

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 23 October 2014 at 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillor Plant (in the Chair); Councillors B Coleman, Collins, Fox, Grey, Jones, Robinson-Payne, Weymouth and Wright.

Councillor Sutton attended as substitute for Councillor Field.

In attendance were Councillors T Wainwright and Williamson.

Mr G Mitchell (Chief Executive Officer) Mr R Read (Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods), Mr T Chaplin (Group Manager Housing Services), Mr T Chaplin (Group Manager Housing Services), Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mrs Hartley (Sport and Leisure Manager).

Mr J McIntosh (Seachange) and Ms A Bourne (Arts Council for England) also attended.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest given at the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Coleman, Field, Myers and Smith.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25 September 2014 were confirmed.

4 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive Officer gave Members a strategic overview on the Council's Transformation Programme. The Chief Executive Officer highlighted the following issues:-

- The financial driver for the programme was significant.
- Outlined the scale of the problems facing GYBC.
- The work carried out by Price Waterhouse Cooper.

- Fees and Charges and Revenue being currently examined.
- Possible significant loss of staff.
- Use of the Council's assets.
- Regular monthly Member Seminars are being held.

Chief Executive Officer outlined the potential risks which were:-

- Does the Borough Council have the sufficient expertise, and the action that needs to be taken to address this.
- Continuing ICT problems.
- Early engagement with Group Managers.
- Engagement with Members.

CEO reported that the core work on customer change was progressing very well; a way forward had been agreed on the IT problems; we now have the capacity of expertise needed; and the Group Managers are on board. There is generally a good focus on the biggest issues.

In response to a request from Councillor Sutton, the Chief Executive Officer agreed that, upon request, any Member could have notes of the meetings of the Transformation Board made available to them.

Councillor Williamson commented that it was very important that all Members should attend the monthly briefing sessions. The Leader also commented that the Transformation Board was not a decision making body.

The Chairman concluded this item by thanking the Chief Executive Officer for his presentation.

5 SEACHANGE ARTS

As part of the committee's 2014/15 work programme, SeaChange Arts presented a review of activities and services currently provided within the Borough. Members were advised that Local Authorities had long recognised the valuable contribution that Arts and Culture can play in achieving their objectives for an area. An opportunity to experience and be entertained by the arts is an essential part of the fabric of a successful community and helps to promote the wellbeing of those who live there. There are also significant benefits for the local economy in that arts and culture events can play an important role in attracting visitors, encouraging spend in the area through use of local restaurants, shops or staying in hotels as part of their visits. In an area like Great Yarmouth this is especially important as part of a tourism strategy which seeks to attract visitors outside the traditional summer months in order to help extend the visitor season. The arts can create employment and have also been seen to help redefine and regenerate local areas. They can help to build and sustain resilience in communities by improving wellbeing, developing skills and providing learning opportunities.

Mr J McIntosh, SeaChange Arts Chief Executive, reported that the SeaChange Trust was established in 1997 as an independent Arts Development Charity with a trading arm set up as company limited by guarantee. It operates as the arts development and promotion service and strategic arts advisor on behalf of the Council under a Service Level Agreement. Mr McIntosh reported that the trust had also worked through seventeen international partnership projects and had levered in over £1.58m

from Europe. SeaChange was now recognised as one of UK's leaders in this field. Members were also advised that the Out There Festival which was launched in 2007 was now one of the largest and best regarded in the UK outdoor arts sector attracting audiences of 40,000 and contributing £1.2m to the local economy. This contribution combines direct spend of the festival on local services and estimates of visitors spend based on annual surveys.

Mr McIntosh also reported that the trust had purchased the York Road Drill Hall from Norfolk County Council in February 2012 and had now renamed the property to Drill House which serves as a base for regular community engagement activities including Circus School, Parkour, theatre groups, music activities, community events and projects as well as for artistic companies working on new productions through creation residencies and combining their time here with community engagement. The venue also provides the administrative base for the organisation. Over the last ten years the activity and turn over of the organisation has increased from £165,000 per year to over £1m in the last financial year. The trust is currently preparing Capital Development Plans for the Drill House.

Ms A Bourne from the Arts Council for England reported on the level of support given by the Arts Council to the SeaChange Trust, and confirmed that the Art Council were looking to continue to support arts activities in the borough. She stated that Great Yarmouth was strategically important to Arts Council England.

Councillor Coleman asked about the level of involvement in arts activities by those members of the public living in the rural parishes and also the issue of the co-operation between arts organisations in Great Yarmouth. In response, Mr McIntosh stated that all residents of the borough could attend activities arranged at the Drill House. He also reported further on the capital aspirations for the future use of the Drill House and confirmed that this would not be a rival to the activities currently being staged at St Georges. Members were advised that there was a significant capital investment required at the Drill House with regard to the need to repair and insulate the roof. There were also currently no plans to install any seats in the Drill House.

Councillor Collins and Robinson-Payne both stated their support for the activities carried out by the SeaChange Trust and congratulated them on the work carried out to date.

The Leader reaffirmed the need for the Drill House to carry out capital investment and stated his support to the trust's activities and reaffirmed the current administrations support to assist the trust financially under the Service Level Agreement.

RESOLVED:

That the report in respect of the Seachange Arts activities and services be received.

6 REVISED ALLOCATION SCHEME 2014

The Committee considered the Group Manager Housing Services report on the impact of the Revised Allocation Scheme. The Group Manager reminded Members that a Revised Allocation Scheme was adopted by the Borough Council earlier this year and the scheme had come into effect from the 4 August 2014. Given that the scheme had been running for two months there was limited information on the impact the scheme was having on applicants. In particular, the ability to offer properties outside the geographical area of the applicant's preference or alternative type of

property will not be effective until three months after the scheme commenced.

RESOLVED:

That the Group Manager Housing Services report on the impact of the Revised Allocation Scheme be noted and that the Group Manager be requested to submit a further report once the revised allocation scheme has been in operation for six months.

7 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014-15

The Cabinet Secretary updated the Committee on the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2014/15.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman reported that the next scheduled meeting on the 20 November would be cancelled and that a special one off meeting would be held on Thursday 4 December to consider the item relating to a committee system form of governance, and that the Committee's scheduled meeting on 18 December would take place and would consider the issues relating to the budget monitoring, review of key performance indicators and events at the Town Hall.

The meeting ended at: 20:20