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COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING Thursday, 4th February 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Butterworth (in the Chair); Councillors Holly, Linden, O'Rourke, Rashid, Stott, and West.

OFFICERS: M. Widdup (Director of Neighbourhoods), J. Searle (Director of Economy), D. Bowler, A. Glover, S. Miah (Neighbourhoods Directorate), M. Robinson (Economy Directorate), M. Hardman and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor D. Ali (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities) and A. Wadsworth (Rochdale Boroughwide Housing).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Kelly, O'Neill, Wazir and Zaheer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

55 There were no declarations of interests.

MINUTES

56 The Committee considered the minutes of its meeting held 10th December 2015. Further to Minute 50 (Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership Monitoring), a Member referred to the issue of the Partnership and queried when this might be resolved? The Committee was advised that the issue had been raised elsewhere and if not amended would be included as a part of the appointments report to the Annual meeting of the Council on 16th May 2016.

DECIDED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 10th December 2015 be approved as a correct record.

COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2015/2016

57 The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Governance Reform which presented the Committee's Work Programme for 2015/2016.

The Director of Neighbourhoods verbally updated the Committee on the flooding incident that occurred in Rochdale town centre and other parts of the Borough on 26th December 2015. The Director added that a report on this matter would be presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 30th March 2016.

**DECIDED – That (1) the report be noted;
(2) the Director of Neighbourhood's commitment to report to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30th March 2016 on the flooding incident in the Rochdale Borough on 26th December 2015 be noted.**

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

58 **DECIDED – That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following three items of business since it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, namely information relating to the business or**

financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY COHESION HUB ACTIVITIES IN ROCHDALE BOROUGH

59 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods that updated Members on recent activity and initiatives undertaken and commissioned by the Cohesion Hub to promote community cohesion and engagement in Rochdale Borough, further to a request made by the Committee at its meeting on 23rd September 2015.

In considering the report the Committee noted that some Members had submitted detailed questions on this issue in advance of the meeting' including requests about where to register hate crime and efforts being made to increase confidence and satisfaction within the borough's various communities.

DECIDED – That the report be noted.

ASYLUM DISPERSAL IN ROCHDALE AND ACROSS GREATER MANCHESTER

60 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods which provided an update on issues relating to Asylum dispersal across the Borough. The report was submitted further to an informal session of attended by Members of the former Overview and Scrutiny Committee that was held in April 2015.

Members of the Committee in considering the report sought clarification on reports of authorities being able to refuse to take in asylum seekers, housing amenity support provided to asylum seekers and on the number of refugees that might be attempting to arrive from Syria either directly or indirectly.

A Member of the Committee requested that the Council, when making decisions about taking in Syrian refugees in the future, should also take into consideration the number of asylum seekers that Rochdale currently has across the Borough and the effect that this is already having on service provision in terms of health and education for example.

DECIDED – That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the Council, when making decisions about taking in Syrian refugees in the future, should also take into consideration the number of asylum seekers that Rochdale currently has across the Borough and the effect that this is already having on service provision.

HIGHWAYS SHARED SERVICE - OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

61 The Director of Neighbourhoods verbally updated the Committee on proposals to create a Greater Manchester wide Highways Shared Service. The aim was that a number of the Greater Manchester Authorities would collaborate for the delivery of local highways services. The contributing authorities this far were Bury, Rochdale, Stockport and Transport for Greater Manchester, for the purpose of supporting an increase in capital infrastructure work across the region and an effort to make sure that the right skills were in place to deliver a good quality service to each local authority and to ensure future resilience for each authority.

The Director of Neighbourhoods advised that the proposals were subject to staff engagement and advised that any comments that Members of this Committee wished to make on the proposals would be used to help preparation of the Final Business Case that was scheduled for Member Approval around June 2016. The

Director of Neighbourhoods undertook to circulate to Members of the Committee the Outline Business Case for a shared highways service for Greater Manchester that had been prepared by Transport for Greater Manchester.

DECIDED – That the report be noted.

READMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

62 **DECIDED – That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.**

RBH PERFORMANCE REPORT

63 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods which provided Members with an update on the performance of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) for quarters 1 and 2 in (April – September) 2015/16 in relation to the achievement of the aspirations, commitments and promises set out in the Council's Service Level Agreement with RBH. Promises were initiatives or projects that RBH had committed to deliver. Commitments were described as pre-transfer service levels that RBH were required to maintain and aspirations were things that RBH would like to do, but were not guaranteed to do so as there was no specific funding in its business plan and delivery may be adversely affected by issues such as the impact of welfare reform. The report also provided some additional key performance information and updated Members on the organisations mutualisation process, development programme and on how RBH is working in partnership with the Council, local agencies.

The Committee in considering the report sought clarification on the rates at which RBH charged for rechargeable repairs; the 'turnaround' periods for recently vacated properties (which Members were advised was overall 43 days per property); and the review exercise for the funding of Tenants and Residents Associations, which it was requested that RBH be asked to clarify.

DECIDED – That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the Chief Executive of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing be requested to write to the Tenants and Residents Associations across the Borough clarifying their funding arrangements.

DIRECTORATE PLANS 2015-16: QUATER3 PERFORMANCE UPDATE

64 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods that presented details of progress in the third quarter of 2105/2016 (October - December) towards targets contained in the Neighbourhoods Directorate and the Economy Directorate Plans for 2015/16.

The Director of Economy updated Members on the proposed Solar Farm at Chamber House Farm, Heywood, which he advised would not now be progressed due to changes imposed by the government to the subsidy regime. However he undertook to keep residents in the area updated on any future developments. In considering the report a Member requested that all future meetings of the Rochdale Township Planning Sub-Committee be attended by a Legal Officer due to the contentious nature of a large proportion of applications that are considered by that Sub-Committee.

The Director of Neighbourhoods updated the Committee on the flooding incident that caused much damage to Rochdale, including the town centre and to parts of the Pennines Township on 26th December 2015. He advised of how the floods had affected the Council's ICT system, leading to a temporary shut-down of the Council's computer network and the Borough's Emergency Plan had been adapted in light of

experiences caused by the flooding incident. The Director also reported upon improved refuse collection rates and procedures for the procurement of school meals contracts.

DECIDED – That the report be noted.

GREATER MANCHESTER SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

65 The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Economy that informed Members of the current progress in the joint preparation by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (the GMSF) as a new statutory development planning document to guide spatial planning across the city region until 2035. The report also informed Members of the current consultation which is taking place on a draft vision, strategic objectives and growth options for the GMSF and the opportunities for communities, businesses and elected Members to engage in this process.

The report identified the main issues that would affect Rochdale Borough including evidence suggesting that the levels of housing need across Greater Manchester will be significantly higher than the current housing requirements set out within the Districts' existing local plans or strategies; the Core Strategy sought to manage the supply of land for housing and employment over a period until 2028; the existing supply of, and potential opportunities for, additional, industry and warehousing land; the need to build on the potential opportunities afforded by devolution and initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse to enhance the economic role of Greater Manchester including Rochdale Borough; transport infrastructure will be a high priority both in terms of improvements to the strategic road and rail networks and orbital connectivity to ensure the Borough's residents have access to the key areas of economic growth; and the consultation document stated that Greater Manchester recognises the importance of Green Belt and usable green space in creating neighbourhoods where people want to live.

In considering the report the Committee noted that some Members had submitted detailed questions on this issue in advance of the meeting, in particular raising concerns about proposals for new housing developments to infringe on green belt land. In response to this the Committee were advised, given the projections of population and household growth, the GMSF options consultation suggested a scale of growth required to be accommodated across Greater Manchester for the period until at least 2035, and alternative spatial options as to how this might be accommodated. The priority in the consultation was to see the reuse of vacant and brownfield sites within the urban areas. However, to develop a full view of current and future land use within Greater Manchester and spatial options, an assessment of all types of land would be made, including a collective assessment of current Green Belt land. The assessment will look at land currently designated as Green Belt across all Districts to see how well it performs against the Green Belt purposes. This would be just one part of a wide range of evidence which will be used to develop options for the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework to be published for consultation in late 2016.

DECIDED – That the report be noted.

GMCA/AGMA SCRUTINY POOL

66 The Committee considered the minutes of the meetings of the GMCA/AGMA Scrutiny Pool held 9th October and 11th December 2015. In considering the minutes of these two meetings Members noted the poor attendance by some other Greater Manchester authorities, especially in light of the significant issues that were on the

agendas of such meetings. The Committee also asked that the Councillor Rowbotham, as lead scrutiny member, for the GMCA/AGMA Scrutiny Pool be requested to report to the next meeting of the Council on 6th April 2016 regarding the activities of the GMCA/AGMA Scrutiny Pool.

DECIDED – That (1) the minutes of the meetings of the AGMA Scrutiny Pool held 9th October and 11th December 2015, be noted;
(2) the Chair of this Committee be requested to make representations to the Chair of the GMCA/AGMA Scrutiny Pool about the lack of representation from some other authorities in Greater Manchester.