

Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 21 August 2018

Attendees: Councillor Kevin Bentley, Councillor Phil Coleman, Councillor Beverly Davies, Councillor Chris Hayter, Councillor Andrea Luxford Vaughan, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Barbara Wood
Substitutes: No substitutes were recorded at the meeting
Also Present: Councillor Bourne, Councillor Goss, Councillor King

175 Update on Implementation of Plastic Recycling Collections to Flats

Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Sustainability and Transportation, introduced the Update on implementation of Plastic Recycling Collections to Flats report. The report requests that the Panel consider whether action taken against the implementation plan will achieve the previous Cabinet decision to where feasible, provide residents of flats with collections of plastic recycling.

Councillor Goss provided the Panel with an update on the implementation of plastic recycling collections to flats and informed members that 70% of flats would be covered under the plan in phase one and that 25 out of the 35 landlords and management agencies responded positively to the scheme. Further attempts to contact the remaining ten will be undertaken. Councillor Goss confirmed that there may be some locations that are not suitable for bins and these will be surveyed, however it is not possible to place a set of bins at a flat unless there is permission from the landowner.

Panel members welcomed the progress and thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting.

In response to a question as to whether the scheme was going to plan, Councillor Goss stated that the plan is on time, and that there is nothing stopping the roll out of plastic collection from flats towards the end of the September. A member of the Panel sought confirmation that the items possible for recycling included on the promotional material was correct. Officers confirmed that these would be reviewed to ensure that they were accurate prior to distribution.

In response to a question from the Panel, Councillor Goss confirmed that the website was in draft form, but that this could be shared with members of the Panel. A further question was asked as to what success for the project would be to which Councillor

Goss stated that this would be to roll out flats recycling to 80% of flats in the Borough and to see the recycling rates increase. In terms of the next steps for the project once the first phase has been completed, it would be to provide further information and education to residents. Councillor Goss highlighted that a future campaign would be about the need to clean the recycling prior to putting it in the bin.

In response to a question about how close the Council works with management companies and social landlords to educate residents due to fast turnover and the need to prevent cross contamination. Councillor Goss confirmed the need to provide education and continual communications to residents in partnership with social landlord and management companies. This includes the landlords agreeing to include literature in their mailshots to residents.

A question was raised regarding whether there were plans for a supplementary planning document or planning rules to ensure that going forward bin stores are large enough and have the capacity to deal with all recyclates at new developments. Councillor Goss confirmed that this is part of the current standard, with new flat developments adhering to the standard and has been in place for a number of years and has been reviewed.

RESOLVED that the progress on the implementation of plastic recycling collections to flats be noted.

176 Locality Budgets

Lucie Breadman, Assistant Director of Community and Tina Bourne, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities introduced the report. The report requests that the Panel review the analysis provided and consider and recommendations going forward in regard to locality budgets. This report was brought to the Panel following a request from the Chairman.

Lucie Breadman provided the Panel with a summary of the report and highlighted that the basis of locality budgets is to distribute public funds fairly to a range of organisations and projects. Lucie Breadman stated that the largest proportion of funding so far has been given to community groups.

Councillor Bourne highlighted the importance of locality budgets and the variety of organisations across the Borough that have received funding. Councillor Bourne informed Panel members that there had been a number of small changes to the locality budget scheme for 2018/19, this included an increase in minimum spend for each application from £50 to £100 as well as a focus on reducing the need for locality budget carry forwards through well planned applications.

A member of the Panel queried whether Councillors were aware that it was their responsibility to monitor locality budget spends and questioned whether locality budget

money could be retrieved if a project or organisation closes prior to meeting its objectives. In response, Councillor Bourne confirmed that there is a requirement on Councillors to have an understanding of the groups and project ongoing in their area. With regard to retrieving money from those organisations that have closed down this would likely be too difficult.

Panel members agreed that officers should not be burdened with extensive monitoring of the locality budgets and also that Councillors should be made aware of the responsibilities. It was suggested that information be circulated to Councillors by e-mail, regarding frequently asked questions and examples of good practice for locality budgets, including identifying where funding could be provided before it is even available. Councillor Bourne confirmed that a reminder would be sent to Councillors in October, which could include information about guidelines and the need to reduce the number of late applications which can lead to carry overs. Members of the Panel suggested that the deadline for locality budget applications should be moved to January, rather than February to assist in preventing last minute applications and noted the time it takes to bring together a locality budget application. Another member of the Panel questioned why there aren't more simple controls with regards to locality budgets such payment on receipt of invoice, which would reduce the need for extensive monitoring. Officers confirmed that they would go back and look at this possibility of doing this, however there may be an issue with those organisations where the funding would not provide an invoice. Officers confirmed that those grants over £1,000 would be monitored, as well as a random spot check of other applications.

A suggestion was made that any money that remains unspent at the end of a financial year could be utilised as part of a bidding system for other organisations in the Borough. Councillor Bourne stated that the key aim is to ensure that Councillors spend their locality budgets in year, resulting in no carry forwards and a fresh start each year. If there are underspends each year, this could be looked at by Cabinet.

Members of the Panel thanked officers for writing the report and attending the meeting to answer questions.

RESOLVED that

Locality Budget guidelines be circulated to Councillors by e-mail.

A member briefing regarding locality budgets and Councillor responsibility be arranged in the near future.

The deadline for Locality Budget applications be moved to January of each year.

Further research be conducted to assess the best means for monitoring locality budget spend.

The Panel thanked the officers for the report.

177 Year End 2017 - 2018 Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan

Councillor Coleman (by reason of being a Director of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Resources, and Dan Gascoyne, Assistant Director Policy and Corporate introduced the Year End 2017-2018 Performance Report including progress on Strategic Plan Action Plan report. The report requests that the Panel consider whether the proposed targets for next are sufficiently realistic and ambitious; ahead of Cabinet on 5 September. Councillor King, provided the Panel with summary of the reports included in the agenda and highlighted that the performance of the Council was positive, with only one key performance indicator categorised as red. This provides assurance that the Council is delivering in those key areas against the targets set. Going forward for 2018-19 a number of key performance indicator targets have been tightened.

A member of the Panel questioned, in relation to the support to development of community neighbourhood plans, whether statements of community involvement had been published. In response Dan Gascoyne and Councillor King confirmed that further information could be provided after the meeting.

A further comment was made with regards to the Visit Colchester magazine, which does not include reference to Tiptree on the map. In response Councillor King confirmed that whilst the Visit Colchester content was effective in highlighting the tourist information for Colchester, a further look could be undertaken to ensure that there is a balance in the documentation. With regard to the inward investment campaign, a member of the Panel suggested that examples should be included within the report to provide information of what has been achieved.

A member of the Panel expressed their thanks to those officers who look after Castle Park and Highwoods Country Park, as the parks recently received a Green Flag. Following on from this a question was asked requesting more information regarding funding for Sport England national pilot for physical activity. In response Pam Donnelly, Strategic Director, confirmed that the initial stages of the project are underway, this followed a research project on this issue the findings of which will be published towards the end of the year. Pam Donnelly confirmed that Colchester Borough Council have commenced advertising for roles that will assist developing initiatives.

It was also suggested that the wording relating to the ongoing five-year supply of housing sites and provision of sufficient numbers be reviewed to provide clarity with regards to the adoption of the local plan. Councillor King highlighted that this statement reflects a period of time, but can be reviewed to assess whether it could be more qualified.

With regard to the targets proposed for 2018-19, a Panel member questioned why some targets had not been raised when during the previous year they had been exceeded and suggested that the targets may not be stretching enough. In response Councillor King confirmed that the targets reflect the level of challenge, demand for services and inward change. Councillor King stated that six of the key performance indicators targets had been increased.

A further point was raised with relation to why the target for other planning applications has reduced, and whether this target is a reflection of staffing issues. With regards to staffing, Dan Gascoyne confirmed that the Planning team has been through a futures review process in recent months and a number of positions are currently vacant to which the Council is actively recruiting. With regards to targets they are based on considering current information with what can be achieved and previous performance.

Following on from this question, a member of the Panel queried whether the review in planning was a success. In response Pam Donnelly confirmed that the level of success for the futures review will depend on the efficiencies and degree of cultural change. In addition, it is difficult to predict the level of demand due to economic uncertainty and the changing state of the housing market. With regards to the process of setting targets, Pam Donnelly confirmed that they regularly are challenged by Cabinet.

With regard to Key Performance Indicators, a query was raised as to why K1P2, planning appeals allowed against decisions had been removed. In response Dan Gascoyne confirmed that the number of KPI's had been reduced by one, and further information about why this particular KPI had been removed could be provided after the meeting.

A member of the Panel suggested that the targets for 2018-19 be reviewed again, as some targets are lower than previous years and not stretching enough. There were also suggestions that further information be included within the reports to highlight the reason behind the target level. Councillor King confirmed that setting targets is part of a balance and that conversations on this have occurred in the creation of the document. Councillor King confirmed that he would be happy to further review the targets to ensure that they are stretching enough for the authority.

The Panel discussed the possibility of pre-scrutinising the Key Performance Indicators earlier in the municipal year in future. Councillor Bourne highlighted that additional information could be provided to the Panel in future and this could include the justification behind setting each target, which Cabinet members receive.

RESOLVED that;

The proposed Key Performance Indicator Targets be further considered by CABINET to ensure they are adequate.

To request to CABINET that future Key Performance Indicator targets are pre-scrutinised

and that additional information be included within the reports to detail the reasoning behind the targets being set.

178 Strategic Plan Spending Priorities - Scrutiny Report

Councillor Bentley (by reason of being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Infrastructure) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).

Councillor King introduced the Strategic Plan Spending Priorities report. The report asks the Panel to consider and comment on the Strategic Plan Spending Priorities as agreed at Cabinet on 11 July 2018.

Lewis Barber

Lewis Barber attended the meeting to have his say with regards the money allocated to Transport for Colchester. Councillor Barber's main concern was what the money allocated for enabling and feasibility would be used for and to ensure that the timescales of such work would be reasonable.

Councillor King

Councillor King highlighted that this paper had been brought to the Scrutiny Panel following discussions at Full Council. Councillor King confirmed that much of the detail behind the financial contributions are still in development and that further information on this issue would be available in the autumn.

Councillor King provided Panel members with a summary of the key strands within the report and the eight themes.

Some members of the Panel queried the extent to which the report could be scrutinised given the level of detail included. Councillor King stated that the report was a statement of positive intent and is still a work in progress. The themes within the report are linked to pre-election statements, which was shared in July.

It was suggested by a member of the Panel that given the spending commitments and the limited detail in the report that the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders attend a future Scrutiny Panel meeting to answer detailed questions. Councillor King highlighted that the report to Scrutiny was originally submitted to Cabinet as part of a series of financial papers, and therefore in line with the Resources Portfolio. Councillor King acknowledged that the Panel would have further queries regarding the information included in the report, but that the report does provide the Panel with an opportunity to discuss the priorities set out and a reflection of the direction of the administration. Councillor King also acknowledged the important role played by Scrutiny.

A member of the Panel expressed some concern about the approach to partnership working, and whether partners had been informed of the Council's intent before it was

made public. A further comment was made about why tollgate was the only project mentioned under the cooperation theme.

A member of the Panel expressed concern that some decisions on spending had been made but were not reflected in the report and that a briefing had been promised regarding the additional PCSO's prior to the Police being aware. Councillor King confirmed that more detail will be available shortly, however it is not possible to provide information on spending at this point. Councillor King also confirmed that the Essex Police and Fire Commissioner was in support of the PCSO initiative. Councillor King acknowledged that this paper had come to the Scrutiny Panel out of sequence. Following a further query about when a report with additional information could be brought back to the Scrutiny Panel, Councillor King said that this could be confirmed in due course.

Panel members thanked Councillor King for attending the meeting and requested that further information be brought to the Scrutiny Panel when the plans have developed, with the Leader of the Council in attendance to answer additional questions. A member of the Panel stated that they did not feel that it was possible to comment fully on the strategic priorities due to the level of detail included in the report.

RESOLVED that;

The Panel commented on the Strategic Plan Priorities.

The Panel expressed their thanks for Councillor King attending the meeting.

The Panel request that at the next opportunity the Leader of the Council bring a more detailed report on the Strategic Plan Spending Priorities.

179 Bus Review Letter - Further Questions to Bus Companies

Jonathan Baker, Democratic Services Officer, introduced the Bus Review Letter report. The report requests that the Panel consider and approve the draft letter to Bus Companies, the County Council and Community360, and to consider when the deadline for submitting responses should be, and when these responses should be considered by the Panel.

Members of the Panel welcomed the letter, and suggested that the deadline for receiving responses should be the end of October.

RESOLVED that;

The draft letter to bus companies, the County Council and Community360 be approved. The deadline for responses to the letter should be the end of October

180 Work Programme 2018-2019

Jonathan Baker, Democratic Services Officer, introduced the Scrutiny Panel work programme for 2018-19. The report requests that the Panel consider and note the contents of the work programme for 2018-19.

Jonathan Baker provided the Panel with an update regarding the October meeting of the Scrutiny Panel which would include the performance report from Colchester Borough Homes, as well as information relating to homelessness in the Borough. Councillor Tina Bourne, was invited to the table and informed the Panel that they could look at the homelessness strategy, which is a three year document, alongside the updated actions at the same meeting. Councillor Davies welcomed the opportunity to review homelessness at the next meeting and highlighted a request to speak to different agencies and organisations that also assist the homeless in Colchester to see whether there are gaps in provision.

Jonathan Baker also highlighted that an invite has been sent to the Police and Fire Commissioner to attend a Scrutiny Panel meeting, in order for the Panel to feed into the Essex Fire Plan.

The Panel also discussed inviting the Business Improvement District to a future Scrutiny Panel and requested that a report about business rate retention and the future arrangements be brought to a Scrutiny Panel meeting. Jonathan Baker highlighted that the November meeting of the Panel would include a finance report and it could be brought to that meeting. In response to a question, Jonathan Baker confirmed that it was looking likely that the arts organisations would be invited to attend the Scrutiny Panel meeting in March.

RESOLVED that:

The Panel request a report on business rate retention be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.

That the Work Programme 2018-19 be noted.