

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING Tuesday, 22nd September 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Holly (in the Chair); Councillors: Boriss, Joinson, Nolan, O'Neill, O'Rourke, Rana and Robinson.

OFFICERS: N. Thornton (Director of Resources), J. Rooney (Assistant Director (Information, Customers and Communities), J. Murphy (Chief Finance Officer), S. Smith (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), R. Barker (Head of Workforce and organisational Development), A. Wytwyckj (Neighbourhoods Directorate), A. Ridyard and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate).

12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bamford, Mir and Wraighte.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

14 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held 4th August 2020, be approved as a correct record, subject to the correct spelling of Councillor Nolan's name.

15 HEALTH RELATED ABSENCE REPORT

The Committee scrutinised a report presented by the Head of Workforce and Organisational Development, which provided Members with third quarter, fourth quarter and year end health related absence figures in respect of 2019/2020.

Overall the number of days lost per FTE (Full Time Equivalent) was 9.67 for 2019/2020, with the main reasons for absence being stress/depression and operative/post-operative. The Directorates with the highest number of days lost per FTE were Adult Care, Children's Services and Neighbourhoods.

During the latter part of 2019/2020, the third quarter health related absence figures (October - December 2019) indicated that 2.73 days per FTE were lost, with a slight decrease in the fourth quarter (January – March 2020) to 2.60 days per FTE lost.

Although not relevant to the reporting period in question, Appendix One of the submitted report, provided Members with an overview of recorded Covid-19 related absences, as at 31st March 2020.

Each of the Council's Directorates were committed to continuing to monitor and manage absence to meet the challenging targets, which they had been set, on an annual basis. In addition, the Council's Human Resources Service

continued to provide strategic advice and support to Services including attendance at Absence clinics. Regular support was also provided to managers who had staff absent on long term sick or with persist short term absences. The Human Resources Service also continued to provide training (including e-learning and face to face training) and to support managers across the Authority on effective absence management, whilst also providing support to staff.

The Chair asked if Members could be provided with information that compared Rochdale's performance, relating to health related absences, with the other authorities in Greater Manchester.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. The Head of Workforce and Organisational Development be requested to provide Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a briefing note which compares Rochdale Council's performance, relating to health related absences, with the other authorities in Greater Manchester.

16 EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY REPORT

The Head of Workforce and Organisation Development presented Members with the Employment Equality Report for 2019/2020. The report informed Members that the Council was seeking to ensure that the composition of its workforce reflected the diverse local community, and offered equality of opportunity in employment. It was reported that the Council was compliant with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish equality information of its workforce.

This report provided information for the financial year ending on 31st March 2020 and aimed to demonstrate the progress and achievements in increasing the composition over time to demonstrate how the workforce's diversity had changed, and how this compared to the demographic profile of Rochdale Borough (based on the 2011 census data).

It was noted that the Council had established an Equality and Diversity Steering Group to support its commitment to integrate equality, diversity and inclusion throughout its services. A key component of the strategy would be equality, diversity and inclusion in employment which would look to address those areas where the Council was under-represented when compared to the local population.

In considering the report Members noted 11.5% of the Council's workforce were from BAME and other identifiable minority communities, which was under representative of the overall percentage of BAME residents in the Borough. It was further noted that there were no members of the Council's senior management team that was from the BAME community. In response the Head of Workforce and Organisation Development undertook to investigate these issues further.

Members also sought clarification on the Council's recruitment and selection procedures and policies and suggested that further work be undertaken to investigate this matter (and the Committee subsequently resolved to establish a scrutiny study group to examine this issue – minute 23 below, refers).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

17 DIRECTORATE PLANS 2020/2021 - RESOURCES DIRECTORATE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS DIRECTORATE

The Committee scrutinised the Resources Directorate Plan 2020/2021 and the Neighbourhoods Directorate Plan 2020/2021.

The Directorate Plans outlined the action that the Directorates were intending to take over the coming year, to support the Council's long-term vision and strategic priorities. The Plans sought to support the Council's vision to 'grow our economy and develop the Borough through co-operation and partnership, improving the lives of local people and communities'.

In considering the Directorate Plans Members noted the good work that was being undertaken across the service areas in both Directorates. In respect of the Neighbourhoods Directorate, the Committee commended the ongoing excellent work being undertaken across the Borough by the 'front-line' services which had in many cases been a virtual life-line to some of the Borough's more isolated and vulnerable residents.

The Committee noted that due to the impact of Covid-19 the Directorate Plans were being submitted to the Committee relatively late in the Municipal Year, therefore it was suggested that in future the Plans be submitted to the Committee at the first available meeting after their formulation or alternatively be submitted to an overview and scrutiny planning session that is typically held at the beginning of the Municipal Year and it would enable the Plans to be used as a guide for developing the Committee's work programme.

Resolved:

1. The Resources Directorate Plan 2020/2021, be noted.
2. The Neighbourhoods Directorate Plans 2020/2021, be noted.
3. In future years, Directorate Plans relevant to this Committee, be submitted either to the first available meeting after their formulation or alternatively be submitted to an overview and scrutiny planning session which are usually held at the beginning of the Municipal Year, thereby enabling the Directorate Plans to be used as a guide for developing the Committee's Work Programme.

18 3RD & 4TH QUARTER CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

The Assistant Director (Information, Customers and Communities) provided the Scrutiny Committee with a summary of corporate complaints and compliments received during the third and fourth quarters of 2019/2020 (September 2019 – March 2020). The Committee was reminded that part of

the Council's performance management process was to ensure the Authority's ambition to continuously improve services was realised.

It was reported that in total, 247 new complaints were received during the second half of 2019/2020, across all services. The majority of the complaints were resolved at 'Stage One', with only 13 escalating to 'Stage Two' and two complaints being dealt with at 'Stage Three'. A total of 110 compliments were received during this reporting period.

Members were pleased to note there had been a slight reduction in the overall number of complaints received the year and that the majority of the Council's service areas had received fewer complaints in the reporting period compared to the previous year.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

19 FINANCIAL UPDATE (PERIOD 4) 2020/2021

The Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer, which updated members on the Council's forecast 2020/2021 financial position as at the end of July 2020. The Finance Update report contains details of the following:

- a. The forecast Revenue outturn position, showing a pressure of £11,426k. The General Fund pressure relating to Covid-19 was reported to be £26,920k, which was partially offset by the use of the government funding relating to Covid-19 of £16,032k. Non-Covid-19 pressures were currently reported as an in-year pressure of £538k.
- b. The Savings plans of £4,169k comprised of ongoing savings and £280k of one-off savings, with a balance to address of £764k. The balance to address was an impact of Covid-19.
- c. An update on the Health & Social Care Pool Fund.
- d. Forecast Capital expenditure of £135,430k, after re-phasing of £23,407k, £22,000k for schools being delivered in the next financial year and funded through external grants, grant increases of £2,295k for transport schemes and a budget reduction due to the transfer of £18k funding to an Academy.
- e. The forecast 2020/2021 Collection Fund position of a deficit of £30,450k, which would be partially mitigated by increased government Section 31 grant of £20,950k, leaving a residual pressure of £9,500k, this pressure relating to the impact of Covid. The Council's share of the forecast 2020/2021 Collection Fund deficit is £8,381k, which will impact on the Council's General Fund budget for 2021/2022.

The purpose of the report was to keep Members updated on the financial position of the authority, as effective budget management was considered to be critical to ensuring the financial resources were spent in line with the budget and that they were targeted towards the Council's priorities. The report focused on the forecast 2020/2021 financial position as at the end July 2020.

The Committee was advised that the submitted report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its next meeting on 29th September 2020.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

20 REVENUE BUDGET 2021/2022 TO 2023/2024 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/2022 TO 2025/2026

The Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer that provided an update on the Revenue Budget and 2021/22 to 2023/24. The report also provided an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy; outlined proposed changes to the Council's Capital Programme 2020/21; and described the Council's proposed Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2025/26, as a basis for consultation.

In considering the report the Committee were informed that the report was being presented to the Cabinet's meeting on 29th September 2020, where that meeting would be required to recommend a balanced 2021/2022 Revenue Budget to the Budget Council meeting (in March 2021), and provisional budgets for 2022/2023 to 2023/2024. The Council was required to set a balanced budget for 2021/2022 by 11th March 2021. Members of the Scrutiny Committee were advised that the Revenue budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy Capital Programme were key parts of the budget setting process.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

21 DISCRETIONARY FEES AND CHARGES 2021/2022

The Committee scrutinised a report of the Chief Finance Officer, which presented proposed increases to Discretionary Fees and Charges, across the authority, for 2021/2022. Discretionary Fees and Charges were reviewed on an annual basis. At the Cabinet meeting held 28th July 2020, a 2% general increase in Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2021/2022 was agreed for planning purposes, subject to various exemptions highlighted within the report.

The Chief Finance Officer's report detailed the proposed Discretionary Fees and Charges for 2021/2022, as a basis for consultation, and the report also detailed those charges which were proposed to be exempt from the general 2% increase.

The Committee were advised that the submitted report was due to be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 29th September 2020.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

22 GREATER MANCHESTER CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Greater Manchester Corporate Issues and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 16th June 2020, be noted.

23 CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for 2020/2021, which outlined the scheduled programme of reports during the year.

Members requested that consideration be given to the establishment of scrutiny study groups to examine two issues: firstly the recruitment and selection of staff and secondly the establishment of a Members Development Programme.

Further to Minute 4 of the Committee's meeting held 4th August 2020 (Township Plan 2020-2022) the Chair indicated that he would consider with the Committee's Vice Chair the feasibility of establishing a study group to examine the role of Township Committees.

Resolved:

1. The Committee's Work Programme 2020/2021 be noted.
2. A Scrutiny Study Group comprising five Members, including the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee, be established to examine two issues: the recruitment and selection of staff and the establishment of a Members Development Programme.
3. The establishment of a study group to examine the role of Township Committees, be discussed and assessed by the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee.

24 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:

That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

Reason for the resolution

Should the press and public remain during debate on this item there may be a disclosure of information that is deemed to be exempt under Parts 1 and 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

25 CYBER SECURITY

The Committee received a confidential presentation from the Assistant Director (Information, Customers and Communities) which detailed issues surrounding Cyber security including potential threats and measures that are being undertaken to counter these various threats.

The Committee in considering the presentation noted that whilst training for staff on issues relating to cyber security was mandatory for the Council's it

was currently optional for elected Members. Members of the Committee suggested that the training should be mandatory for councillors as well.

Resolved:

1. The presentation be noted and welcomed.
2. The Committee recommends to the Cabinet that it be a mandatory requirement for all Members of the Council to undertake training on cyber security.