

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 at 6.00 pm via Remote Meeting

Present: Councillors E J Carter, T L B Janke, R T Kiernan, B J Thompson and C R Turley (Chair)

In Attendance: Angie Astley (Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer Services), Anthea Lowe (Associate Director: Policy & Governance), and Kieran Robinson (Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor R Mehta

COMSC12 Declarations of Interest

None.

COMSC13 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

COMSC14 Work Programme Review

Members received the presentation of the Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer Services.

The Committee was informed that officers had met with the Chair and had redrafted the Committee's work programme into a clear programme for the municipal year ahead. The proposal being presented was subject to change as a result of the work programming process that was being carried out; however, the presented programme was considered a starting point for the Committee to add considerable value to the Council's operations.

The revised work programme was separated into two thematic areas – Safer & Stronger Communities and Transport. An additional area, Other, provided scope for the Committee to add further items beyond the two proposed themes. The new thematic areas and the items contained within them were composed of the various issues from the previous work programme that had been delayed as a result of Covid response. Items from the previous iteration of the work programme had been combined into larger, further reaching, that the Committee would be able to add real value to.

Safer & Stronger Communities was a new two-year strategy that was due to launch in April 2021. There was scope for Scrutiny to influence the strategy throughout its two-year span. This thematic area was to include Private Sector Housing, Neighbourhood Enforcement, and the Safer Stronger Communities Strategy.

The second thematic area was Transport. This area was split into four items:

- Strategic Transport Strategy;
- Transport Strategy – Active Travel;
- Transport Strategy – Electric Vehicles; and
- Corporate Travel Plan.

At the time of the presentation, the Other area contained one item – Council Communications. This had been on the previous work programme but had been delayed due to pressures caused by severe flooding and Covid-19. It was proposed that the item be delayed further but retained as an item to scrutinise in future.

A discussion followed the Executive Director’s presentation:

Members expressed their desire that a separate item to scrutinise HMOs be added to the work programme as the area was considered much too complex to reside within the Private Sector Housing item alone. There was broad agreement that HMOs were an important issue in their own right deserving of more detailed scrutiny. It was agreed that this be added as a separate item within the Safer & Stronger Communities theme.

The Committee was also keen to examine Community Action Teams. A discussion around the recruitment of enforcement officers followed and Members agreed that the issue of Community Action Teams should be added as an item within the Safer & Stronger Communities theme.

COMSC15 Chair's Update

The Chair thanked all Scrutiny Members who had taken part in the Local Plan Working Group for their hard work and highlighted the benefits of cross-party working in scrutiny. Members were informed that the Working Group’s report would be received by Cabinet in due course.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday, 7 July 2021