

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Virtual Meeting held on Thursday, 11th February, 2021 at 7.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor Andrew Harding in the Chair;

Councillors Jim Blagden, Dale Grounds,  
Phil Rostance, David Walters, Lee Waters and  
Caroline Wilkinson.

**Apology for Absence:** Pete Hudson.

**Officers Present:** Lynn Cain, Joanne Froggatt, Mike Joy and  
Shane Wright.

### **OS.13 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **OS.14 Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2020,  
be received and approved as a correct record.

### **OS.15 Corporate Plan Performance - April to September 2020 Update**

The Assistant Director, Corporate Services and Transformation presented the Quarter 2 Corporate Scorecard for April to September 2020 to enable Members to review the levels of performance achieved and further consider the impact of the pandemic on the Council's performance.

The Council has worked extremely hard since the pandemic began and were the only local authority in Nottinghamshire that has continued to deliver their Tier 1 and Tier 2 critical services without interruption. The Council had also delivered a variety of humanitarian services across the District and had continued to facilitate many of their waste collection campaigns.

As at the end of September 2020, 71% of Corporate Scorecard measures were achieving or exceeding target or were within 10% variance of their targets. 61% of measures were also indicating an improved position compared to the same period in the previous year or were within 5% of the previous year's performance levels.

The key highlights regarding performance were as follows:

### Health and Happiness

- work had commenced on the new leisure centre build in Kirkby
- many voluntary organisations had benefitted from community funding especially through the Council's 'Feel Good Food' project

### Homes and Housing

- service delivery to Council owned stock had been maintained throughout
- prevention of 35% more households becoming homeless
- 99.6% of properties had received their annual gas and safety checks
- the acquisition of 32 additional properties to add to the Council's housing stock

### Economic Growth and Place

- Covid Information Officers had continued to support high street businesses
- an award of £6.2 million from the Future High Streets Fund

### Cleaner and Greener

- increases in incidences of fly tipping (most probably due to closure of local recycling centres) but showing signs of reducing in late 2020/early 2021
- the success of the 'Bag It' campaign
- a reduction of 9% in reported incidences of dog fouling and littering

### Safer and Stronger

- responses delivered to 2,500 reported incidences of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and nuisance (more prevalent during lockdowns)
- increases in incidences of domestic violence and the recruitment of a Domestic Violence Support Officer

### Innovate and Improve

- the use of digital and online facilities had increased, in no small part due to the introduction of the Council's new website and an easier journey for customers
- the effective administration of the online Business Grants Scheme applications
- the proposed enhancement of e-billing to reach more local businesses (currently around 50% of businesses are billed electronically)
- Council's staff sickness absence levels shown a reduction since the same period last year.

The pandemic had unfortunately had a negative impact on some of the Council's critical functions and these were outlined as follows:

### Business Rates Collection

At the end of Quarter 2, business rates collection stood at 46.1% which was considerably lower than the target of 53.8%. It was acknowledged that it would be a long term commitment for the Council to improve and recover this current position.

### Rent Arrears

There had been a significant increase in rent arrears due to many households experiencing financial difficulties and the timelines for seeking possession being extended from 3 months to 6 months.

### Void Property Turnaround

Void property turnaround had slowed down from the target of 21 days due to difficulties accessing building/refurbishment materials during the lockdowns. This position had now started to improve.

Following the presentation, the Scrutiny Research Officer took the opportunity to remind Members of a previous review regarding the implementation and impact of Universal Credit and suggested that it would be timely to receive an update from the Council's Service Manager, Housing Management & Tenancy Services as to the current Council position regarding rent arrears and collection.

Scrutiny Panel A were also considering a new topic at its meeting on 18 March regarding tenancy support and the methods of support provided by the Council to tenants to sustain their tenancies, to avoid eviction and being made homeless.

Members then debated the following:

- the methodology of data collection and presentation in the Corporate Scorecard
- the current position with regards to recycling within the District and the inevitable lag of receiving current data with regards to bottle/clothing banks etc.
- the importance of prioritising support for residents experiencing domestic violence and the key priorities of the new Domestic Violence & Vulnerability Officer
- how the pandemic has affected the Council's markets with acknowledgement that the Idlewells Indoor Market and Hucknall Outdoor Market has been defying the odds and performing well throughout the pandemic
- recent investment in additional CCTV cameras for the District
- recent changes in legislation and the resultant cessation of investment in commercial properties
- options for the Council to bridge future funding gaps including programmed service reviews, digital delivery, a procurement review and changes to use of Council assets.

### RESOLVED

that the level of performance achieved against the Quarter 2 Corporate Scorecard for 2020/21, as presented, be received and noted.

## **OS.16 Annual Budget Update**

Committee Members were advised that the Corporate Finance Manager (and Section 151 Officer) could not be in attendance at the meeting and the agenda

item was therefore withdrawn. Members would be afforded the opportunity to comment on the content of the 2021/22 annual budget via alternative means.

## **OS.17 Scrutiny Workplan Update**

The Scrutiny Research Officer provided an update to Committee regarding progress against the 2020/21 Scrutiny Workplan as follows:

### Play Park Inclusivity

The review in relation to play park inclusivity had commenced at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting but as a result of officers having to consider differing priorities at this present time, it had been agreed that the review would be held in abeyance for the next couple of months and resurrected as soon as practicable.

Members were however informed that progress in relation to play park inclusivity was going on in the background and it had been agreed that a swing at the new park at Sorrel Drive would be relocated to ensure full access by children with disabilities and a 'sign board' was also to be erected to assist vision impaired children. The news was welcomed and showed how Member scrutiny continued to have an influence on the delivery of Council services.

### Veteran and Service Personnel

The veteran and service personnel review was now drawing to a close with a set of draft Cabinet recommendations being considered at the Scrutiny Panel A meeting on Thursday evening. The recommendations included additional training opportunities for employees and the creation of a welcome pack for ex armed forces personnel.

### Tenancy Support

The terms of reference for this new review were due to be considered at the Scrutiny Panel A meeting on Thursday and it would potentially include consideration of tenant money management, the content of introductory tenancies and legislative evictions procedures for seeking possession of properties.

### Climate Change

The climate change review was ongoing through Scrutiny Panel B and so far, had conducted one meeting and an informal working group. The range of climate change topics to potentially consider was expansive so Members were currently narrowing down options for consideration.

### Covid-19 Response and Recovery

The Covid-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel continued to meet monthly and had welcomed Richard Mitchell, the Chief Executive of the Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to its last meeting. The dialogue at the meeting was both interesting and insightful and it was intended to consider the impact of the pandemic on local charities and the voluntary sector at the next meeting.

### Waste and Recycling

This waste and recycling review topic had not been commenced to date and would most probably roll over onto the 2021/22 Scrutiny Workplan.

To conclude, Members were asked to note than due to the challenges faced during the last year, most of the review topics from the 202/21 municipal year would be rolling over into the new Scrutiny Workplan for 2021/22. However, Member were still being encouraged, with caution, to suggest new Workplan topics for possible consideration. Members acknowledged this position and two new topic suggestions were made in relation to 'supporting local businesses and buying local' and 'management of roadside memorials'.

### RESOLVED

that the update regarding the work of the Scrutiny Panels and Committee and progress against the Scrutiny Workplan, be received and noted.

The meeting closed at 8.02 pm

Chairman.