

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Tuesday, 17 September 2019
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor P. Cumbers (Chair)

Councillors R. Bindloss (Vice-Chair) R. Browne
R. Child J. Douglas
C. Evans C. Fisher
E. Holmes R. Smedley

Observers P. Chandler

Officers Director for Law and Governance
Democratic Services Manager
People Manager
Democratic Services Officer (CR)

Minute No.	Minute
19	<p>Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wilkinson.</p>
20	<p>Minutes There minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2019 were approved and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.</p>
21	<p>Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.</p>
22	<p>Review of the Scrutiny Annual Work Plan and the Forward Plan Mrs. Taylor, Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny Officer) provided a brief overview of the Work Plan, highlighting that it comprised of four parts:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny Reviews • Forward Plan Items • One off Items • Portfolio Holder Updates <p>Mrs. Taylor encouraged Members to review the Work Plan, consider if the priorities were correct and share ideas. If Members agreed that certain items were not a priority for Scrutiny, they could be removed from the Work Plan.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members suggested Planning Enforcement as a possible topic for Scrutiny and the Director for Law and Governance confirmed that Scrutiny could request a one off update or undertake a review of general Planning Enforcement (but not specific cases). • Members noted that the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Resources would provide this Committee with an update on implementation of the revised Debt Management Policy in March 2020, to allow sufficient time for its impact to be assessed. A proactive approach to debt management was vital and Members were eager to know what action was being taken. An interim update would be requested for the next meeting of this Committee. • The Council needed to inform and educate people in the Borough about Universal Credit, which had only been partly implemented. Members discussed undertaking a review of Universal Credit together with debt management but it was agreed that considering the two issues separately would be more beneficial. • Other issues identified for Scrutiny were the health profile of the Borough, with a focus on services provided in relation to health and physical activity

particularly for older people.

- A review of customer service standards and service levels was also highlighted as a possible future review topic.

A Member asked if non-Members of the Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group could attend meetings as observers and the Chair confirmed that this was not a public meeting but Councillors of the Scrutiny Committee could attend as observers if they wished.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the items suggested for Scrutiny would be discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee (and with relevant officers) and an updated version of the Work Plan would be circulated to Members.

Any further items for inclusion in the Work Plan should be submitted to the Chair or Vice-Chair for further consideration at the next meeting of this Committee (on 12 November 2019). Items should be in line with the Council's vision & priorities and enable Scrutiny to have maximum impact.

23	<p>Questions to Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Access and Engagement</p> <p>Members agreed to defer the presentation by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Access and Engagement to a future meeting of this Committee (following approval of the Council's Corporate Strategy).</p>
24	<p>Community Grants Review - Presentation</p> <p>Mrs. Rahman, People Manager and Councillor Freer-Jones, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Access and Engagement</p> <p>(a) gave a presentation (a copy of which is attached), setting out the proposals to review the current policy for allocation of community grants;</p> <p>(b) asked Members to consider any areas not identified in the presentation;</p> <p>(c) advised that £44k would be available and asked Members to confirm their areas of priority to help focus the Review.</p> <p>Copies of the People Board Outcomes Framework, which formed part of the presentation, were circulated to Members.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There should be an acknowledgement that the Council also allocates a significant amount of discretionary business rate relief over and above the Community Grants allocation. This was not included in the presentation but would be acknowledged in the final policy.• It was highlighted that though not in receipt of grant monies, Shopmobility received financial assistance toward utility bills.

- The People Manager would provide members with further information regarding any grants issued outside the Community Grants process.
- Members were keen to see recipients of grants being subject to agreed service level agreements.
- It was vital to direct focus onto Parish areas, as well as the Town. Councillor Freer-Jones reassured Members that grant monies and benefits were available to the whole Borough and all would have the opportunity to submit bids.
- Consideration should be given to subsidising public transport in rural communities.
- Community Groups had been consulted as part of the Review (via email). Effective community engagement was crucial in helping the Council achieve its aims and aspirations for the Borough. Inclusion and engagement was being considered in detail and Members were supportive of this. Mrs. Rahman would confirm if Parish Councils were consulted on the Review outside this meeting.
- Stakeholder mapping (who the Council should consult with) was being undertaken as a separate piece of work and members would be asked to contribute. Members highlighted the importance of reaching the elderly, young people, those living alone or in isolated areas and Parish Councils.
- Members also highlighted that helping to train and prepare people for work, facilitating good mental health and less substance misuse was important but this was not solely the Council's responsibility.
- The grant monies should not be targeted to areas which were subject to statutory help but consideration could be given regarding how to complement these services.
- In order to make funding more accessible, Members considered making it available every six months. However, it was agreed that areas of focus needed to be prioritised to ensure the monies had a significant impact and were not 'spread too thinly' amongst organisations. Councillor Freer-Jones confirmed that she would advise Cabinet that Members wanted to explore the possibility of setting aside a smaller funding pot to be available for smaller grants.
- Local schools could be encouraged to work with care homes by providing opportunities for volunteering which would in turn provide students with opportunity of gaining work experience. This would be good for both the young and the elderly.
- The cost incurred to the Council through its administration of the Community Lottery was raised and Mrs. Rahman confirmed that she would look into this and confirm the figure outside this meeting.

A Member commented that the Review work undertaken was good. Analysis of the needs in the Borough had been undertaken and the proposed action would benefit the community.

Councillor Freer-Jones advised Members that the points they had raised would be taken forward to Cabinet . She would continue to work with Mrs. Rahman on the

Review, which would be submitted to Cabinet in October and would work with the Director for Law and Governance on community engagement.

Scrutiny Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

25

Update on Task and Finish Group - Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation

The Committee received a report on the Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group from the Chairman of Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Cumbers, Chair of Scrutiny Committee introduced the report and advised that the Task and Finish Group were progressing well. The Welfare, Housing and Safer Communities Manager had provided the Group with very useful background information and performance statistics at its preliminary scoping meeting. Members and officers were in agreement that empty dwellings (and the loss of rent) was unacceptable. Work had commenced on the Housing Improvement Plan and the Task and Finish Group was working towards creating an effective voids policy, amongst other areas of work which were identified in the scoping document. It had many ideas on how to consult with and help tenants and aimed to have a positive impact in this area.

The Task and Finish Group would provide regular updates on its work to the Committee. The final report would be provided to the Committee for Approval in January and would be accompanied by a schedule of evidence considered by the Group during the course of the review.

A Member commented that the update was positive and they were pleased to have this 'plan' in place.

RESOLVED

- 1) Scrutiny Committee **NOTED** the update from the Task and Finish Group for Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation;
- 2) Scrutiny Committee **NOTED** the Scoping Document and approved the timetable for completion of the review and the corresponding revisions to the Terms of Reference.

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Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at: 8.35 pm

Chair

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