

COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING Thursday, 24 September 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Meredith (Chair); Councillors Besford, Beswick, Kelly, West and Zaheer

OFFICERS: M. Widdup (Director of Neighbourhoods), F. Crompton (Neighbourhoods Directorate), M. Garraway (Committee & Constitutional Services Manager)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Susan Emmott and Councillor Williams

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

46 MINUTES Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 February 2020, be approved as a correct record.

47 RBH - FIRE CONCERNS

The Chair introduced the item which had been brought as a result published by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) on 8 September 2020 which highlighted defects in the compartmental cladding on each of the buildings in College Bank. The defects led to concerns that fire could spread through the blocks of flats. The Chief Executive of RBH had been invited to attend the meeting, however the Chief Executive of RBH had declined and suggested that the Director of Neighbourhoods should be in a position to present instead. The Chair set out that this would be inappropriate as the Director of Neighbourhoods was not an employee of RBH nor familiar with the specifics of this situation at College Bank.

The Chair also sought to clarify if the concerns with the fire safety of RBH properties were historical (pre-1998) and whether they were compliant with the regulations that existed at the time the Council entered into the agreement with RBH. The Chair sought to understand what rigorous fire assessment were being undertaken with the other properties within RBH's portfolio and what measures were in place within those properties in the short term.

Furthermore, Members of the Committee sought clarification in relation to what the 'waking watch' was, their role and how qualified those undertaking the roles are; in light of the recent concerns on the cladding. There was a lack of clarity as to what happens next, what are the associated costs were with the 'waking watch' and who bore the cost. Members expressed concerns that RBH had failed to engage with residents in relation to the longer term plan to

address the defects. Assurances were sought as to other RBH properties across the Borough and what measures were in place to ensure that those properties had measures in place to mitigate the identified risks at College Bank.

The Chair referred to questions which had been raised with Members by residents of College Bank and members of the public. Those concerns related to:

- What comprehensive Fire Risk Assessments had been undertaken since the Grenfell disaster?
- A lack of engagement by RBH with residents as to the extent of the risk.
- A lack of detail within the Fire Safety Policy.
- That the Asbestos Policy, the Electrical Safety Policy and the Extreme Weather Policy are all now out of date.
- The Health and Safety Framework document is now overdue its review by nearly a year.
- A lack of understanding on the role of the 'Waking Watch'.
- A recent fire within a flat at College Bank and that the property had not been repaired.

The Director of Neighbourhoods provided assurance as to properties within Rochdale BC's portfolio setting out how each property was assessed and the policies which underpin fire safety.

Resolved

That the Chief Executive of RBH be requested to respond to the issues raised by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as residents, and be invited to address the Committee at a future meeting.

48 WARDLE AND SMALLBRIDGE FOOTBALL CLUB

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods, setting out a request for funding for a football pitch in Wardle. The report had been referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Cabinet for the Committee to consider how the Council approaches contracting and pricing of similar contracts.

Members were informed as to the background of the project and the issues that had led to it not being delivered within budget and a subsequent request to the Pennines Township Committee for additional funding.

Members sought clarification on the process for contract negotiations, if they were agreed as fixed price contracts and whether clauses were included to protect the Council when a contractor was unable to complete a project within the agreed pricing.

Members expressed concerns that where there had been problems with estimation of costs that additional funding was being sought from Township funds. In instances where projects had not been delivered within estimated

costs additional funding should be sort from the Directorate or the contractor rather than Township,

Resolved

1. That the Chief Finance Officer be requested to provide details for Members as to what mechanisms are in place to protect Township funds should an agreed contract not be delivered at the specified price.
2. That STaR procurement be invited to a future meeting to address issues in relation to the agreement and approval of contracts.

49 INCLUSIVE SKILLS, WORK AND HEALTH PLAN 2021-2023

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Economy setting out the Inclusive Skills, Work and Health Plan 2021-2023.

The Plan recognises the co-dependency between health and employment, and the role skills plays in securing better employment and earning better wages. The Plan aims to maximise the benefits for Rochdale of the significant budgets devolved to Greater Manchester, recognises that this brings opportunities as well as challenges.

The Plan outlines 8 priorities and what success would look like for each.

1. Adults with learning difficulties and mental health issues
2. Long term unemployed
3. Digital Inclusion
4. Adult Education (18yr +)
5. Higher Education (higher level apprenticeships and degrees)
6. People in low skilled low paid employment
7. Employers
8. Making every contact count (RBC/NHS)

Members sought clarification on the impact of Covid-19 and how different ways of working required alternative skills whilst offering an opportunity to develop new skills to take advantage of jobs outside the borough.

Resolved

That the report be noted and supported for implementation.

50 WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Resources setting out the Committee work programme for the municipal year.

Members were informed that a study group consisting of Members from each of the three overview and Scrutiny Committees would be established to consider the Council's recruitment policy and member development.

Resolved

That the report be noted.