

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 13 July 2020

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair), Councillor Graham Walker (Deputy Chair) Councillors Tony Ansell, Rufia Ashraf, Janice Duffy, G Eales, Penny Flavell, Andrew Kilbride, Samuel Kilby-Shaw, Dennis Meredith, Cathrine Russell and Zoe Smith

Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Environment
Councillor Stephen Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing
Councillor Brandon Eldred, Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor Anna King, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Safety
Phil Harris, Director of Housing and Wellbeing
Stuart McGregor, Chief Finance Officer
Chris Carvell, Environmental Services Manager
Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Emma Roberts.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2020 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

5. BUDGET SCRUTINY

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, highlighting the salient points regarding both the West Northants Shadow Authority budget and financial implications of Covid19 on the Council. It was highlighted that a finance monitoring report would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting in August 2020.

Mr McGregor was thanked for the informative updated.

AGREED: That the report is noted.

6. MONITORING OF ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS

(A) CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

Phil Harris, Director, Housing and Wellbeing, presented the action plan detailing progress on the accepted recommendations, he highlighted the key points and provided explanations of what has taken place and what work is currently being undertaken and other work planned.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In response to a query regarding feedback from schools on the training provided, the Committee heard that it had been incredibly successful and had been delivered by various experts.
- A joint approach was being enacted with Daventry District Council regarding enforcement – “international lighthouse”. Sharing of best practice is also being undertaken amongst Local Authorities
- The Committee was very pleased to note that a number of the recommendations had been dealt with.

AGREED: That further monitoring of the accepted recommendations of this action plan takes place at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 November 2020.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook performance management scrutiny on:

- HML01 total number of households living in temporary accommodation
- HML07 total number of households that are prevented from becoming homeless

The Committee made comment, asked questions and heard:

- It was commented that less social housing is becoming available; for example there are 100 less homes than was expected despite Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) building 100 homes in the year.
Housing Services has been successful in preventing the loss of the breakdown in some shorter term tenancies and have had dialogue with tenants and the landlords
- A report will be considered by Cabinet at its August 2020 meeting regarding a second phase of the pilot scheme involving the purchase of 24 former council homes to reduce the Council’s use of temporary accommodation.
- It was confirmed that bed and breakfast accommodation is rarely used now as temporary accommodation.
- In answer to a query whether reasons for homelessness has changed, it was confirmed that the reasons are similar over the past couple of years such as family and relationship breakdown.
- The Committee commented that loss of employment due to Covid19 could lead to people losing their homes

- In response to a query regarding the landlord's forum, it was confirmed that a change of emphasis was being looked at for letting to people that are in receipt of housing benefit and looking to prevent evictions

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook performance management scrutiny on:

- ESC06% of land and highways assessed falling below acceptable levels – detritus (NI195b) (4M)

The Committee asked questions, made comment and heard:

Regarding detritus on the roadside the Committee heard that this had fallen behind due to Covid19 but was on track.

AGREED: That performance management scrutiny of the above was now complete.

8. CSP PERFORMANCE

Councillor King, Chair, CSP, presented the report to the Committee and highlighted the salient points.

The Committee asked questions, made comment and heard:

- It was commented that work regarding training with schools had been phenomenal and fabulous feedback received. In addition, virtual events had taken place
- It was noted that there were some challenges around violent crime.
- The Taxi Marshal Scheme commenced on 4 July 2020 and was working slightly early over the first three weekends, from 7pm to 1am – the Scheme would then revert to “pay day” weekend.
- Purple Flag has been extended and assessors would visit the town.
- The plan to gate Jeyes Jetty has been approved and is near completion.
- It was confirmed that taxi drivers are expected to wear masks.
- The statistics contained within the report are in line with national figures

AGREED: That the update on CSP performance is noted and a further update is presented to the Committee at its meeting on 11 January 2021.

9. SCRUTINY PANELS

10. SCRUTINY PANEL 1

The Chair advised that evidence gathering had halted due to Covid19 but would be re-starting next week.

(A) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY GANGS AND KNIFE CRIME WORKING GROUP

The Chair advised that evidence gathering had halted due to Covid19 but would be re-starting later this week.

(B) PRE DECISION SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP - TRIAL OF BUY BACK OF PROPERTIES

The Chair advised that the Working Group had met earlier today and received a good brief. It would meet one more time in August 2020.

11. DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

The Chair presented the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/2020 for the Committee's approval. The report highlighted the good work of Overview and Scrutiny over the past year. The report would be presented to full Council at its meeting in September 2020.

The Chair put on record his thanks to the Democratic and Member Services Manager for her work and dedication to Overview and Scrutiny over the past 14 plus years. He added that the centre for public scrutiny had, on many occasions, noted Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton as examples of best practice. He went on to thank Members for their enthusiasm, hard work and input into Overview and Scrutiny. The Committee thanked the Chair for his dedication, hard work and support to Overview and Scrutiny and the way that he had diligently led the Committee.

AGREED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/2020 is approved and presented to full Council at its meeting on 14 September 2020.

12. POTENTIAL FUTURE PRE DECISION SCRUTINY.

There were none.

13. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 7:06 pm