor and challenge performance in relation to the SIF Action Plan.

OSC.917 CORPORATE PLAN – QUARTER 3

A report was submitted by the Leader of the Council outlining the progress during quarter three 2013–2014 for the corporate performance indicators and projects within the Bury Council Corporate Plan. The information had been extracted from

the Performance Information Management System (PIMS) and provided by the responsible services.

Questions and comments were invited from members of the Committee and the following issues were raised:

- Councillor O’Hanlon requested further detail on the actions being taken in relation to the level of residual household waste per household
- Councillor Carter referred to the ongoing work of the Council to promote the use of Foster Carers and suggested that, in addition to the indicators around adoption, the next performance report include an indicator relating to fostering.
- Members of the Committee highlighted issues around levels of staff sickness and requested details of the actions taken to reduce this figure.

It was agreed:

That the Assistant Director of Personnel be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee providing a breakdown by Department of sickness levels within the Council along with the actions taken to manage the issue.

OSC.918 CORPORATE PLAN 2014 -15 – PROPOSAL OF KEY PROJECTS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Following issues raised at previous meetings of this Committee, the Executive Director of Adult Care Services submitted a report setting out a number of proposed key projects and performance indicators to be referenced in the Corporate Plan for 2014- 15. It was reported that, following a Team Bury planning event in February, as well as continuing with the current priority “One Council, One Success, Together” the following priorities had been identified:

- A Strong Local Economy
- Stronger Communities
- Health and Well-being

During discussion of this item, Members of the Committee highlighted the importance, in terms of effective overview and scrutiny, of having specific, meaningful, measurable indicators. It was suggested that a future planning session be held to discuss the development of performance indicators.

It was agreed:

That comments and views from Members, on the proposed indicators set out in the report, be forwarded to Democratic Services.

OSC.919 CIVIC HALLS – PROGRESS REPORT

The Assistant Director of Operations submitted a report providing an update of the work undertaken and the progress made on the recommendations made as a

result of the independent review of Civic Halls.

The key points of the review were to:

- Identify underlying issues with the service
- Develop a sustainable business model going forward
- Propose a combination of short and long term options to achieve this
- Improve upon the level of subsidy required at present
- Improve user satisfaction

As a result of the review the following issues were highlighted

- Financial Assessment and Usage levels,
- Marketing and Promotion,
- Pricing Structure,
- Catering,
- Condition of Venues and
- Management of Venues

The report set out the outcomes arising from the review and the actions taken through the development and implementation of improvement plans. Figures relating to usage, income, expenditure and subsidy levels were included within the report.

Questions and comments were invited from Members of the Committee and the following issues were raised:

- The Chair, Councillor Hankey, acknowledged the increased marketing and advertising activity, but questioned how long the current level of trading subsidy could be sustained in the current financial climate.
- Councillor O'Hanlon highlighted the need for capital investment in many of the Civic Halls to enable them to compete with the private sector and suggested invest to save business cases be developed.
- Councillor James highlighted the community value of Civic Halls and, as such, stated that they could not solely be measured against companies operating in the private sector.
- Councillor Daly questioned the ongoing increase in operational expenditure and highlighted that a further, more detailed in depth breakdown of income and expenditure was required.

It was agreed:

That a further progress report be submitted to this Committee setting out detailed income and expenditure information in relation to Civic Halls.

OSC.920 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS OVERVIEW PROJECT GROUP – FINAL REPORT

Councillor Fitzwalter, Chair of the School Admissions Overview Project Group, submitted a report setting out details of the work, findings and recommendations of the Group.

During discussion of the report, Councillor Fitzwalter provided further information in relation to the Prestwich area.

The Chair, Councillor Hankey, placed on record his thanks to Councillor Fitzwalter and the Group for an excellent, thorough report.

It was agreed:

1. That this Committee approves the following recommendations, as set out in the report, for onward submission to the Cabinet:
 - (i) The Group acknowledges the complex nature of school place planning and supports the need for a proactive approach to develop strategies that respond to both short and medium term demands for places.
 - (ii) Whilst acknowledging the difficulties in measuring migration into the borough, the Group highlight the need to regularly monitor patterns and developments through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment; the Council's Core Strategy; and regular liaison with neighbouring boroughs.
 - (iii) Targeted strategies employed to manage demand pressures continue to be monitored with regular consultations with local headteachers at affected schools.
 - (iv) The Group acknowledges that the admissions system is complex but seems to be fair. Members, who are often asked for advice on applications by parents, should be offered an annual briefing from Children's Services on the process and any changes to the system.
 - (v) Consideration be given to the development of a simplified summary of the school admissions paperwork provided to parents
 - (vi) Consideration be given to the role of Elected members in the admissions and appeals process.
2. That further to (1) above, the report to Cabinet include detailed reference to the issues faced in the Prestwich area of the Borough.

OSC.921 WORKLESSNESS OVERVIEW PROJECT GORUP

Councillor Tariq, Chair of the Worklessness Overview Project Group, provided a verbal update in respect of the work of the Group. The Group had met with a number of officers and planned to visit the Radcliffe Works facility and the Council Offices at Whittaker Street. The reception area at Whittaker Street is now a one-stop shop providing a wide range of services and information for anybody attending. Located there are the citizens advice, DWP, Step Change debt charity, Bury Support Fund, Food Bank, internet access as well as the benefits services. These services can assist with providing information as well as signposting to other providers.

Councillor Tariq reported that the Group will be ready to present its findings and recommendations at the first scheduled Scrutiny meeting of the 2014/2015 Municipal Year.

It was agreed:

That the update be noted.

OSC.922 VOTE OF THANKS

Councillor O'Hanlon thanked the Chair, Councillor Hankey, for his hard work and commitment during the Municipal year.

COUNCILLOR M HANKEY
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 10 pm)