

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 03 October 2013 at 18:30

Attendees:

Mrs Mary Coleman (Member), Mr Bert Collins (Member), Mr Ronald Hanton (Member), Mr Jim Shrimplin (Member), Mr Barry Stone (Chairman), Mrs Marlene Fairhead (Member), Mr Charles Marsden (Member), Mrs Kerry Robinson-Payne (Member), Mr Jamie Smith (Member), Mrs Barbara Wright (Member)

Apologies for Absence:

Mrs Sue Hacon (Member), Mr Michael Castle (Member), Ms Marie Field (Member)

Absent:

No Members Absent

Also in attendance at the above meeting were:

Councillor Sutton attended as a substitute for Councillor Castle

Councillor B Coleman attended as a substitute for Councillor S Hacon

Robert Read (Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods) - attended for item 2

Trevor Chaplin (Group Manager Housing Services) - attended for item 2

Graham Hollingdale - attended for item 2

Councillor Williamson - attended for item 3

Daren Barker (Conservation Officer) - attended for item 3

Jane Beck (Director of Customers Services) - attended for item 4

Jane Ratcliffe (Chief Executive Officer) - attended for item 5

Councillor T Wainwright - attended for item 5

Seb Duncan (Director of Resources Governance and Growth) - attended for item 5

Councillor Jeal attended as an observer

Robin Hodds (Cabinet Secretary)

Karline Smith (Senior Member Services Officer)

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2013 were confirmed.

2 PM007A - Voids Repairs

The Committee considered the Director of Community Housing and Neighbourhoods report on voids repairs. He reported that over the last couple of years there had been an increase in the average void turnaround time in Council Housing Properties. A review had been carried out along with a visit to Norwich City Council where some lessons were learnt around overall management and how different contractors work as they have a more focused joined up approach. It was reported that the Council was having to fit more kitchens than they wanted to. It was also found that the Council was having to do catch up works after the property was let resulting in rent free periods for tenants. A Member asked for clarification on the normal length of time that a property would be empty and it was reported that this would depend if the tenant had died and a family member kept hold of the keys. It was pointed out that once measures had been put in place the void times would reduce.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, and that an update be provided at a Scrutiny Committee in six months time.

3 Vauxhall Bridge

The Committee considered the Conservation Officer report. The Conservation Officer reported that the Vauxhall Bridge project had been a very complicated project with difficult ownership and was multi funded and was therefore not a normal project in terms of the project arrangements.

The Conservation Officer reported that the partnership went through a robust tender process but there were time constraints for the tender process and that the Preservation Trust was the accountable body.

A Member asked if there was a conflict of interests between Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Norfolk County Council.

The Conservation Officer stated that he did not know if there had been a conflict of interest but in hindsight a contractor with Heritage or listed building experience should have been selected as savings may have been achieved.

A member asked to see the minutes of the partnership meetings.

The Conservation Officer stated that the previous Head of Planning had spoken highly of the contractor as they had worked on bridges and had a good track record.

The Conservation Officer was asked what his role was in the project and he reported that this was as the Project lead.

Councillor Williamson reported that in the last month an attempt had been made to set up a charitable trust but as Sustrans was a charity this was not possible. They had suggested writing a bid for them to be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to pay

for phase two.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, and the issues detailed be addressed at the next meeting.

4 PIPs

The committee considered the Director of Customer Services report on Pips. The Director of Customer Services reported that she had received a letter from NPLaw which detailed Sutton Media's response and that the original request to relinquish the licence had not been formally done.

A Member asked for clarification as to the relationship between the Greater Yarmouth Tourist Authority and Great Yarmouth Borough Council and the position of the Chief Executive of the GYTA. The Director stated the Council's Tourism Manager was currently the CEO of the GYTA.

The Committee discussed the level of outstanding fees owed to the Council. The docs also clarified that advertising was sold through Sutton Media and payments should have been paid to GYTA. A question was raised as to why a county court summons had not been issued on the GYTA for non payment of outstanding debts. The documents clarified that this had been dealt with under the Sundry debt procedure. The CEO confirmed that she had not been requested to pursue the debt.

The documents confirmed that the arrears owed to the Borough Council should be paid by the end of the year.

In response to a question from a member of the public about the GYTA relinquishing the licence, the Chairman stated if the GYTA had relinquished the licence to Sutton Media it was likely that they would not have received any outstanding funds owed to them.

RESOLVED:

That this item be deferred to the next meeting and the Chief Executive of GYTA be requested to attend the next meeting and that the committee be furnished with GYTA minutes and any other relevant documentation.

5 Management Structure

The committee considered the report on the outstanding questions in respect of the management structure.

A Member stated that the report stated £387,000 ongoing savings and consultancy fees of £36,800 and asked if there would be any more consultancy fees to pay in the future. The Cabinet Member (Transformation and Regeneration) stated that there was £3/4m savings in the first year and that the consultancy fee's were a one off cost.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6 Role of Ward Councillors

The Cabinet Secretary reported that a meeting would be held next week and that an update on this meeting would be given at the 31 October 2013 Scrutiny meeting.

7 WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14

It was agreed that the following issues be addressed at the next meeting:-

- Efficiency Support Grant Report
- Key Performance Indicators
- Interim Report for St Georges and Pavilion
- Role of Ward Councillors
- Vauxhall Bridge
- PIP's
- Boarded up derelict houses

8 Any other business

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at: 20:00