

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th February 2018

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Billings (Chairman), Councillor Mrs Wyatt (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Atkin, Mrs Coe and Mrs Patten

In attendance

Councillor Taylor (Labour Group)

OS/49 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bambrick, Dr Pearson and Mrs Stuart (Labour Group)

OS/50 **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th November 2017 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

OS/51 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM ITEMS ON AGENDA**

The Committee was informed that no declarations had been received.

OS/52 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

The Committee were informed that no questions from members of the Public had been received.

OS/53 **QUESTIONS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

The Committee were informed that no questions from Members of the Council had been received.

OS/54 **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN RURAL VILLAGES**

The Cultural Services Manager presented the report to Committee.

Councillor Mrs Coe sought clarity on which play areas the District or parish councils are responsible for. The Cultural Services Manager reported that

many different arrangements are in place, proposing that a review be undertaken with a view to introducing some uniformity.

Councillor Atkin made reference to the funding opportunities, how Aston on Trent Parish Council had tackled the issue of raising funds, repaid via the precept, and queried the Lottery Fund criteria. The Cultural Services Manager confirmed that as Lottery funding had reduced, there was less to award, most going to deprived and/or rural areas. Councillor Mrs Patten queried what could be done to assist smaller rural settlements. The Cultural Services Manager acknowledged the difficulties, noted that smaller schemes required smaller outlays which could act in their favour, subject to the submission of a good application. Assistance, he suggested, could be provided by Council staff in terms of completing applications.

The Cultural Services Manager estimated that a Play Audit, including equipment condition and ownership, could be completed within three months, a Community Facility Audit within six months. Councillor Mrs Coe requested that this item be retained on the Committee Work Programme for a future meeting.

Councillor Taylor queried when the Council last provided capital monies in this area and what the Council did to assist parish councils. The Cultural Services Manager stated that it had been more than six years since there had been a capital programme and confirmed that activity with parish council's was varied, largely dependent on how active the council was.

Councillor Taylor enquired whether the list, as attached to the report, could be circulated to all Members, to assist in identifying all areas and their condition. The Cultural Services Manager clarified that the list referred to areas including play equipment, not necessarily open areas used for play, but containing no equipment and that maintenance priority was largely determined by a scoring mechanism.

Methods of making parish councils more aware of the assistance available, ranging from presentations, e-mails and parish liaison meetings, were also discussed. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) referred to the proposed allocation of £250k for a new Community Partnership Grant Scheme; although this had been approved by Finance and Management Committee on 11th January, it was still subject to ratification by Council.

The Chairman noted that the completion of a play audit would prove useful, necessary before the Committee could make any recommendations, including on how the Council can assist parish councils in seeking funding.

RESOLVED:-

Members noted the report on recreational facilities in Rural Villages.

OS/55 **IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to Committee.

The Vice-Chairman voiced her concern regarding the potential for debt and repayment issues once the Universal Credit direct payment scheme commences. Tenant workshops relating to this topic were seen as a good idea, but attendance and adherence to the advice given were raised as concerns. The Director acknowledged the concerns raised, especially in light of experience elsewhere in the country, reporting that in situations where the rent arrears reached eight weeks or more, requests could be made to the DWP to impose a Payment Management Plan, whereby the rental amounts would be paid direct to the Council.

The Chairman queried the greater provision for debt, the Director clarifying how the estimate was calculated.

Councillor Mrs Coe made reference to the impact on the private rental market, the potential for increased evictions, producing a greater housing demand on the Council via homelessness claims.

Councillor Mrs Patten queried how many tenants paid their rent using cash. Whilst the Director did not have the payment method information, it was acknowledged that those paying with cash may find it more difficult to manage than those paying by direct debit, for example.

Councillor Atkin queried the seven benefits being rolled into the single Universal Credit payment, information the Director undertook to supply separately, and how the implementation information would be promoted across the District. The Director clarified what was being undertaken in this respect, also confirming that additional computers were being installed, as applications had to be made on-line.

Councillor Taylor, whilst noting the potential impact on poverty and collection as concerns, also queried the impact on officer time in dealing with these matters. The Director noted this, but added that some staff currently processing benefit claims would no longer be required to do so and may need to be re-deployed. Councillor Mrs Coe stated that the CAB undertook work in the more rural areas, offering one-to-one support on request. The Director confirmed that Council officers were already working with the CAB and CVS in this area.

RESOLVED:-

Members considered the current position and planned actions for supporting tenants and potential claimants of Universal Credit.

OS/56 **WASTE COLLECTION BUDGET AND FUTURE GROWTH PROVISION**

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the report to Committee.

Councillor Atkin queried the reliance on agency staff in waste collection. The Director confirmed that there had been a greater reliance on agency staff and overtime up to six months ago, before the additional refuse round was approved. Access to an agency pool was still in place to ensure service continuation on a daily basis.

Councillor Mrs Patten queried whether, given the amount spent on standby staff, additional staff could be employed, used to supplement the refuse crews as required, deployed to other duties when not. The Director undertook to investigate the proposal further and report back.

The Chairman requested that a report relating to street cleansing be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee, along with initial feedback on the above proposal.

RESOLVED:-

Members considered the proposed budget for Waste Collection Services for 2018/19 and approved the report backs as detailed above.

OS/57 **FEEDBACK ON GROUNDS MAINTENANCE / STREETSCENE / WASTE SERVICES VISITS**

The Chairman made reference to the visit made to North Warwickshire Borough Council, citing in particular the enhanced collaboration between different teams, such as litter pickers, fly tipping teams and the refuse round teams, including some outsourcing. The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) confirmed that a review of current service standards and performance was underway, but that this would not cover matters of a more operational nature. Councillor Mrs Coe suggested that the Committee review operational matters, requesting that a report be submitted at a future date, to be determined by the 2018 Scoping Meeting.

RESOLVED:-

Members noted the information provided relating to this topic.

OS/58 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

The Chairman requested that the aforementioned report on street cleansing be added to the March 2018 agenda.

RESOLVED:-

Members considered and approved the updated work programme.

OS/59 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it would be likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

EXEMPT QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 11

The Committee were informed that no exempt questions from Members of the Council had been received.

The Meeting terminated at 7.10pm.

COUNCILLOR A BILLINGS

CHAIRMAN