

**COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF MEETING
Wednesday, 21st June 2017**

PRESENT: Councillor Neil Butterworth (Chair); Councillors Susan Emmott, Hartley, Malcolm, O'Neill, O'Rourke, Stott, Wazir, West, Winkler and Zaheer

OFFICERS: D Bowler (Assistant Director Place), M Robinson (Assistant Director Planning), S Miah and H Bellis (Neighbourhood Directorate) and C Denyer (Resources Directorate)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Inspector Riley (GMP) C Tostevin and D Kirkham (Rochdale Boroughwide Housing)

APOLOGIES

1 There were no apologies for absence.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2 Further to the Council's Code of Conduct, Councillor Wazir declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 9 (Directorate Plans 2016-17 Quarter 4 Performance Update - Economy Directorate) insofar as he was the Assistant to Cabinet Member for Regeneration. Councillor Wazir left the room during the consideration of this item of business.

URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

3 The Chair indicated that the following additional items of business had been accepted onto the Agenda on the grounds of urgency:-

Review of Safety of Places of Worship and Communities following the recent terrorist attacks in London and Manchester

Checks to Buildings Following the Grenfell Tower Fire

VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

4 In accordance with the Council Procedure Rule 2.2 the Chair indicated that agenda items 6 - Discretionary Crisis Fund and Local Welfare Provision Year End Report 2016/17, 9 - Directorate Plans 2016-17 Quarter 4 Performance Update - Economy Directorate and 8 – Directorate Plans 2016-17 Quarter 4 Performance Update - Neighbourhoods Directorate - would be considered before agenda item 6 - Draft Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017/18 - and prior to all other business contained within the agenda thereafter.

MINUTES

5 **DECIDED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th February 2017 be approved as a correct record.**

REVIEW OF SAFETY OF PLACES OF WORSHIP AND COMMUNITIES FOLLOWING THE TERRORIST ATTACKS IN LONDON AND MANCHESTER

6 The Principal Community Cohesion and Equality Officer reported on a review of the safety of places of worship and of local communities following the terrorist attacks which had taken place in London and Manchester.

The Committee was advised that since the attacks had taken place, the Neighbourhoods Directorate and Community Safety officers had worked closely with Greater Manchester Police (GMP), the Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU), Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS), the Home Office and neighbouring authorities to ensure that a review of safety and security procedures across public buildings and events had taken place and appropriate measures implemented to ensure that members of the public and staff continue to remain safe and businesses can continue as normal without disruption.

Community Safety officers had regularly engaged with key stakeholders in faith communities to offer advice and reassurance and encourage the delivery of positive engagement events to promote solidarity with victims, unity and promote community cohesion. Communities had also been provided with useful contact details and encouraged to report suspicious activities to the relevant authorities as well as hate crime if they are an unfortunate victim or if they witness a hate crime taking place.

Members were asked to note a number of key short, medium and long term actions which had taken place to ensure that places of worship and communities remained safe as well as addressing the fears and anxieties expressed following the recent attacks in London and Manchester.

In response to concerns raised in discussion regarding the role of social media in the proliferation of hate and race crime the Committee were informed that following a meeting of the Rochdale Council of Mosques, the Member of Parliament for Rochdale, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Assistant Chief Constable it had been agreed that the concerns would be taken further nationally.

DECIDED – That the report be noted.

CHECKS TO BUILDINGS FOLLOWING THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

7 Clare Tostevin, the Director of Communities and Dave Kirkham, the Fire Safety lead at Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) provided an update on the safety of the seven residential tower blocks at College Bank in Rochdale.

The Committee was advised that no cladding existed on the residential tower blocks in Rochdale and that these were of a simple concrete construction with no gas supply to the buildings. All seven blocks at College Bank were reported as having met all the current fire safety standards and each block had a full fire risk assessment in place. In addition, in the period 2016/2017 RBH had

invested in excess of £300,000 in a programme of fire safety upgrades at College Bank, including the fitting of emergency lighting, replacement bin hoppers and upgrades to a number of existing fire doors.

A review the fire risk assessments for College Bank was undertaken on an annual basis and following the recent investment, a full and rigorous fire risk assessment on each block at College Bank which had been brought forward following the unprecedented fire at Grenfell Tower in London.

The evacuation procedures for the residential blocks had been reviewed in the light of the fire at Grenfell Tower and new information leaflets had been delivered to all the residents of the blocks explaining the 'Stay Put' policy meaning that only those in whose flat the fire occurs are required to evacuate their premises.

RBH had also delivered smoke detection and interlinked sprinkler suppression systems within the bin compounds to ensure a fire in this location cannot develop outside of that area and all blocks had also been provided with rising fire mains and all fire related facilities were serviced, maintained and tested in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation and the manufacturers recommendations. In addition to the legislative requirements the caretakers undertook twice daily inspections of all 7 blocks and where necessary removed any items of rubbish or unauthorised storage which have presented both a fire risk and safety risk.

A Service Level Agreement and Information Sharing Agreement with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service for the delivery of Home Safety Checks to tenants were by appointment and had resulted in vulnerable tenants having received advice and reassurance.

The Assistant director of Place updated Members on a meeting organised by the Mayor of Greater Manchester to discuss the safety of high rise tower blocks across the city region. Councillor Emmott attended the meeting along with representatives from the Housing Providers across the region and Senior Council officers.

During consideration of the report a query was raised with regard to owner occupied flats. The Committee was advised that the fire safety upgrades had also been offered to owner occupiers where required.

A query regarding the robustness of the procurement process was raised with regard to ensuring that the materials used when the building renovations took place were of the specified standard. The Committee were advised that those blocks across GM that are clad were to be inspected and the cladding tested by GMFRS. The Assistant Director Place advised that a special GM Highrise Task Force was to be set up and that checks will continue to be carried out across Greater Manchester on all social landlord, private and student blocks of flats. The cladding used on school and college buildings was also to be checked.

DECIDED – that the report be noted

**DISCRETIONARY CRISIS FUND AND LOCAL WELFARE PROVISION
YEAR END REPORT 2016/17**

8 The Director of Neighbourhoods submitted a report which informed Members of the Discretionary Crisis Fund's performance throughout 2016/17

The DCF offered support to vulnerable residents who are resettling in the Borough from temporary/institutional care that may need help in acquiring essential household items. The scheme is also a final 'safety net' to provide immediate and targeted relief for members of the local community who are in the greatest need and who do not have the means to resolve their own emergency situation.

The report included details of the grant funds contributions made to a number of Food Banks within the borough and also grant funding to a number of small community based projects

Members noted that a report was due to be submitted to Cabinet in September 2017 requesting further funding contributions to continue the current provision levels throughout 2018/19 and fund the scheme from 2019 onwards as otherwise the provision will cease.

In considering the report the Chair referred to the informal meeting of the Committee's membership that was held immediately before this meeting of the Committee, where Members received a comprehensive presentation and overview of the Local Welfare Provision available in the Borough.

Members sought clarification of what steps had been taken to raise awareness of the scheme among the harder to reach sections of the Community and how this may be further improved.

**DECIDED – That (1) the report be noted; and
(2) the Council's Discretionary Crisis Fund be supported.**

**DIRECTORATE PLANS 2016-17 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE UPDATE -
ECONOMY DIRECTORATE**

9 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Economy which advised of the progress at the end of Quarter 4 (1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017) towards the achievement of the targets contained in the Economy Directorate Plan 2016-17.

The Committee were informed that 87.50% (21 out of 24) of the actions included in the Directorate Plan 2016/17 achieved the required target with a further 12.50% (3 actions) not meeting the required target. The one red measure was the employment rate which had fallen during the year and although there had been a slight recovery at the end of the year it was still below the target set. The two amber rated performance measures related to the town centre project which had experienced delays and the Long Street

Methodist School project, as part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative, in Middleton.

Members noted that Rochdale Development Agency's (RDA) performance was also included in the report where the RDA was delivering projects on behalf of the Council as with the Rochdale Market and Rochdale Riverside developments or had provided a service for the Council such as business growth support.

Members sought clarification on a number of issues that were raised in the report, including the progress of the project to relocate the market in Rochdale Town Centre and details of which sites across the Borough had been granted planning permission but were not currently being developed. The Assistant Director Planning undertook to circulate a list of development sites which have been granted planning permission to Members of the Committee by the end of June 2017.

DECIDED – that (1) the report be noted;
(2) the Director of Economy be requested to circulate an update on the progress of the project to relocate the market in Rochdale Town Centre to the Members of the Committee;
(3) The Assistant Director Planning to be requested to circulate a list of development sites which have been granted planning permission to Members of the Committee by the end of June 2017.

DIRECTORATE PLANS 2016-17 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE UPDATE - NEIGHBOURHOODS DIRECTORATE

10 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods which advised of the progress at the end of Quarter 4 (1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017) towards achievement of the targets contained in the Neighbourhoods Directorate Plan 2016-17.

The Committee were informed that 85.71% (24 out of 28) of the actions included in the Directorate Plan 2016/17 achieved the required target with a further 14.29% (4 actions) not meeting the required target.

The three red actions related to the launching of the new place branding project and Rochdale, the Formulation of a 5-10 year Residential Growth Strategy for the borough which was linked to the Greater Manchester Place Initiative and the continued work with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing to deliver the promises made to tenants contained within the stock transfer agreement. The one amber action related to the completion of the development of new communications strategies to improve external and internal.

The Chair requested that the Council's performance management template be amended to ensure a consistent reporting procedure across the Directorates.

DECIDED – that (1) the report be noted;

(2) the Assistant Director Information, Customers and Communities be requested to review the Council's performance management template to ensure a consistent reporting procedure.

DRAFT COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

11 The Committee considered the first draft Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017/18 as a basis for development. Members were advised that amendments to the Work Programme would be made on an ongoing basis throughout the year to reflect current and forthcoming challenges to be faced by the Authority in general and this Committee in particular. The Committee was also advised that there was a responsibility to report the Work Programme to the Council for information purposes.

The Committee were advised that some issues could be scrutinised in conjunction with one or both of the other two Overview and Scrutiny Committees; in this regard Homelessness had been identified as a potential example of cross-committee working because this subject had implications that were relevant to the terms and references of all three of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Committee were advised that that the issue of homelessness and rough sleeping had been identified as an issue to be examined by a cross-committee task and finish group.

The Chair requested that suggestions for further topics for scrutiny by a task and finish group be notified to the clerk for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

In considering the report the Chair advised that the work programme may require alignment with that of Greater Manchester overview and scrutiny Committees once the details were confirmed.

DECIDED – That the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017/18 be noted.

GMCA/AGMA SCRUTINY POOL

12 **DECIDED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint GMCA/AGMA Scrutiny Pool held on held on 13th January, 10th February, 10th March and 7th April 2017 be noted.**