

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Monday, 24th June, 2019.

Present:- Councillors Plenty (Chair), Wright (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Gahir, Matloob, Minhas, S Parmar, Plenty, Wright and Sless

Non-voting co-opted members:- Morris Sless

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Hulme

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gahir declared his employment as a taxi driver in connection with the Member question on bus lanes.

2. Election of Chair for 2019/20

Resolved: That Councillor Plenty be elected as Chair of the Panel for the 2019/20 municipal year.

3. Election of Vice-Chair for 2019/20

Resolved: That Councillor Wright be elected as Vice Chair of the Panel for the 2019/20 municipal year.

4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd April 2019

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2019 be approved as a correct record.

5. Member Questions

Members noted the tabled response to Members questions regarding School Streets, Bus Lanes, Tree Planting, and Osborne. Responses were given to a number of supplementary questions from Members.

Resolved:

1. That a report be submitted to the Panel in six months on the performance of Osborne with regard to missed appointments;
2. That it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested a report on bus lanes to its meeting on 11 June 2019 which Panel Members could attend and speak in accordance with rule 30;
3. That the responses to the members' questions be noted;

6. The Home Improvement Agency

The Panel received a report which summarised the work of the Slough Home Improvement Agency and which highlighted some of the challenges faced by this work and the impacts on the community. The Service Lead – Housing (People) Services introduced the report and outlined the background and the processes involved. He reported that the main challenge was the timescales involved in delivering adaptations to customers and that, as it was taking too long, housing and adult social care had commissioned a review. It was anticipated that consultants would be appointed in August and some recommendations presented about October.

The Panel were advised that the Slough HIA did not receive a budget at the beginning of the year and only derived income through charging a 15% fee on the works they carried out which resulted in a budget pressure.

In response to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- the officer was unaware of any residents being unable to be discharged from hospital pending an adaptation. Arrangements were made with a care home or other facility until their home was ready;
- the waiting list of 61 and only 5 adaptations in progress for council properties was a historical issue and was being reduced. Definite improvement was expected in the next month;
- the bottleneck had arisen from only one officer undertaking financial assessments. However staffing had been increased since the beginning of the financial year;
- Slough did not offer all the services provided by a Home Improvement Agency, as listed in the report, as it did not have the capacity. The top priority was homelessness and temporary accommodation;
- with regard to the case study 2 in appendix 2, discussions were taking place to try to resolve the matter;
- the financial assessment took into account everything except the home.

Resolved:

1. That an update report be submitted once the consultant's report was available;
2. That the report be noted.

7. Progress with implementation of Housing Asset Management Strategy and HRA Investment Programme

The Panel received a report which provided details of further progress made on HRA investment programmes and the continued application of the Council's Asset Management Strategy.

The Service Lead Housing, Development and Contracts introduced the report highlighting that the Housing Development and Contracts (HDC) team implemented a programme of investment via the RMI partnership in 2018/19 of £10m. The Housing Development and Contracts New Homes Development Programme, as at 14 June 2019, was tabled.

In response to questions, the Panel was informed that:

- the need for 618 boiler replacements had resulted from design failures that had led to internal rust. The newer models were more efficient as they reduced future maintenance and CO2 emissions and reduced gas bills for residents;
- the 189 new roofs reflected the age of the stock together with the stock condition survey and had been logged to undertake the contract in batches;
- fire risk assessment surveys were undertaken for all communal areas across the housing stock. The Royal Berkshire Fire Service dealt with tower blocks including sprinkler systems;
- the 100% voids completions when measured against targets from October to March was an improvement;
- the residents' survey was analysed in conjunction with Internal Audit and the results given were contractual figures. In order to take forward the feedback from colleagues and members of a possible differentiation between perception and reality it was proposed to hold a programme of events, member walkabouts and meetings with residents in order to obtain the perception of Osborne on the ground. The information obtained would be circulated to Councillors and broken down by ward. It would be available on the external website together with the Osborne monthly performance;
- 1932 appointments had been booked and 35 had been missed but this needed to be considered in the context of normal repairs maintenance. Members were invited to contact the officer with regard to any specific query;
- complaints were not closed until the following month to enable investigation and response;

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- out of hours appointments for emergencies were for exceptional circumstances only. Residents had the flexibility of an early morning or last appointment.

The Panel noted that:

- information on all investment programmes would be available for members to access via SBC InSite which would be updated on a monthly basis by the RMI Client Team. Information would be available on a ward basis;
- it was proposed to make a presentation to the Panel on the draft development strategy.

The representative from Osborne undertook to feedback comments that Members had seen operatives sitting in cars for long periods and asked that Osborne be notified of any future such observations. Members were informed that work was allocated to all operatives and sub contractors via PDAs. Dynamic scheduling enabled oversight of job acceptance, en route, when at the property and completion. The next job was allocated from a prescheduled drop down list which could not be viewed until completion of the previous job. There was a fixed fee per job. The completion of 3-4 jobs a day prior to the contract with Osborne had increased to 6-8 per day.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

8. Waste charges and co-operation with Bucks CC

The Panel received a report on the issues surrounding SBC's provision of Household Waste and Recycling Centre Services. Particular mention was made of the impact to Slough and to Slough residents of changes to HWRC services provided to Buckinghamshire County Council at Burnham HRC and Langley HRC.

The Service Lead Environmental Services stated that Bucks CC were testing to ascertain whether sufficient savings could be achieved without the need to completely close Burnham HRC. No operational or financial impact for Chalvey HRC had resulted from the changes at BCC, therefore there were no plans to change the current SBC policy. The flytipping on the road to Burnham HRC could have resulted from lack of knowledge of the closure.

In response to questions, the Panel was informed that:

- in order to control use of SBC sites, evidence of Slough residence, such as a utility bill, was required. In addition number plate recognition was used and the operatives identified frequent users;

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- the aim was to control DIY and tyre waste. Whilst sofas were accepted at the sites collection was normally arranged;
- in order to work economically the waste teams collected the household waste in their area before returning for recycling and special collections. Concessions were available for the disabled and age 65+.

The Service Lead Environmental Services undertook to report back on:

1. how Langley HRC presented its recycling statistics
2. the arrangements for the disposal of knotweed

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

9. Forward Work Programme

The Panel reviewed its work programme and discussed potential items listed for inclusion, including clarification of their expectations of item titles raised at the scrutiny training session which took place on 13 June 2019.

9Details of the potential items as listed in the agenda were as follows:

- Residents' experiences –frontline services including the one stop shop
- Housing development strategy – update from the discussion earlier at the meeting
- Five Year Plan Outcome 4 – to include oversight of residents living in good quality homes, homelessness
- The items on Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and the Landlords' register to be taken together
- High Street redevelopment update
- Langley High Street infrastructure and impact on businesses, to include a report back from Network Rail
- Impact of personalised charges on tenants – an information report on recharges
- Local Plan update – if appropriate
- Low emissions strategy – to include electric charging points
- Leisure Centre – the impact of the leisure centre upgrade

The Chair reinforced that Members could suggest items for consideration by the Scrutiny Panel at any stage.

Resolved: That

1. the Work Programme be noted as circulated apart from the Neighbour Services Scrutiny Indicators and Housing Services Scrutiny Indicators being taken together at the 31 October 2019 meeting
2. the potential items as discussed be added to the Work Programme as appropriate.

10. Date of Next Meeting - 5th September 2019

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The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 5 September 2019.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)