

## MINUTES

of the

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 26 July 2021 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor J. Galley (Chair)

Councillors L. Ashley, W.A. Daden, I.D. Fuller, R.J.E. Gisby, S.M. Goldman, I.S. Grundy, J.C.S. Lager, C.M. Shaw, M. Sismey, M.S. Steel, C.R. Tron and S. Young

#### 1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bracken. Cllr Goldman was his substitute.

#### 2. Election of Vice- Chair

Councillor Shaw proposed that Councillor Young should continue in her role as the Committee's Vice Chair. This was seconded and agreed by the Committee

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Young be elected as Vice-Chair for 2021/22.

#### 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 4. Declaration of Interests

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

#### 5. Public Question Time

No questions were asked or statements made.

#### 6. Decisions Called-In

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

#### 7. Cabinet Portfolio Update – Leader of the Council

Councillor Robinson updated the Committee on his role as Leader of the Council. The report outlined the various roles he undertakes and the regular meetings which he had attended

in the last year. The Committee were referred to the written report which detailed each of these roles and what they entailed. The report also covered areas such as the project panels and working groups he had been involved with along with external meetings such as the Essex Covid Outbreak Engagement Board.

The Committee heard that during the year, the topic of Council reorganisation had faded away but was now slightly back on the horizon, with County areas now being invited to put bids forward. Councillor Robinson also referred to the Waterside scheme, where significant progress had been made over the last 12 months. The Committee also heard that progress continued to be made with the Chelmsford garden community project, with recent meetings with developers taking place and a masterplan intended to be ready by the end of 2021. Councillor Robinson also informed the Committee of other Capital works taking place and that many different areas of infrastructure seemed to now be taking place at a similar time, which would be a logistical and financial challenge for Council's. It was noted by the Committee that meetings such as the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives continued to be useful, especially when looking at infrastructure works affecting wider areas than just single Council's.

Councillor Robinson also informed the Committee, that he had been very pleased with the continued use of working groups across the Council. He noted that these had been very useful in collating wider input from all members and officers. Councillor Robinson also highlighted the many benefits of holding certain Committee meetings remotely. He stated that they allowed greater access for all parties and that he and the other group leaders had written to the local MP's to raise the issue and he hoped the Government would respond accordingly soon. The Committee was informed by Councillor Robinson, that he was always happy to answer questions from other Councillors and encouraged members to continue to highlight issues, that he and the Chief Executive needed to look at.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Robinson stated that;

- The Covid data provided on the ECC website was often rounded to per 100k so sometimes a figure would appear as 0 when in effect it was a bit higher.
- Long covid would be a major issue as we move out of the pandemic and was a subject he had raised at various meetings, due to the potential issues it would cause.
- He would look into the possibility of answers to questions at meetings being provided to Cllrs in advance of the meeting to assist with follow up questions. He did also clarify that he often allowed follow up questions at meetings such as Cabinet and questions had to be submitted in advance to allow research to take place to provide detailed answers.
- It was very important to continue to increase recycling rates along with other areas of work to reduce the Council's carbon footprint. In Chelmsford, we already meet most government requirements and this is assisted by the separating out of waste categories which provided cleaner recycling and a higher sale price
- There had been an adjustment to the Community Governance Review timetable at Full Council last week. This meant that a Governance Committee would take place in early September and the comments from the Connectivity and Local Democracy working group would be taken on board when producing the report. It was noted the report would be published towards the end of August.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

*(7.02pm to 7.19pm)*

## 8. Final Report from the Riverside Project Task and Finish Group

The Committee received a report from the Riverside Project Evaluation Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group had been established in 2019 to undertake a project evaluation of the re-development scheme. The report detailed the main findings from the evaluation of the Riverside Project and included recommendations that may need to be considered when planning or undertaking similar construction projects in the future.

It was noted that officers prepared a comprehensive evaluation report of 70 pages in addition to around 1000 pages of supporting documentation, that was then considered in detail by the working group at various remote meetings. The Committee heard that Appendix A detailed the original terms of reference set and Appendix B covered the project chronology and key milestones. It was noted that the report set out the key aspects and it was for the Committee and the Council to consider them. The Committee heard that section two of the report highlighted the key issues which had identified 70+ learning points and 24 recommendations, which were summarised in Appendices C and D. It was also noted that commercially sensitive information had been redacted, officers and the group felt this was a more open approach than including more detail which would have led to the report having to be considered in closed session. The Committee heard that the group's recommendations would not be relevant for all projects as the Council has such a diverse range of projects and a similar one of this scale would not be taking place in the immediate future. It was noted however that some of the recommendations had already been applied in the planning of the Waterside project and all of them would be considered for future projects, as appropriate.

Members of the Task and Finish Group thanked officers for their hard work in assisting them to produce the comprehensive report. It was noted that despite not being able to meet face to face, they had developed some very useful recommendations moving forward and were pleased that some of these were already being implemented on other projects.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was noted that;

- The use of a contract administrator was very specific for this type of project, and the form of construction contract used. It was a role that could be utilised for similar projects but was not a role the Council required for all projects. One key aspect in this area was the importance of the project manager being involved from an early stage.
- Attaining a very good BREEAM rating had been a very positive aspect of the project. This meant the building was very energy efficient and it was difficult to attain this for a leisure centre building and the benefits would be realised over the coming years.
- The discharging of the last remaining planning condition was still something being considered by officers. This related to elevational treatments of the existing retained building [containing the ice rink and sports hall] and a £2m sum had been allocated in the Capital programme. Officers stated that a better solution would be

found by the Council taking their time and ensuring it was achieved in the best way possible.

- Implications of contracts with other bodies such as ECC for highway matters had been a key element of the project. The Task and Finish Group had looked at these in detail and it was an area the Council would focus on for future projects. One example of this was already taking place with the Waterside project and more time would be allocated to these areas in future to ensure adequate permissions and permits were obtained.

Members of the Committee thanked the Task and Finish group and officers for producing a very comprehensive report. It was noted that the findings were fair and with hindsight, some of the challenges experienced would perhaps have been addressed in a different way. The Committee noted that the recommendations would be very useful when planning and undertaking other projects and the Council would benefit as a result. It was also noted that a state of the art leisure centre was now in place that continued to be very successful for the Council.

RESOLVED that, the suggested recommended actions, as set out in the report, should be considered when the Council is planning and undertaking similar construction projects in the future.

*(7.20pm to 7.53pm)*

## 9. Annual Report on the Scrutiny Function 2020-21

In accordance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance adopted by the Council on 23 April 2008 a report on the activity of the scrutiny function of the Council for 2020/21 had been prepared. The Code required that the Committee produce an annual report on its work for consideration by the Council and subsequent publication on the Council's website. It was noted that due to the change in meeting dates, the report would now go to the December meeting of Full Council rather than July.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report on the Scrutiny Function for 2020/21 be approved for subsequent publication.

*(7.53pm to 7.54pm)*

## 10. Report on Decisions Taken under Delegation to the Chief Executive

The Committee received information on the seven decisions taken during the period 1 November 2020 to 30 June 2021 under the Chief Executives delegated authority to take urgent decisions.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

*(7.54pm to 7.55pm)*

## 11. Annual Report from the Chelmsford Policy Board

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Chelmsford Policy Board. He informed the Committee that the Board had been very busy during 2020-21 and had met on eight occasions, officers and members of the Board were thanked for their contributions during the year too. The Board had considered various consultations and proposals including for Bradwell B and the North Essex authorities shared Strategic local plan. It was noted that the Board had also considered technical and planning documents to allow the Council to be on the front foot for any land availability opportunities.

The Committee was also informed of the considerable work that had taken place on agreeing four separate masterplans for strategic growth sites. It was noted that these had included wide participations from stakeholders and local ward members and the process had been working well. The Committee also heard that there were currently five working groups which had been meeting regularly and had been very useful.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

*(7.56pm to 8pm)*

## 12. Work Programme

The Committee considered a report on its work programme which had been updated following the last meeting on 1 February 2021. It was noted that management team were considering some future topics and these would be circulated to members soon. It was also noted that a report on the South Essex Parking Partnership had been requested, and this would be programmed into the work programme.

RESOLVED that;

1. the report be noted and;
2. the Committee be consulted via email on some additional items for the future work programme.

*(8.01 pm to 8.03pm)*

## 13. Urgent Business

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

The meeting closed at 8.04pm.

Chair