

Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 18 June 2024

Present: Samantha Thompson (Chair)

Attendance	
Tina Clements	Jeremy Pert
Mike Davies	Bernard Peters
John Francis	Bob Spencer
Philippa Haden (Vice-Chair (Overview))	Mike Worthington
Kath Perry, MBE	Nigel Yates

Also in attendance: Ian Parry, Alan White and Victoria Wilson

Officers: Catherine Mann, Peter Barker and Lynsey Bissell

Apologies: Gill Heath and Jeremy Oates

Part One

45. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting

46. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

47. Community Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture presented the report to the Committee. Cabinet agreed to develop a Community Strategy in February 2023, focusing on a long-term approach to community empowerment. The Cabinet Member detailed the overview of the engagement undertaken, with 2,106 residents participating between November 2023 – February 2024. The draft vision statement emphasised meaningful dialogue with residents, which avoids “overly corporate language”. In addition to resident engagement, the Community Strategy had been developed with the opinions of key stakeholders including the Corporate O&S Committee (via a working group) and Cabinet. The feedback from the Committee would help shape the Community Strategy moving forward and allow areas for improvement to be identified.

The Committee noted the following comments and responses to questions:

- The identification of key working partners, including district/borough councils, parish councils, the police and voluntary community sector partners was noted.
- The mechanism for working with district/borough and parish councils was explained and work would continue, particularly with parish councils. It was agreed that providing greater outreach and support for non-parish areas and parishes not affiliated with the SPCA was paramount. The Cabinet Member was mindful of the gaps and worked with all relevant parties to guarantee universal communication.
- The strategy tried to reflect the community and ethnic minorities had been consulted and engaged with.
- Engagement would continue to inform the strategy.
- The need to build social capital and encourage greater connectivity was discussed particularly around feeling safe and the relationship with local policing and the Police fire and crime commissioner.
- The Cabinet Member clarified that the Community Strategy was long-term, although caveated that regular check-ins will most likely occur every 2.5 years to ensure active participation and engagement.
- Where to identify the next generation of volunteers and carry on the rich heritage of volunteering inherent to Staffordshire was discussed - concern was raised that the Community Strategy was overly reliant on previous trends and not anticipatory in nature. Engaging young people was raised as an issue.
- The innovative aspect of the councils digital strategy was noted in the minutes of the previous meeting; the role of digital inclusion, and its potential detrimental effect, were raised in relation to volunteering.
- The demographic challenge in relation to age and location was discussed. It was noted that young people tend to be more mobile (i.e. moving away for university and returning), which affects volunteer rates and consistency. Greater infrastructure was voiced as a general potential solution. Furthermore, there was an awareness that more ethnically and culturally diverse areas of Staffordshire required representation.
- Social isolation is also seen as a concern to developing volunteering infrastructure, especially in areas with less settled populations (e.g. areas with a high percentage of second home ownership).

Congratulations were given to Phil Pusey, the Chief Executive Officer of the Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS), who was recently awarded an MBE "for services to the community in Burton and Staffordshire". The Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture paid tribute to volunteers in Staffordshire, in presenting the following figures:

- 528 volunteers in the Libraries and arts service

- 27 community-managed libraries
- 89 volunteers in the Heritage and Archives service
- 50 volunteers in 8 Family Hubs

Recommended:

- a) The Strategy and engagement to date be noted.
- b) The comments made by the Committee as listed about be noted.
- c) The draft pillars and objectives for the Communities Strategy were supported.

48. Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 4

The Leader of the Council introduced the integrated performance report for quarter 4 2023/24 which summarised the councils performance and financial position against the strategic and delivery plans.

The report detailed the latest revenue forecast outturn which showed a forecast overspend of £4.0m (0.58%), compared to the quarter 3 forecast overspend of £5.4m (0.9%).

It was noted that the new delivery plan had prompted a new format for the report which would be presented to the committee at the next meeting when they considered quarter ones performance for 2024/25.

The committee made the following comments and received responses to questions:

- Rising costs and increased demand remained a challenge. £4 million overspend at the end of quarter 4, equating to 0.85% of the councils annual budget was an improvement on quarter 3, which carried a £5.4 million overspend, equating to 0.9% of the annual budget. Cabinet was due to report on 19th June 2024 to present the final return for the year.
- The budget for SEND transport remained a challenging area.
- Concern was expressed regarding the supported living brokerage, with complexity and volumes of cases attributed to a rapid change.
- The number of care homes rated "outstanding" or "good" was still below the national average. work was underway to help support providers were possible.
- The need for high quality SENCOs, in addressing send needs early was discussed. It was felt that this was an area which could help mitigate against the excessive use of resources for ECHP in the long-term.
- The percentage of ECHPs completed on time was still falling shy of the national average. There was currently a shortage of Educational Psychologists in Staffordshire to cover the number of ECHPs. Additional money had been specifically allocated to recruiting 10 additional Educational Psychologists, of which 7 of the positions had

been filled.

- The desire to see greater numbers of children with SEND educated in mainstream schools was noted, with the financial and social benefits emphasised.
- An additional £5 million had been added to the budget for repairing potholes. This should lead to improvements in equipment, inspections, and flood prevention.

Recommended: That the report and information provided be noted.

49. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Chair introduced the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which summarised scrutiny activity and outcomes for Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the municipal year 2023-24. All Committee Chairs had provided input into the report.

Resolved: That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24 be approved and referred to Council on 18 July 2024.

50. Appointment of Members to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Working Group

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee appoint members to the working group each year. At the Chairs and Vice Chairs Programme Board in November 2023, it was agreed that the Chairs of the Scrutiny committees would assume membership of the MTFS Working Group.

Resolved: that the following members be appointed to the MTFS working group:

- Cllr Thompson
- Cllr Haden
- Cllr Pert
- Cllr Peters
- Cllr Spencer (or vice chair to be confirmed at the next meeting - representing Safeguarding and Education O&S Committee)
- Cllr Oates (To be confirmed at the next meeting)
- Cllr Kruskonjic (representing Economic infrastructure and Communities O&S Committee)
- Cllr Yates.

51. Work Programme - Planning

The Committee considered the draft work programme for 2024/25. Members were informed that a triangulation meeting would be held later that day which would also generate items for pre decision scrutiny.

Resolved: That the Work Programme be approved.

Chair