

MINUTES

of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 4 February 2019 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor M. Springett (Chairman)

Councillors N. Chambers, P.J. Cousins, J.A. Deakin, M.J. Flack, I.S. Grundy, A.M. John, D.A. Lumley, J.A. Potter G.C. Seeley, and G.I. Smith

1. **Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. De Vries, R.A. Ride and G.H. Smith. No substitutions were made.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to minute number 8, the Committee was informed that officers had implemented the recommendation agreed regarding household notification letters. It was noted that these were now being delivered to every residential property.

3. **Public Question Time**

No questions were asked or statements made.

4. **Decisions Called-In**

The Committee noted that no decisions taken by the Cabinet had been called-in.

5. **Declaration of Interests**

All members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

6. **Quarter Three 2018/19 Performance Information Report**

The Committee considered a report on the progress made against the Council's key performance indicators at the end of December 2018.

Eleven indicators had achieved target for quarter three in 2018/19. Of particular note were **Percentage of waste reused, recycled and composted, Customer visits to Sports and Net additional homes provided**. It was noted that recycling rates were now 10% higher than in December 2016, therefore highlighting the benefits of fortnightly collections. Members were informed that a figure comparing this to the national average would be circulated to them after

the meeting. It was also noted that visits to Riverside had been performing well against its revised target in addition to higher visitor levels at both CSAC and Dovedale's.

It was reported to the Committee that ten indicators had not met their target for quarter three in 2018/2019. These included, **Theatre Promotion Visits, CSC Abandoned calls and the Number of Household living in temporary accommodation.**

In response to questions from members the Committee was informed that:

- The introduction of GDPR had led to services such as the Theatres losing a significant proportion of their customer database. Other solutions were being developed including different types of brochures being circulated in addition to a new sign up software being implemented.
- The Leisure card would be re launched alongside the re-opening of Riverside.
- The base budget target for Riverside had been reduced when the budget was set to be in line with the expected lower customer levels.
- The indicator for the average time taken in calendar days to process all new claims and change events in Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit normally reached the 9 day target by the end of the financial year. It was noted that an explanation for this would be provided after the meeting by officers.
- The switch to Skype had been a very complex migration but it now provided greater functionality and officers were starting to realise the benefits of this.
- The possibility of adding an indicator related to Universal Credit would be explored by officers when setting the 19/20 indicators and targets.

It was agreed by the Committee that the GDPR issues discussed also be raised when the report on GDPR was due to the Governance Committee in June. The Committee also agreed that officers should explore the use of Parish notice boards to help promote theatre shows and other events. The Committee also stated that officers should be commended for their hard work in consistently meeting a majority of targets.

Councillor John joined the meeting at 7.15pm

RESOLVED that;

1. the report be noted and;
2. a written response be provided regarding why the Housing and Council Tax benefit indicator only reached its target towards the end of the financial year and;
3. the possibility of adding an indicator related to Universal Credit be explored by officers,
4. that the topics discussed regarding GDPR also be raised when the Governance Committee receive a report on GDPR in June and;
5. officers explore the possibility of using parish noticeboards to advertise theatre events.

(7.01pm to 7.26pm)

7. **Annual Presentation by Safer Chelmsford Partnership**

The Council's Public Protection Manager gave a presentation on behalf of the Safer Chelmsford Partnership, regarding its statutory duties, key priorities, key projects and funding in 2018/19.

The Committee was reminded of the Partnership's statutory duties, which were;

- Strategic Assessment and Partnership Plan
- Co-Ordination of Partnership activities
- Strategic Priorities plus Reducing Reoffending
- Prevent, Modern Day Slavery and Domestic Homicide Reviews
- Face the Public – combined with Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Essex Police.
- Survey Public opinion – fear of crime and perceptions
- Annual presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee was also reminded of the Partnership's strategic priorities for 2018/19, which were:

- Tackling violent crime
- Driving down anti-social behaviour in public places
- Identifying and supporting vulnerable people
- Delivery of the Essex Police rural crime strategy

The key projects carried out in the last 12 months included;

- Community Safety Hub launching in March 2019
- Operation Statue
- Violence and Vulnerability
- Education, awareness and community engagement
- Night time economy interventions
- CCTV Transformation

The Committee heard that the Community Safety Hub was due to launch in March 2019 and would be a crucial asset enabling further joint working with Essex Police and other key partners. It was noted that the project had been funded jointly with the Essex Fire, Police and Crime Commissioners office. The Committee also heard that as the Hub was to be located on the Council premises it would enable officers in the Public Protection team of the Council to work closely with their strategic partners.

The Committee was informed that the SOS project continued to be very successful and alongside the new bus were 44 volunteers. It was noted that trainee paramedics from Anglia Ruskin University were included in the 44 volunteers. The Committee was also informed that 313 trips to A & E had been saved as a result of the SOS bus last year.

The Committee was also informed that the 'Spare change or real change' campaign had been shortlisted for a national award and that other Councils were now contacting Chelmsford regarding setting up similar schemes.

In response to questions from Members the Committee was informed that;

- Changes to CCTV had been ongoing and this involved switching from analogue to 4k digital technologies enabling image quality to be greatly enhanced. It was noted that the current focus was on improving the existing technologies rather than re-structuring the whole network.

- Mobile CCTV sites in specific hotspots tended to be very expensive due to not having a direct line of sight between rural areas outside of the City Centre and the CCTV control room. It was noted that for rural sites 4G technology was required and this was very expensive, therefore it was not the most cost viable option.
- CCTV sites had been upgraded in South Woodham Ferrers.
- The partnership had been working closely with the William De Ferrers school and school pastors had been re-introduced to the school under Operation Enlightenment. It was also noted that other schools had now been following this approach and it enabled dialogue to be opened up between students, parents and the Police as it created a safe environment to discuss issues.

The Committee thanked the Council's Public Protection Manager for attending and their presentation.

RESOLVED that;

1. the report be noted and;
2. the Committee's appreciation for the excellent work of the Safer Chelmsford Partnership and the detailed presentation from the Council's Public Protection Manager be noted.

(7.27 pm to 7.59 pm)

8. **Annual Presentation by Essex Police**

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director for Commissioning at the Essex Fire, Police and Crime Commissioners Office. The Assistant Director informed the Committee of the precept changes which had resulted in raising £7.5m in 2018/19 with changes set to result in raising £16m in 2019/20. It was noted that 150 officers had been added in the financial year who were now all fully trained.

The Committee heard that the PFCC had consulted 4,000 members of the public on the proposed increase in precept and had received over 71% support for the initiative. It was also noted that the PFCC was involved with ongoing discussions with the Home Office and Treasury regarding increased funding and a fairer allocation of national funds to the Essex force.

The Committee were also informed about the Police and Crime Plan for 2016-20 which highlighted the operations and aims of the PFCC and heard that an annual report is also published on the PFCC website.

The Committee heard that the use of mobile technologies was becoming commonplace and it was hoped that 1 hour per shift would be saved through the use of mobile phones and dedicated apps. It was noted that the apps enabled reports to be typed up away from the office meaning that officers could stay on patrol for longer as an example.

At this point in the meeting the Chairman advised that questions could be asked after hearing from the Chief Inspector too.

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chief Inspector for Chelmsford. The Committee were informed of the three main areas of policing which included, Community Policing, Local policing teams and the CID/Investigations teams. It was noted that the new hub allowed these teams to collaborate together much more effectively along with the other external partners.

The Committee heard that crime had risen nationally and that this was the case in Chelmsford too. It was also noted that violent crime had risen in Chelmsford, but this was mainly due to the manner of reporting as crimes previously reported elsewhere now were classed as violent crimes. The Committee heard that robberies had dropped by 12.5% and it was believed an increase in stop and search tactics had helped achieve this. It was noted that some significant recent arrests had been made concerning burglaries and that new tactics had helped to achieve this. The Chief Inspector stated that one of the most important messages for the public was to take care of their own property and ensure doors and windows were locked to help prevent opportunist burglaries.

The Committee heard that drugs were a common concern with residents in Chelmsford and that an increase in stop and search had made strong inroads into the problem. It was noted that approximately 80 stop and searches were made between October and December 2017 compared with 489 in the same period in 2018. It was noted that the success rate was one in three therefore leading to a significant number of arrests for possession of drugs or offensive weapons.

The Committee was informed that a strong focus on gang related issues had still been in place throughout 2018 with specific operations in place. The Committee also heard that various projects such as Operation Enlightenment were in place allowing closer working with schools which was crucial as a preventative measure.

The Committee heard that neighbourhood watch groups were seeing a resurgence in certain areas and this was very positive news which Essex Police were keen to encourage. It was noted that a new structure for the Chelmsford neighbourhood watch was being developed. The Committee was informed that the Chief Inspector was exploring new communication methods. It was noted that he wanted meaningful information to be distributed to the public and for good news stories to be publicised more effectively.

In response to questions from Members the Committee was informed that;

- A breakdown of where new officers would be situated was not yet available but was being analysed.
- The appointment process for new officers was normally around nine months, including recruitment, background checks and training.
- The task and finish group for Community Safety Communication would be an important tool in improving messages that reach the public and the police were looking forward to working closely with the Council on this.
- Social Media was a powerful tool and was very important in allowing officers to provide information and highlight the work being performed by them.
- Stop and search tactics had led to arrests for both drug and weapon offences.
- The possibility of a challenge 25 style system for the sale of knives was being explored with the Chelmsford BID.
- Suicide prevention was a key area of work between various partners including the City and County Council. It was noted that measures had been adopted at multi storey car parks to help prevent this.
- Changes had been made to how South Woodham Ferrers was being policed and various tactics were being utilised to fight crimes in the area.
- Various methods were being used to fight localised burglaries.

- The Safer Chelmsford Partnership received funding from the PFCC office and a strong working relationship was in place between the two bodies.

The Committee noted that the work by Essex Police was of great importance and thanked them for their continued hard work in making Chelmsford a safe place for its residents.

RESOLVED that;

1. the Committee's appreciation for the work of Essex Police be noted and;
2. the Committee's thanks for the attendance of the Chief Inspector and Assistant Director and their presentations be noted.

(8 pm to 9.05 pm)

9. **Annual Report on Housing Delivery**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing began by thanking the Committee for allowing them to present at this meeting rather than the November 2018 meeting as scheduled. He informed the Committee that this had been due to the high workloads for officers related to the Local Plan hearings that had been taking place.

The Committee received a report from Councillor P.J.L. Hutchinson, Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing which provided an overview of key housing delivery monitoring statistics in Chelmsford for the period April 2017 – March 2018. The report also provided updated information on new and proposed local and national housing initiatives that had an impact on the delivery of new housing.

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the report highlighted the positive work taking place and demonstrated that figures were continuing to improve. The Committee heard that the appendix to the report detailed a range of information on housing supply in Chelmsford. In conclusion the Cabinet Member stated that the work being undertaken by officers was excellent and very valuable in ensuring housing supply targets were met in future years. He stated that the area was closely monitored by both members and officers and was of good standing.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing and officers be thanked for the annual report on housing delivery in Chelmsford, which was noted.

(9.06 pm to 9.13 pm)

10. **Terms of Reference for Task and Finish Group**

The Committee was asked to agree the draft terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group relating to the effect of the introduction of Universal Credit in Chelmsford.

The Committee agreed that officers should begin background work on this but that it would be beneficial to appoint members to the group after the elections at the June meeting.

RESOLVED that;

1. the terms of reference for the group be agreed and;
2. Councillors be appointed to the Task and Finish Group at the next meeting of the Committee in June after the local elections.

(9.14 pm to 9.17 pm)

11. **Work Programme**

The Committee considered a report on its work programme for 2018/19 which had been updated following the Committee's meeting on 26 November 2018.

It was noted that the Chairman and Vice Chairman had agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 29th April 2019 due to its proximity to the local elections. The Committee agreed that officers should move the April items to the other meetings scheduled later in the year and report the dates at the June meeting.

RESOLVED that;

1. the draft work programme of the Committee submitted with the report to the meeting be approved with the above changes and additions and;
2. Officers finalise new dates for the items originally scheduled for the April meeting.

12. **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business brought before the Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

Chairman