

LARGER PRINT COPY AVAILABLE PLEASE TELEPHONE: 01493 846325

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 November 2013 – 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Stone (in the Chair); Councillors M Coleman, Fairhead, Field, Hanton, Marsden, J Smith and Wright.

Councillor Plant attended as substitute for Councillor Collins.

Councillor T Wainwright and Williamson also attended.

Mr S Duncan (Director of Resources, Governance and Growth), Mr R Read (Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods), Mrs L Mockford (Group Manager Governance) Mr R Gregory (Group Manager Neighbourhood & Communities), Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mr C Rowland (Corporate Policy and Performance Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Collins and Shrimplin.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 31 October 2013 were confirmed subject to the following amendments:-

Item 6 – Vauxhall Bridge

It was agreed that the minutes of the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust relating to the appointment of the contractor would be considered at the next meeting. It was also agreed that with regard to the comment in respect of the access from the Quay along the Bridge it was agreed that there was a need to have a clear defined plan with regard to a possible crossing in this area and which would detail how pedestrians and vehicles would be accommodated in this area.

Item 7 – Salisbury Road Call-In

A Member commented that if the proposal to build housing accommodation on this site was approved it would turn to slums within ten years.

2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROJECTS AND MEASURES

The Committee considered the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer's report which summarised how the Council has moved from monitoring Performance Indicators via target setting to the new version of reporting performance of Key Projects and Corporate Measures to Members for 2013/14. Members were advised that the report for Key Projects and

Corporate Measures refer to performance in the first six months of 2013/14 (1 April to 30 September 2013 inclusive).

The Committee considered in detail the summary report for the quarter April to September with regard to the Corporate Key Projects and discussed the following particular projects:-

- KP09b - Delivering the Empty Homes Programme – HCA Project.
- KP01 - Development of Beacon Park.
- KP05 - Welfare Benefit cuts/changes.
- KP12 - Improving facilities at the Marina Centre and Phoenix Pool.
- KP13 - Developing and delivering new sports and play strategies.
- KP16 - The setting up of a cost sharing group with North Norfolk District Council known as Coast Share.

In relation to KP09a, the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods outlined the discussions that had taken place with regard to the HCA Project and advised that it was now proposed to reduce the number of properties to be delivered by nine properties and the target would now be sixteen properties. In connection with KP13, the Cabinet Member (Transformation and Regeneration) reported that the Borough currently lacks a comprehensive and up to date strategy around play, playing pitches and leisure. It was proposed that a new strategy would be coming on board in the near future. With regard to KP16, the Director of Resources, Governance and Growth reported that this was a proposal to guarantee to provide services at cost and it was anticipated that there would be a 20% savings result. The issue of exemption from VAT was explained to Members.

The Corporate Policy and Performance Officer presented the Corporate Measures for 2013/14 which summarised performance for the first six months of 2013/14 (1 April to 30 September inclusive). In particular the Committee's attention was drawn to measures CM07a, CM09b, CM21, CM22, CM23 and CM25.

RESOLVED:

That the report on Performance Management – Key Projects and Corporate Measures for the first six months of 2013 be received.

3. EFFICIENCY SUPPORT GRANT (ESG) PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee considered the Director of Resources and Governance's progress update with regard to the Efficiency Support Grant. Members were reminded that as part of the 2013/14 grant settlement from Central Government the Council was allocated £1,864,000 of Efficiency Support Grant which is designed to support the Council delivering savings towards a balanced budget. In order to receive the ESG, the Council was obliged to submit a business case which would demonstrate how the grant would deliver the required level of savings to balance the budget by 2015/16. Guidance for the preparation of the business case was published in a letter to the Chief Executive on the 28 January 2013 and this required the business case to be prepared around five themes:-

- Shared Chief Executive and shared Senior Management Team proposal.
- Shared Service Delivery.
- Shared Procurement.
- Strategic Asset Management.
- Other efficiency measures.

The Council submitted a business case which was approved by the department for Communities and Local Government and the Efficiency Support Grant had been received in May 2013. The Director of Resources and Governance reported that his report now updated Members on progress towards delivering the projects within the business case and highlighted additional work that the Council has carried out towards delivering further savings to balance the budget in 2015/16.

The Cabinet Member (Transformation and Regeneration) also reported on the establishment of a ESG Project Group and Board which had met regularly to consider and deliver the projects within the business case. The Director of Resources and Governance advised Members that the bid for the second tranche of ESG Funding had to be submitted to the DCLG and that the deadline was the 23 November for the bids submission.

In discussing the progress report, the Chairman asked for clarification with regard to the progress that had been made with regard to the themes concerning the Shared Chief Executive and Shared Senior Management Team proposal and also the Shared Service Delivery. The Cabinet Member (Transformation and Regeneration) detailed the services that the Borough Council were currently sharing at present and reiterated that it was the aim of the current administration to retain the sovereignty of the Borough Council. The Leader confirmed that there was no proposal of the current administration to share a Chief Executive and a Shared Senior Management Team.

In connection with the Borough Council's previous two attempts at sharing Senior Management and sharing of services, the Shadow Leader questioned the detail of the text within the bid to be submitted to DCLG for the second tranche of funding.

The Chairman asked whether enough progress had been made with regard to the themes within the business case so that it would be likely that the Borough Council would receive the second tranche of grant approval. Councillor J Smith also asked whether there were any plans overhanging from the transitional grant previously awarded to the Council. The Leader confirmed that there were no such plans.

RESOLVED:

That the progress update report in respect of the Efficiency Support Grant be noted.

4. ROLE OF WARD COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered the Cabinet Secretary's report with regard to the Role of Ward Councillors. Members were reminded that the Committee had set up a Ward Members Working Group to fully examine the issues relating to the role of Ward Councillors. The main issues considered in detail by the Working Group could be summarised as follows:-

- (a) A mentoring/buddying system for Councillors.
- (b) Members Handbook.
- (c) Members Equipment.
- (d) Case work and engaging with the community.
- (e) Ward Councillors Compact.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Cabinet be recommended to agree to the Ward Councillor Compact and also to the mentoring/buddying system for Councillors.

- (ii) That a further meeting of the Ward Members Working Group be held to give further consideration to the finalisation of the Members Handbook, to consider Councillors induction and also to give further consideration to community involvement.

5. FINANCE REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2013

Members received and noted the Director of Resources and Governance finance report for September 2013.

6. BUS STATION REVIEW

The Cabinet Secretary reported on the advice received from the County Council with regard to progress in respect of the Great Yarmouth Bus Station as follows:-

- The tender for the new electronic signage has now closed and the award of the contract will be made within the next few days.
- Works to re-instate a power supply to all bus shelters at Market Gates has commenced with appropriate surveys being carried out. The exact timetable for completion of these works is not yet known.
- The installation of the new signage is likely to take place in January 2014.
- Pigeon works had been completed and deep clean of the area had been carried out.
- The murals had been erected and had been well received.
- Details relating to the proposals for the Great Yarmouth Bus Station had appeared in an article in the “Buses Magazine” which is a national publication.

RESOLVED:

That the position be noted.

7. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

The Cabinet Secretary reported that it was anticipated that the following items would be considered at the January meeting:-

- Land Holdings.
- Role of Ward Councillors.
- Vauxhall Bridge.
- St Georges Chapel and Pavilion.

RESOLVED:

That an additional item be added to the Work Programme as follows:-

“Impact of Benefit Changes”.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman reported that the next meeting to be held on the 19 December 2013 would be cancelled and that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on the 30 January 2014.

9. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm.