

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 JULY 2020

Present: Councillors Davies (Chair), Levane (Vice-Chair), Battley, Beaney, Beaney, Cox, Foster, Rankin, Turner, Webb and Bishop

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Roberts.

Councillor Bishop was present as a substitute for Councillor Roberts.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillors asked that a written response is received in relation to the actions concerning Disabled Facilities Grant and the Climate Change Strategy.

RESOLVED- (Unanimously) that the minutes of the meeting held on the 5 March 2020 be approved.

50. PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTERLY REPORT FOR 2019/20- QUARTER 4

The Chair thanked everyone for all the hard work that had been put into dealing with COVID-19 crisis and wanted to recognise the extra effort people had gone too in order to help others.

The Chair recognised that the data the Overview and Scrutiny committee were looking at this evening was from pre COVID-19 time and that the Council was currently working differently in response to the crisis. It was still important to review the data to see if there were any issues that needed addressing.

Councillors pointed out that this is the last time they would be receiving data in this format and inside would have data on the website that they will be able to monitor throughout the year and not just at quarterly meetings.

RESOLVED- (Unanimously)

- 1. That comments on year end performance be addressed with appropriate action and report back**
- 2. That comments on proposals for future performance and finance reporting and monitoring arrangements are considered**
- 3. That staff be thanked for their hard work and achievements to date.**

Reasons for Recommendations

To assist the council to undertake performance and financial management arrangements

51. SUPPORT RECOVERY + WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

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The Chair invited the Managing Director and Cabinet members to speak in relation to the work the Council has been doing for residents during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Managing Director advised that responding to COVID-19 had been a unique experience and a challenging one given a reduction in Officer posts and the recent delivery of the December Election. The Managing Director has been proud on how Officers have worked together as one team in delivering the councils COVID-19 response and transforming the way we work. COVID-19 caused the council to change its priorities and activities have been focussed on delivering essential services and key COVID-19 response work. Activities have included supporting vulnerable communities through the community hub and the allocation of business grants to support local businesses affected by lockdown.

The Managing Director praised the councils previous work that had helped during this period. The digital transformation work of the last few years helped with providing residents with new online forms and our IT team successfully implemented software quickly that has been used for digital meetings. The housing department worked hard and have housed most homeless people in temporary accommodation now. It is believed that without this the council wouldn't have provided as a robust response to COVID-19 as it did, and this greatly benefited our communities.

Moving forward the council's day to day working arrangements have changed with most officers now working from home. All foreseeable meetings would be held digitally. This would be reviewed regularly looking at performance and productivity of the council. The council is not out of the response phase for COVID-19 yet. Work has begun on looking at the future and recovery plans are currently being formed and discussed. The council is also looking at second wave planning to guide future that will incorporate lessons learned from today.

Officers have been working very hard and long hours in order to help with the response to COVID-19. Overview and Scrutiny recognised the work Officers had been doing in order to help the community and expressed thanks for their efforts.

Councillor Fitzgerald spoke of how from a political leadership perspective he was incredibly pleased with the council's response to COVID-19 and the efforts of staff. Local government had been central to responding to this crisis. The leadership and senior Officers met daily in order to discuss the councils COVID-19 response. There had been clear successes such as keeping street cleansing operational and the adjustments made at the crematorium given its small team. The crisis has proved how important the statutory services the council provides are and how people value them.

The community hub has been providing food, prescription and well-being support. An operational this size would have been put together in 2-3 months but was turned around in just 6 weeks. It is a great example of multi-agency working to benefit the local community and has had many local volunteers supporting the community hubs work.

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Councillor Fitzgerald stated there was still a need for transformation solutions to help with the challenges that the local community were facing. Overview and Scrutiny committee had proposed a good template for helping with this.

The Chair invited questions from the committee.

The Managing Director was asked what the minimum level of staff would be needed to run the council's services in the event of a second wave of COVID-19. How would services be prioritised and if the council did not have the staff to run these could we look at other authorities to help.

The response to this was normally with business continuity plans there is a one event such as building loss to a fire and your plan would enable you to establish yourself somewhere else as quickly as possible. Sussex Resilience Forum has asked the Council to plan for a scenario where the second wave outbreak is 2 ½ times worse than the first wave. The big issue with staff capacity will be how many would be fit to work face to face.

Currently 80% of the council's staff can work from home but 20% of staff perform face to face duties. The council has had to change how face to face staff work in order to protect them and residents from COVID-19. The street cleansing team for example worked closer to their homes and didn't attend the depot. In the event of a second wave the statutory services would be prioritised, but it was recognised that many of these were face to face. All the council's services had been ranked and essential services such as benefits, and homelessness would be prioritised over ones that could wait. Staff can be released from their duties and retrained to support essential services. Other authorities would be approached for mutual aid if needed but equally our staff could be used in other authorities to support their essential services. Councillor asked about the impact of the recent decision to remove opposition members from Cabinet and how opposition councillors would now have an input into decision making. The response was that oppositional councillors would still have influence on the committees and groups they already sat. Any valid ideas and suggestions would be greatly appreciated and have always been welcome. This cross party had always been useful and would hope that would be more positive response to the councils work during the COVID-19 crisis that weren't necessary shown from opposition at the start of the pandemic. It was hoped that the work between the parties would continue to positively impact residents.

Cabinet thanked Overview and Scrutiny for all the work that they have done and were pleased how this work programme and the individual themes linked in with the council's COVID-19 recovery plan that is in development. The Leader was particularly pleased to be working with the committee in this capacity.

The Chair introduced the work programme and explained that Overview and Scrutiny Committee function was to track and monitor the performance of the council on behalf of residents. Given that the senior Officers and Councillors are currently responding to the COVID-19 crisis Overview and Scrutiny have taken the to reflect and think ahead. The Overview and Scrutiny work programme have 5 strands to it which are;

- Fair Outcomes for all- Councillors were keen to ensure that recovery benefitted all residents as some minority groups had been disproportionately such as the

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BAME communities and the elderly residing in care homes. The work of the community hub quickly identified that residents who were living in social deprivation were hit a lot harder and quicker when lockdown happened. These residents have needed a lot of support with things such as food. Cabinet are keen to work with Overview and Scrutiny for this and to make sure that equalities would be a high priority.

- Communications Strategy- Overview and Scrutiny recognised that a good communications strategy was integral to helping a good equalities strategy in gaining the voices of those residents who are disadvantaged and excluded. In order to do better for these residents there needs to be two-way communication where there would be greater transparency from the council and greater input from residents. Residents are unsure what Overview and Scrutiny the work that it. An increase in communication would help alert residents to activities and increase input from them.
- Constructing and keeping secure spaces- This was for existing & new businesses and communities. There is a wide remit with many different parties involved from visitors to small businesses. It's important that newly modified safe spaces allow for functional operations still. It was suggested that health monitoring regarding social distance measures were looked at and capacity. It was suggested that the Local plan, Town Deal and Trinity Triangle was looked at.
- Health and inequality- This will focus on closing the gap on morbidity and mortality. Currently some adjoining wards have a difference of nearly 16 years in life expectancy. One of the issues they would be looking at our health centre present in areas of deprivation and primary care needs assessments as there is a large GP shortage in the area. There is likely to be a second wave of COVID during the winter months. During this time period there is usually high demand for health services anyway and they would like to look at the winter planning for this. They would also look at disproportionately affected resident's health needs such as those from BAME communities working in the health sector.
- Reimagining HBC and Hastings Partnerships- This will look at working together to make improvements for residents. They are looking ahead at the impact of both COVID-19 and Brexit. This will cause huge social and economic changes. They will be a need to be inclusive and work together with many organisations and individuals to help negate the negative impact these changes could potentially bring.

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The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.18 pm)