

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13 December 2018

PRESENT – Councillors Carson (Chair), Cossins, Mrs Culley, Donoghue, Lyonette and M Nicholson

APOLOGIES – Councillors Kelly, Tostevin and Wright

ABSENT – Councillor L Hughes

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE –

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Dave Winstanley (Assistant Director Capital Projects, Transport and Highways Planning), Elizabeth Davison (Assistant Director Resources), Brian Graham (Head of Environmental Services), Barbara Copson (Performance Manager), Shirley Burton (Democratic Manager), Dave Coates (Head of Planning, Development and Environmental Health) and David Hand (Head of Service for Planning Policy, Economic Strategy and Environment)

P24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

P25 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2018

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 25 October, 2018.

RESOLVED – That, with the insertion of Councillor Culley and the deletion of Councillors Marshall, M R Nicholson and Wright in the list of those Members present at the meeting, the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

P26 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS Q2 2018/19

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) together with a detailed scorecard (also previously circulated) advising Members of the Quarter 2 performance against those key performance indicators for 2018/19 which were within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

It was reported that, of those 21 indicators which were reported either quarterly or six monthly at quarter 2 and for which there was information available, 13 indicators were on target to achieve their year-end target and two were not; one was showing performance at quarter 2 which was better than the same period last year and five had either no previous data to compare with or no data had been submitted for this quarter.

A number of indicators which were showing good performance at quarter 2 were highlighted in the report and reference was also made to two indicators, total visits to the Dolphin Centre and the number of ward Members who were leading or involved in

a litter or grounds maintenance based project which were showing lower performance due to recording issues. It was reported that, in relation to the litter and grounds maintenance indicator, the figures reported was based on those Members involved in the initial pilot and that improved reporting on the activities which were taking place in Wards by Members was needed.

Reference was also made to the indicator in relation to the number of new homes delivered against the five-year supply and it was suggested that an additional indicator in relation to the Housing Delivery Test which would measure the number of homes delivered on sites allocated within the local plan would be useful to be include in future reports.

The Performance Manager reported that CUL077 – Town Centre footfall trend (rolling 12 months) had been replaced with CUL 080 – Town Centre footfall trend from previous year, as this had been considered to provide more useful data for the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

P27 ROAD SAFETY

The Assistant Director, Capital Projects, Transport and Highways Planning gave a presentation on the systems and processes used to measure trends and patterns in relation to road safety accidents within the Borough, through the North East Regional Road Safety Resource.

It was reported that the Road Safety Resource, which was based at Gateshead Council and which was set up and funded under the Department for Transport's Road Safety Grant Scheme, provided information and data analysis to support road safety education, training and publicity at a regional level, however, specific local information, could be obtained through the interactive map and the dashboard and an illustration of how to use the system to drill down into specific areas within Darlington was given.

Following previous questions by Members in relation to the Stonebridge Junction since its opening, we were advised that, in the four years prior to 2015, there had been 21 accidents and, in the four years since, there had been 11, one fatal, one serious and nine slight.

The Assistant Director reported that, in terms of comparative information, a public satisfaction survey had highlighted that Darlington was performing above the national average in respect of road safety; was ranked number one out of 113 authorities taking part in relation to road safety education, number ten in relation to road safety environment and 28 in relation to road safety locally. The Council had also recently won an award for being in the top quartile for a themed result and for being within the top ten for the number of benchmarking information with improvements.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

P28 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) 2019/20

Submitted – A report (previously circulated) of the Chief Officers Executive which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 11 December 2018, in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2019-20 to 2022-23 and proposing a 2019/20 to 2022/23 capital programme for consultation.

The Assistant Director, Finance and Human Resources reported that the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) which was due to be announced on 6 December 2018 was still awaited, however, any amendment in relation to the LGFS was not expected to be significant.

It was reported that the delivery of the core offer which was agreed in 2016 remained extremely challenging with some significant pressures arising in children's social care, however, through innovative financial investments and increased income from economic growth, the Council could still deliver the agreed balanced plan, extend the MTFP. A further £0.600 million had also been identified which could be used to bolster the Futures Fund themes or be returned to reserves.

Discussion ensued on the significant work which had been undertaken to achieve economic growth within the Borough, particularly in relation to Symmetry Park, which had been rewarded with a positive net increase in the projected National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) collected over the coming MTFP. It was reported that the Council currently retained 49 per cent of the NNDR collected, however, the business tax base was much more volatile than the Council Tax base and required very close monitoring. In addition to the potential to lose income due to business closures, the Council also carried the risk of losing appeals by businesses against valuations.

It was reported that there were no proposed reductions in service levels within the 2019/20 MTFP and there were some only minor changes to the proposed schedule of fees and charges.

Members questioned whether the revenue reserves should be used to reduce the proposed Council Tax increase, however the Assistant Director Finance and Human Resources reported that the reserves were being used to balance the MTFP going forward and the Officers view was that the Council Tax needed to be increased.

RESOLVED - That this Scrutiny Committee has no comment to make on the proposed schedule of fees and charges for those services within its remit and supports Cabinet's proposal in relation to those fees and charges and the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.99 per cent for the next financial year.

P29 WORK PROGRAMME

The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2018/19.

The Chair reported that the Local Plan Task and Finish Review Group which was

scheduled to be held on 17 December 2018 had been postponed and a meeting would be arranged prior to it being considered by Cabinet in 2019.

Following a question by a Member in relation to Concessionary fares, it was reported that the responsibility for this was now with the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), however, the Council did have responsibility for operating the scheme. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Committee could look at the Tees Valley Bus Strategy which was being developed as part of the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan.

Reference was also made to the intention for this Scrutiny Committee to look at Darlington's Retail Strategy, including the indoor and outdoor markets and the Car Parking Strategy.

RESOLVED – (a) That the current status of the work programme be noted and updated as required.

(b) That the Assistant Director, Capital Projects, Transport and Highways Planning make arrangements for the Tees Valley Bus Strategy to be submitted for consideration to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time.

(c) That items be added to the agreed work programme in relation to the Retail Strategy and the Car Parking Strategy.