

COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING Wednesday, 18th September 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Meredith (in the Chair); Councillors Beswick, Susan Emmott, Hartley (substituting for Councillor Besford), Kelly, Angela Smith, Winkler and Zaheer.

OFFICERS: M. Widdup (Director of Neighbourhoods), D. Bowler (Assistant Director – Place), S. Ayres (Economy Directorate) and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Blundell (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Business, Skills and Employment), Councillor D. Williams (Chair of Middleton Township Committee), G. Swarbrick (Chief Executive – Rochdale Boroughwide Housing), P. Ambrose (Rochdale Town Centre Management Company), V. Davies (Middleton Town Centre Management Company) and three members of the public.

APOLOGIES

14. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Besford, West and Peter Williams

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

15. There were no declarations of interests.

MINUTES

16. Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held, 20th June 2019 and 28th August 2019 be approved as correct records.

ROCHDALE BOROUGHWIDE HOUSING

17. The Chief Executive of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) attended the meeting, at the request of the Chair, to provide a presentation to the Committee's members that described the background to the establishment of RBH as an independent Mutual Housing Society, following the transfer stock transfer, to them, of approximately 13,000 social housing homes in Rochdale, in March 2012.

The presentation focused on work that RBH was doing to progress its services for Rochdale's residents.

- a. Growing Together: delivering the right mix and quality of homes to meet the demands of Rochdale's tenants and residents.
- b. Thriving Together: helping to make Rochdale a desirable place in which to work, thrive and age including via a special range of new and tailored housing services.
- c. Improving Together: to improve the way in which RBH works (internally and externally) with a clear focus on value for money
- d. Building Rochdale's Economy: to strengthen RBH's commitment to and maximise the impact of the development of procurement opportunities and assisting in the development of inclusive growth across Greater Manchester.
- e. Partnership working: to work with partner organisations including Rochdale Borough Council and other social housing providers that operated within and without Rochdale.

The Committee in considering the presentation sought clarification on a number of matters including: the future of the seven high rise housing blocks ('seven sisters') at College Bank, Rochdale. A Member of the Committee expressed concern at the lack of response that she, and other Councillors, were receiving from RBH staff to queries they were putting forward on behalf of their constituents, many of whom were RBH tenants. The Committee asked how many tenants were presently be waiting to be transferred and why residents who resided, say, in Heywood or Middleton had to travel to Rochdale to be interviewed about their tenancy or a potential tenancy. The Committee requested clarification on RBH's allocations policy and how long tenants and potential tenants could expect to remain in a particular 'allocation band'. A member asked what role the Council played in relation to the development of RBH's lettings policy.

A Member sought clarification on RBH's current financial situation relating to its current levels of surpluses, balances and the rational for pay-rises for senior staff at RBH.

The Committee sought clarification on RBH's governance arrangements expressing concern at the reduced Council membership of RBH's governing Representative Body.

The Chief Executive of RBH endeavoured to answer Member's questions and undertook to provide written answers to those questions that required more detailed answers.

Resolved:

1. The presentation by the Chief Executive of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing be noted and welcomed
2. The Assistant Director (Place) be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee, detailing the Council's Lettings Policy.

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMPANIES - 2019/20 GRANT

18. The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Economy regarding grant funding for the Borough's town centre management companies. Rochdale Council had in place Grant Funding Agreements with both Rochdale Town Centre Management Company and Middleton Town Centre Management Company for 2019/20. The Agreements for these discretionary grants detailed the activity which the grant funding will support, the conditions attached to the award of the grant and monitoring requirements.

The Committee was informed that Town Centre Management Companies had been established across the country for over 20 years. Their principal aim was to promote the viability and vitality of town centres through active partnerships of the public/private and voluntary sectors. Each town centre and their needs and opportunities were different and therefore structures, aims and objectives and governance were unique to each town.

Since April 2019, Rochdale Town Centre Management Company is now trading as Rochdale BID (Business Improvement District) following a successful ballot of town centre business and organisations. This generated £195,780 in a levy on top of business rates paid by town centre occupiers of properties with a rateable value of over £12,000. The Council's levy payment for 2019/20 is £36,264. This is the largest levy payment in the town centre and contributes to an overall budget of £215,780 for the BID in 2019/20. Councillor Brett represents the Council on the Company Board.

In terms of Middleton Town Centre management Company they received a grant, via the Council's Economic Affairs team of £31,500, a grant from Middleton Township of £10,000 and a grant from Middleton Township for the Christmas Lights 'switch-on' event in the sum of £3000.

Representatives of the two Town Centre Management Companies, the Chair of Middleton Township Committee and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Regeneration, Business, Skills and Employment portfolio, addressed the Committee and answered various questions put forward by Members.

Resolved.

That the report be noted.

ROCHDALE SAFER COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN 2019 - 2022

19. The Committee scrutinised a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods that presented the council's revised Community Safety Plan which was formulated and delivered by the Community Safety Partnership. The Committee, in considering the report, noted that it had been submitted to the Council's Cabinet on 27th August 2019, where the recommendations contained therein were approved.

The Community Safety Plan is designed to support the development of simpler plans that are accessible and customer facing. The revised Plan was informed by information from a residents' survey in 2018 and a strategic threat assessment that included qualitative and quantitative data to assess the scale, trend, intelligence assessment and knowledge of themes.

The themes considered in the Plan included; Residential Burglary; Serious Violent Crime; Child Sexual Exploitation; Youth related anti-social behaviour; Modern Slavery; Domestic Abuse; Organised Crime; Substance Abuse – including drugs and new psychoactive substances; Night time economy and issues in our town centres; Community tensions; Sexual offences and Cyber Enable Fraud.

The Director of Neighbourhoods reported that the Plan had previously been endorsed by the Community Safety Partnership with five priority areas so that people and communities in Rochdale will be: Free from the harm of domestic abuse and violence; Free from the harm of organised crime and exploitation; Safe from crime and antisocial behaviour; Able to enjoy themselves in the town centres; Able to live, work, learn and socialise in harmony. The Director reported that a new chair of the Safer Communities Partnership had been appointed: Superintendent Rick Hunt of Greater Manchester Police. In response to a question from a Member the Director of Neighbourhoods advised that he would be attending the Committee's next meeting on 21st November 2019, together with Superintendent Hunt to discuss with the Committee the five priority areas detailed above. In addition the Director of Neighbourhoods undertook to include in his report to the Committee details of measures being undertaken to counter the high levels of domestic violence reported across the Borough.

A Member referred to the relatively high number of suicides in the Borough. The Director of Neighbourhoods undertook to liaise with the Coroners Service about this matter and report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) The Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership Community Safety Plan 2019 – 2022 be endorsed.
- (2) The Director of Neighbourhoods and Superintendent Hunt, the Chair of Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership, be requested to attend the Committee's next meeting, on 21st November 2019, to discuss the five priority areas detailed in the Community Safety Plan 2019 - 2022.
- (3) The Director of Neighbourhoods be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee, in consultation with the Coroners Service, relating to suicide prevention.

CLIMATE CHANGE

20. Further to the Council meeting held on 17th July 2019, where Members adopted a motion relating to Climate Change (minute 15(a) refers), the Director of Neighbourhoods gave a presentation updating Committee members on measures in place both in Rochdale, and the wider Greater Manchester region, to tackle this important issue.

The Committee was informed that on 8th October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had published a report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission. The report warned that the risk of 'catastrophic climate change' including extreme heat, drought, flooding and climate-related poverty would significantly increase unless global warming could be kept to a maximum of 1.5°C. The report's authors found that global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate and say that urgent and unprecedented action is required to meet the target.

The Greater Manchester Mayor organised a Green Summit that was held in March 2019 at which a 5-Year Environment Plan was launched. The Plan's ambitions requires urgent action from everyone in Greater Manchester – from businesses, the public sector, and local residents. The Plan set out how Greater Manchester's local authorities and health sector would work to reduce environmental impact (of our buildings, vehicle fleets and procurement processes, in particular).there was a need to increase the efficiency of how businesses heat and power their buildings and produce goods/services, reducing the environmental impact of how their goods and staff travel, and installing renewable energy and heating technologies at their premises.

The key aspects of the Greater Manchester Plan included more efficient use of energy supplies – the source of power and heat buildings and transport; increasing local renewable electricity generation, de-carbonising how buildings are heated and increasing the diversity and flexibility of energy supplies. Another key aspect was travel and transport – to be achieved through increased use of public transport and active travel routes; phasing out fossil-fuelled private vehicles and replacing them with zero emission alternatives; tackling the most polluting vehicles on the roads; establishing a zero emissions bus fleet; de-carbonising freight transport and shifting to rail and water transport.

In terms of future action it was proposed that a draft strategy, setting how Rochdale Borough will contribute to the Greater Manchester five Year Environment Plan and achieve the target by 2028 would be presented to future meetings of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet. Closer links would be developed with

partners and local businesses. It was proposed that a Working Group be established comprising Members of the Council and representatives of outside agencies. Also the development of a 'climate emergency' budget for the Borough setting out the level of investment needed to achieve established targets linking into discussions at Greater Manchester level around the Environment Plan.

Resolved;

The Committee notes and welcomes the Director of Neighbourhoods' presentation and further notes his commitment for further action in relation to this matter.

WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020

21. In considering the Committee's Work Programme for 2019/20 it was requested that a report be presented to the Committee's meeting, scheduled to be held on 20th February 2020, regarding the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and a report on the Supplementary Planning Document relating to the future use of College Bank Flats, Rochdale, prior to the submission of the document to the Council's Cabinet.

Resolved:

That the Committee's Work Programme be amended to reflect the two issues referred to above.