

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY, 2018

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY, 2018 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Kevin Rodgers

Councillors Neil Gethin, Richard A Jones, Jane Kidd, Andrea Robinson and Paul Wray

Co-optees –

Invitee: -

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Healy and Bev Chapman and

		<u>ACTION</u>
48	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	Councillor Jane Kidd declared an interest in agenda item 6 (2017-18 Finance and Performance Improvement Report) by virtue of being a member of a Voluntary organisation. Councillor R. Allan Jones declared an interest in agenda items 7 (St Leger Homes of Doncaster Performance and Delivery Update, Quarter 2) and 8 (Doncaster Council Housing Allocation Policy Review) by virtue of being a Member on the St Leger Homes of Doncaster Board.	
49	<u>MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14TH DECEMBER 2017.</u>	
	<u>RESOLVED</u> that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 14th December, 2017, be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair	

50	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no Public Statements made at the meeting.	
51	<u>ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIR</u>	
	Following the recent by-election in Armthorpe, the Chair welcomed the newly elected Member, Councillor Frank Tyas to the meeting. Councillor Tyas was in attendance to observe the Scrutiny Meeting following his recent election.	
52	<u>2017-18 QUARTER 3 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT AND 'DELIVERING FOR DONCASTER' BOOKLET.</u>	
	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee was presented with the Finance and Performance Report for Quarter 3 which provided an overview of progress made since the last report.</p> <p><u>Finance and Performance</u></p> <p>The Assistant Director of Finance was in attendance at the meeting, and responded to key issues of concern raised within the report. There was concern regarding the current projected overspend at the end of Quarter 3, that had increased sizeably since the end of Quarter 2, largely down to the Children's Trust whose projected overspend had increased from £1.6 M to nearly £3 M this quarter. This information had been received late, and had not previously been reported to Council. A number of meetings had been called and monthly meetings were being undertaken in order to address what was ongoing and retain some control and instil confidence in the Trust.</p> <p>The Assistant Director of Finance gave reassurance to Members, that this was hopefully just a dip in the finances of the Council, rather than the general trend. The Council would have to help the Trust out financially, as it was would not be in the Council's interests for the Trust to go into administration. There needed to be a firmer focus on what was going on within the Trust, with stronger relationships in order to be aware of potential problems at an earlier stage. Members noted that a new Financial Director had been appointed to the Trust who had a great deal of local government experience and was an extremely competent individual who it was hoped would regain control and address these problems.</p> <p>Moving on from the current issues linked to DCST, the Assistant Director of Finance reported that whilst the biggest problems financially were within Children's Services, there were also a number of other issues contributing to the overspend, for example, Members noted that spending had increased across Regeneration, as it was increasingly</p>	

difficult to cut costs. All non-essential spending had been stopped, and vacancies across the Council were not currently being filled in an effort to make essential savings. The problems with the delayed Waste Contract had contributed to the overspend, and whilst it was comforting that this was a one off issue, it nevertheless was accountable. The Committee noted that financially, the Council was in a difficult position, and would be for 3 to 4 years, and whilst there were Reserves in place, it was not anticipated that these would be used other than in extenuating circumstances.

Following the updates received from the Assistant Director of Finance, the Chair invited Members to put forward any issues that they may wish to raise in light of the information received through both the report, and the update from officers.

Queries were raised with regard to the following which officers endeavoured to provide clarity and reassurance on at the meeting:-

- Would the money given to the Children's Trust have an impact on Doncaster Schools;
- Costs of placements of children in care, and were care needs being properly balanced against cost;
- The use of Consultants across the Council and the cost implications;
- Information in relation to the number of National Voluntary Sector Organisations commissioned to deliver services in Doncaster, and in what capacity, voluntary or commercial capacity.

Health and Adult Social Care

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director Communities, and Victor Joseph (Public Health Consultant) to the meeting and invited them to update Members with regard to performance updates and key issues.

It was reported that there were continually areas that proved challenging within the service with action and mitigation ongoing on a continual basis. Members were informed that obesity and smoking continued to be the biggest challenges and actions to address this further were ongoing. However, life expectancy of the people in Doncaster had increased which was positive, but with it came increased costs as people developed further health problems through old age.

Members raised queries as to how many health checks were being undertaken across the Borough, as it was felt that there was not enough awareness as to the availability of these. It was reported that there had been a low take up of health checks recently, and some work was due to be undertaken on this area in order to ensure that the

public got the benefit of these with a renewed focus on getting the message across that these were readily available for all. Leading on from this, Members queried if the uptake in disadvantaged areas was lower, and what was being done to address this. Members noted that this had in actual fact provoked the review and there was an increased focus on targeting deprived groups by public health. However, Officers endeavoured to provide Members with figures in relation to the checks in order to provide greater clarity. Officers informed Members that a lot of issues had been uncovered, and awareness needed raising on a number of issues, particularly for improving access for BAME and minority groups and those from disadvantaged areas.

Through the course of discussions, Members asked how many people with Direct Payments actually employed their own staff for their care needs. The Assistant Director of Communities assured Members that whilst she didn't have this information at the meeting, she would be able to provide them with this.

The Assistant Director of Communities also looked to provide an update on the work of the Voluntary and Community Sectors, and reported that a lot of work was being embarked upon in order to improve engagement with local groups and support transformation. In relation to this, A question was raised how of the work done by these groups was supported by Sport England. Officers assured the Committee they would look into this and provide Members with detailed information on this issue.

Children and Young People

The Assistant Director of Commissioning and Business Development was in attendance at the meeting to provide the Committee with an update on issues within the Children and Young People Directorate.

Attendance in schools, continued to be a persistent problem, although work to address this was being progressed and the Council and the Trust were working collaboratively with Ofsted and the DFE to improve on the situation, and regular meetings with Head teachers, Senior representatives from DMBC and the Trust, the CEOs of Academies and representatives were being held to keep a tight hold on the problems. Members found the persistent attendance figures worrying, and were not happy to see the approach favoured by many academies of excluding pupils to focus on results. It was noted that indeed this was being addressed, and Ofsted had in fact contacted all schools to inform them that in future, that any absence due to exclusion would be factored into future Ofsted inspections. In terms of the attendance of children in care in secondary schools, this was also a persistent concern for the Committee. However officers assured Members that improvements were being made and the Interim Head of the Virtual School had taken steps to address this problem and acknowledged that this was a problem that needed a lot of focus.

The Chair, raised concerns with regard to the overspend by the Children's Trust, and commented that whilst there was the statutory duty of Children's Services being discharged through the Trust, long-term, if the financial problems continued, what were Officers views as to the Trust's sustainability. Members were informed that a review would be undertaken in the coming months in terms of future delivery, but currently, direction remained in place and through the challenge strategic group, the future model and sustainability would be scrutinised.

Regeneration and Environment

The Director of Regeneration and Environment provided an update to the Committee, giving an overview of the Directorate's successes, and any current concerns.

Generally, it was reported that the Directorate was performing well, and the majority of targets were being achieved with some of the following highlighted to Members:-

- Recycling rates were good;
- Planning applications were ahead of target although there was the view that these would be extended in the coming year in order to make it more challenging;
- Sickness, in comparison to last year was on target;
- Capital projects were doing well, with the Wool Market due to be completed by October 2018, Great Yorkshire Way was nearing completion, and the Colonnades refurbishment would soon be finished.
- Herten Triangle would soon be ready for commencement on the project, and Network Rail had confirmed a site at Waterfront West, and there was still confidence that the proposals for the development of a Cinema and Restaurants within the CCQ would be achieved.

The Committee noted that the budget was the biggest current concern, and the £1.6 M deficit which had increased since the end of the last quarter. This was down to a number of one off problems, with the delay in the late start of the new waste contract being one of the main contributing factors.

Following the update given by Peter Dale, Members were invited to put any questions to the Director of Regeneration and Environment on any areas of concern. The main areas of concern raised were as follows:-

- Parking Strategy and Transport issues – members appreciated the need to reduce the reliance on parking but good quality transport was essential in order for this to

	<p>happen. Members were informed that options were being looked at and discussions were ongoing with SYPTE;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A query was raised with regard to the progress being made on Big Information Screens around the town centre as greater connectivity was needed with regard all the projects currently being undertaken. Members were informed that costs were being explored and Officers would get back to Members with a more conclusive response. • A query was raised with regard to the rail link to the airport, on which a feasibility report was currently being undertaken, and once completed, the Committee would be updated. • Finally, Members muted their concerns in terms of town centres across the Borough and their regeneration as proposed within the Mayor's Manifesto. There was the fear that not enough consultation was being undertaken to understand the needs of the towns and their residents. Members were assured that Overview and Scrutiny would be involved in the process along with local Ward Members to ensure it was robust. <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the virements approved by the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Executive and Cabinet as detailed in Appendix A to the report be noted; and 2) The new additions to the Capital Programme as detailed in Appendix A, on pages 11 and 12 of the document be noted. 	
53	<p><u>ST. LEGER HOMES OF DONCASTER PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY UPDATE: 2017/18 QUARTER THREE.</u></p>	
	<p>Members were presented with the Quarter 3 report for Performance and Delivery from St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) which provided feedback on performance against Key Performance Indicators for 2017/18.</p> <p>Officers provided Members with any relevant updates on the issues contained within the report, and the Committee were invited to raise any areas of concern in relation to the performance of SLHD. The following issues were raised during the course of the discussions:-</p> <p><u>Number of Households Placed in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation</u> Members noted that this was a new KPI, and provided information on the number of households placed in temporary accommodation. It was reported that the average number of nights spent in B&B accommodation was 3, whilst it was not ideal, this was sometimes the</p>	

	<p>most appropriate course of action, particularly in cases such as where families were fleeing domestic violence.</p> <p><u>Percentage of Homeless decisions made within Statutory Timescales</u> This was a new KPI this year, and at the present time was classified as Red. Currently, this sat at 76%, with the target being 90%, and although it was lower at the moment at the end of Q3, it was expected to exceed 90% by Q4.</p> <p><u>Scheduled Repairs – Percentage of Promises Kept</u> Currently, this KPI was deemed to be Amber, but demonstrated an upwards trend, and where it stood at 98.8%, only 15 repairs had not been completed on time.</p> <p><u>Percentage of Local Expenditure</u> Members noted that whilst there was the intention to ensure 2/3 of all expenditure was in Doncaster, this was not always the case and therefore this KPI fluctuated each month. This was largely due to Procurement laws, and the main factor being that SLHD was largely income led, and a large majority of all expenditure was down to staffing costs.</p> <p><u>Rent Arrears</u> Members queried whether this KPI should be amber, as it appeared to be off its target of 2.5%. However, reassurance was provided as this was a seasonally adjusted profile, with rent arrears traditionally rising in December.</p> <p><u>Gas Servicing</u> Councillors commented that this service was available to the public, and whilst it maintained its 100% target, Officers informed Members that there were still improvements that could be made, with a better marketing strategy planned for the future. It was also reported that further commercial ventures were being looked into for the future, with the possibility of providing garden services private owners and other initiatives.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the progress of St Leger Homes of Doncaster performance outcomes and the contribution SLHD makes to supporting DMBC's Strategic Priorities be noted.</p>	
54	<u>DONCASTER COUNCIL HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW</u>	
	<p>Members of the Committee considered the report on the Doncaster Housing Allocations Policy, which outlined a number of key changes to the policy and the response to emerging legislation. SLHD was in attendance at the meeting to provide further information on the issue and respond to any concerns that Members may have.</p>	

Significant consultation had been undertaken with customers, stakeholders and elected Members to ensure that the policy produced met the needs of the people of Doncaster and the overall objectives that evolved from this were as follows:-

- Continue to house those in need in Doncaster
- Support stable and vibrant communities;
- Reflect local priorities;
- Make the best use of housing stock;
- Have a clear system in place setting out a framework of eligibility, qualification and priority of access to council homes and nominations made to Housing Associations; and
- Fulfil the Council's obligations under Part VI and VII of the 1996 Housing Act and Homelessness Act 2002 as amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.

Members noted that there were 6 proposed changes to the Policy, which were as detailed below:-

Proposal 1 – Allowing Permanently Older Owner Occupiers onto the Housing Register;

Proposal 2 – Include a 'Right to Move' exception to the local connection criteria;

Proposal 3 – A direct officer for full duty homeless applicants who have not bid on available properties;

Proposal 4 – Create a homeless prevention priority;

Proposal 5 – Create a resettlement status in the platinum band; and

Proposal 6 – Removal of the debt element criteria for applicants under the resettlement status as a reason to refuse access to the register.

Further information on these proposals was provided by Officers and within the body of the report and Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions of the Officers in attendance at the meeting.

The Chair commented that this had clearly been subject to rigorous consultation, and had been a thorough review but there were a couple of points on which they required some clarity. Particularly in relation to older people, the question was raised as to whether or not there were enough bungalows on the register, as in the past there had always been little provision with regard to this. Members noted that the policy would be applied as fairly as possible across the board, and whilst everyone's expectations may not always be accommodated, they would endeavour where possible to meet people's needs. Individual circumstances would be looked at in every case and assessments

	<p>would be carried out to ensure allocations were fair and justified.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee support the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy that Cabinet will be asked to approve with implementation from April, 2018.</p>	
55	<p><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN 2017/18 - FEBRUARY 2018.</u></p>	
	<p>The Committee considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme that provided an update on progress made since the last meeting.</p> <p>OSMC considered the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the next four months, and the Chair invited Members to highlight any decisions on which they had concerns or may require further information.</p> <p>A brief discussion followed, and Members raised some concerns with regard to the Behaviour Improvement Programme and the Public Libraries Strategy, on which they felt that further discussions may be useful.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u> that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The current Work Plan position be noted; 2) The Forward Plan of Key Decisions, be noted; 3) The correspondence exchanged since the last meeting between the Committee and the Executive, be noted; and 4) An informal meeting be arranged with relevant Officers and the Committee to discuss the Public Libraries Strategy. 	