

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 13 June 2016

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair); Councillor Brian Sargeant (Deputy Chair); Councillors Rufia Ashraf, Janice Duffy, Terrie Eales, Elizabeth Gowen, Phil Larratt, Dennis Meredith, Zoe Smith and Graham Walker

Councillor Mary Markham, Leader of the Council (item 5)
David Kennedy, Chief Executive (item 5)
Mike Kay, Chief Executive, NPH (item 6)
Shirley Davies, Executive Director, NPH (Item 6)
Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Community Safety
Julie Seddon, Chair, CSP (Item 7, 8b,8d,8e,8f)
Ruth Austen, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager (item 8e)
Councillor Stephen Hibbert (item 8a)
Phil Harris, Head of Housing and Wellbeing (item 8a)
Debi Waite, Private Sector Housing Manager (item 8a)
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Arthur McCutcheon, observing

Member of the Public Serena Parker, observing

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Caswell and Samuel Shaw.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2016 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

5. UNITARY STATUS

Councillor Mary Markham, Leader of the Council, and David Kennedy, Chief Executive, provided the Committee with an update on Unitary status:

- The Leaders and Chief Executives of the Boroughs and Districts in Northamptonshire continue to work together and generally have committed to support work to investigate Local Government simplification for Northamptonshire. It is felt at NBC that Unitary status is the best way forward and will deliver better services for the residents of the town.
- A further meeting of the Leaders is scheduled for early July 2016.
- The Leader of the main opposition group has offered cross party support to the project.
- Northamptonshire County Council is prioritising the implementation of their Next Generation Model.

AGREED: That the update is noted and a further update is brought to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 September 2016.

6. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW UPDATE

Mike Kay, Chief Executive, and Shirley Davies, Executive Director, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) gave the Committee an update on the Sheltered Housing Review:

Key points:

- The update contained factors considered in developing the Strategy, key recommendations
 - There had been a significant projected growth in the older population: 65 plus population of 32,300 is set to grow to circa 47,000 by 2030
 - 75 plus population is set to grow by 70% (from 14,100 to 23,900,) by 2030
 - Around 59% of tenants are aged 70 plus, 27% aged 80 plus
 - A standard for refurbishing existing stock together with enhanced service provision to assist more older people to live independently in their homes will be created
 - The full range of accommodation and services to target and meet the preventative agenda will be made best use of
 - Partnership working will be increased
 - The Vision for Older Persons' Housing was reported
 - NPH's Sheltered Housing should be rebranded "Older Persons' Housing"
 - The Allocations Policy should be amended to define the stock for people aged 55 plus and only younger disabled people when no other suitable property is available
 - Around 600 units identified as "no longer fit for purpose" for older people and reclassified in three phases.
 - Reclassify 444 bungalows, currently part of NPH's general needs stock, as designated older persons' housing as they become void

- Result in 1,891 units of older people's accommodation
- A Project Group will oversee the implementation
- Voids will be reduced in the remaining designated older persons' stock
- Further work will be undertaken to ensure that the current housing related support service is efficient, meets tenants' needs and represents value for money
- Develop more Partnership working with other Agencies

Mike Kay conveyed his thanks to all those involved in the Sheltered Housing Review.

The Committee asked questions, made comment and heard:

- The Committee acknowledged the growth in the older population
- In response to a query regarding partnership working, Mike Kay advised that there are a series of partnerships in existence. NPH regularly meets with Social Services and shares strategies. NPH works regularly with Planning Services, NBC.
- In answer to a query regarding the age limit for older person's housing, Mike Kay reported that the research had identified people living in mixed blocks of accommodation do not like living with families. Therefore the accommodation will be targeted at older singles, couples and not families.
- It was recognised that social isolation is a key concern. It had been further recognised that there is need to target services to those most in need and most vulnerable.
- In response to a question regarding additional stock, Mike Kay informed the Committee that NPH is not the only provider in Northampton; however, NPH is looking at new properties and undertaking an options appraisal on existing stock. There is a variety of provision.
- Most Housing Associations have withdrawn from new builds Sheltered Housing.

The Chair thanked Mike Kay and Shirley Davies for their informative address.

AGREED: That the update is noted.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) PERFORMANCE

Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Julie Seddon, Chair, Community Safety Partnership apprised the Committee of CSP performance. It was noted that a bi annual report from the CPS is provided to Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Hallam and Julie Seddon highlighted the salient points contained within the briefing note, in particular the statistical data in relation to crime figures where there had been an increase and the reduction in funding. It was noted that people are encouraged to report crimes, including those that took place a number of years ago. The Police has re-categorised the reporting of crime, all reports count as an individual crime. Therefore, this year's data is based on a different methodology to that of previous years.

Julie Seddon thanked all those involved in the Weeks of Action.

The Committee commented on the usefulness of a Police Officer being assigned to Residents' Association but acknowledged that as funding becomes a challenge a move away from community policing is taking place.

The Committee referred to the reduction in Police Community Support Officers and that some Parish Councils have provided funding for a PCSO but one has not been provided.

The Chair thanked the Chair of the CSP and the Community Safety Manager for the production of the comprehensive report.

AGREED: That the report be noted and a further report is presented to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 February 2017.

8. MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS:

(A) MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING, INCLUDING HIMOS

Councillor Stephen Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Phil Harris, Head of Housing and Wellbeing and Debi Waite, Private Sector Housing Manager presented the action plan in relation to the accepted recommendations of the Scrutiny report: Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing, including HIMOs to the Committee.

The Committee noted that recommendations 1,3,4,5 and 8 were still ongoing. Phil Harris confirmed that HIMO training for Planning Committee members had taken place. Additionally, Private Sector Housing and Planning Services have meetings regularly.

In response to a query regarding parking and HIMOs, Phil Harris advised that conditions to licenses have to be applied in accordance with the Legislation. Private Sector housing has a good working relationship with the Police.

AGREED: That the update is noted and a further update is provided to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for Monday, 28 November 2016.

(B) IMPACT OF THE WELFARE REFORM ACT

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities presented the action plan in relation to the accepted recommendations of the Scrutiny report: Impact of the Welfare Reform Act to the Committee.

The Chair was pleased to note that all accepted recommendations had been actions.

AGREED: That no further monitoring is required.

(C) POVERTY IN THE TOWN

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities presented the action plan in relation to the accepted recommendations of the Scrutiny report: Poverty in the Town to the Committee.

The Chair was pleased to note that all accepted recommendations had been actions.

AGREED: That no further monitoring is required.

(D) INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities, and Debbie Ferguson, Community Safety Manager, presented the action plan in relation to the accepted recommendations of the Scrutiny report: Interpersonal Violence to the Committee.

The Chair was pleased to note that most accepted recommendations had been actioned with three on going. He conveyed his thanks to the Community Safety Manager for the excellent training that had been delivered to Councillors recently. He reminded the Committee of some upcoming training on domestic violence. This had been a recommendation of this Scrutiny Review.

Domestic violence was now included in the curriculum for PHSE.

AGREED: That no further monitoring is required.

(E) KEEP NORTHAMPTON TIDY

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities, and Ruth Austen, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager, presented the action plan in relation to the accepted recommendations of the Scrutiny report: Keep Northampton Tidy to the Committee.

The Committee commented that there had been a marked improvement on cleanliness in the town; commending the cigarette butt removal machine. Concerns were conveyed regarding littering on trunk roads and the area around junction 15.

The Chair advised that action on a number of accepted recommendations was outstanding. He requested further monitoring at the August meeting of the Committee.

AGREED: That the update is noted and further monitoring takes place at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 August 2016.

(F) TREE MAINTENANCE

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities, presented the action plan in relation to the accepted recommendations of the Scrutiny report: Tree Maintenance to the Committee.

The Committee requested that a written update on funding for tree maintenance is provided to a future meeting. It was further requested that information about right to light and trees is also provided to a future meeting.

The Chair advised that action on four of the accepted recommendations were outstanding. He requested further monitoring at the August meeting of the Committee.

AGREED: That the update is noted and further monitoring takes place at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 August 2016.

9. SCRUTINY PANELS

10. SCRUTINY PANEL 1

Councillor Dennis Meredith, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1 – Child Sexual Exploitation, Human Trafficking and Domestic Slavery presented the scope of the Review to the Committee for approval.

He highlighted:

The Scrutiny Panel agreed that the title of the Review should be amended to read: “Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).”

It was further suggested that the purpose of the Review be updated to read “To ensure Northampton Borough Council plays an active role in tackling CSE.”

In discussing the rationale for the Review, the Scrutiny Panel felt that the required outcomes should be:

- To make evidence based recommendations to improve the role that NBC has in tackling CSE
- To make recommendations, as appropriate, regarding partnership working in tackling CSE

AGREED:

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves the scope of the review – Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- (2) That the title of this Scrutiny Review is amended to read “Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)”.
- (3) That the purpose of the Scrutiny Review is updated to read “*To ensure Northampton Borough Council plays an active role in tackling CSE.*”

11. SCRUTINY PANEL 2

Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 2 – Museum Trust (Pre-Decision Scrutiny) presented the scope of the Review to the Committee for approval.

He highlighted:

The purpose of the meetings is to:

- Help non-Executives understand the process of establishing a Museum Trust and the legal framework around the establishment of a Museum Trust.
- Enable non-Executives to meaningfully challenge the rigour and robustness of the process.

In discussing the rationale for the Review, the Scrutiny Panel felt that the required outcomes should be:

- To provide Scrutiny input, at the pre-decision stage, of the establishment of a Museum Trust

AGREED:

That the scope of the review- Museum Trust (pre-decision scrutiny) is approved.

12. SCRUTINY PANEL 3

Councillor Zoe Smith, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3 – Homelessness (Pre-Decision Scrutiny) presented the scope of the Review to the Committee for approval.

She highlighted:

In discussing the rationale for the Review, the Scrutiny Panel felt that the required outcomes should be:

- To reduce homelessness in the borough of Northampton
- An understanding of the Local Authority homelessness role and the services provided in Northampton
- A review of existing homelessness services in Northampton, in order to assess their quality and effectiveness and identify any significant gaps in service

AGREED:

That the scope of the review – homelessness (pre-decision scrutiny) is approved.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUP

Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, advised the Committee that in recent years the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has set up a Reporting and Monitoring Working Group annually that provides initial Scrutiny input in the budget process.

He suggested that this Scrutiny activity continues.

Membership of the Working Group for 2015/2016 was:

Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair)
Councillor Brian Sargeant (Deputy Chair)
Councillors Terrie Eales, James Hill, Dennis Meredith, Suresh Patel and Samuel Shaw

The Committee was asked to confirm the membership of the Working Group:

Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair)
Councillor Brian Sargeant (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Terrie Eales, Elizabeth Gowen and Dennis Meredith

AGREED: That membership of the Reporting and Monitoring Working Group is:

Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair)
Councillor Brian Sargeant (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Terrie Eales, Elizabeth Gowen and Dennis Meredith

14. NBC OWNED STREET LIGHTING WORKING GROUP

Councillor Phil Larratt, Chair, NBC Owned Street Lighting Working Group, presented the final report to the Committee for approval.

The Chair thanked the Working Group for the work undertaken.

AGREED: That the report of the NBC Owned Street Lighting Working Group is approved and presented to Cabinet for approval.

15. REPORT BACK FROM NBC'S REPRESENTATIVE TO NCC'S HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Brian Sargeant, NBC's representative to NCC's Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee advised the Committee of the proceedings of the meeting that took place on 1 June 2016.

Councillor Sargeant advised that representatives of the Committee had attended a recent site visit to a local prison.

AGREED: That the update is noted.

16. POTENTIAL FUTURE PRE DECISION SCRUTINY.

There were none. The Chair reminded the Committee that two Reviews were undertaking pre-decision Scrutiny work – Museum Trust and Homelessness.

17. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 7:42 pm