

Minutes of the Corporate Review Committee Meeting held on 13 June 2019

Present: Michael Greatorex (Chairman)

Attendance

Charlotte Atkins	Johnny McMahon
Mike Davies	Stephen Sweeney
John Francis	David Williams (Vice-Chairman)
Colin Greatorex	

Apologies: David Brookes, Ian Parry, Bernard Peters, Martyn Tittley and Susan Woodward

PART ONE

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2019

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2019 were approved as a correct record.

3. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 4, 2018/19

The Leader, Councillor Philip Atkins, The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Sutherland and the Director of Corporate Services John Tradewell attended the meeting to present the report. Kerry Dove, Strategic Insight Manager Rachel Spain, Corporate Finance Manager and Laura Beaumont, Portfolio Manager were also in attendance.

The Integrated Performance report for quarter 4 was considered by the Committee. The overall assessment of the council's performance was described as amber with particular areas of risk being highlighted as Adult Social Care and Children's and Families.

A Member of the Committee asked what was being done to address the issue of the adult social care market. There was concern that the market appeared to be fragile at the moment and the increasing cost of care was increasing levels of risk. In response, members were informed that NEXXUS were trading in domiciliary care and had started to purchase packages for Staffordshire residents. This experience would enable them to develop skills and knowledge which could prove useful if they were to venture into nursing/residential care provision. It was reiterated that it was essential to ensure that NEXXUS were providing a good quality and safe model of care at a competitive rate.

In response to a question on the number of Social Worker vacancies, the Committee was informed that the authority managed to recruit and train sufficient levels of staff but unfortunately, once trained, they then go elsewhere to work. It was noted that case loads had reduced mostly down to closing off cases which in the past would have stayed open for extensive periods of time. There was also a West Midlands regional discussion taking place on how to attract and keep key workers.

With regard to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) high needs block expenditure, it was noted that this was expected to be £5.6m overspent. The Committee was informed that this was a reduction of £1m since quarter 3 due to contracts for the Post 16 provision not being awarded. This remained a significant area of demand growth. There were proposals to manage the increase in demand through the SEND transformation programme which was looking at all areas of the system to ensure that needs are met early on and weren't allowed to escalate. Details of the plan would be considered by the relevant Select Committee.

It was noted that Keele University were working with Amey to develop and test how a 'smart highways' network could be extended to local roads. Environmental aspects and energy efficiency would be included.

Members requested that all future reports and information on obesity should be split down into geographical areas as this would be useful in identifying areas to concentrate on. Healthy Lifestyles and the work of the Public Health team was discussed. It was agreed that this should be considered by the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee at an appropriate time.

The Tourism study was discussed. Members felt that the increase in visits was encouraging and asked for the results of the study by Destination Staffordshire to be taken to a Select Committee for further scrutiny.

With regard to the level of outstanding debtors, the Committee was informed that discussions were always taking place with partners to ensure that as much debt was recovered as quickly as possible and this had resulted in levels of debt reducing. The results of a recent Audit report would also be considered and used to improve the debt recovery processes which should further reduce the figures. It was noted that there had been a slight improvement in the debt recovered from Health Partners but there had been an increase in debt from other sources. A Member asked if this was from Individuals or companies and which was more achievable to collect. In response, it was explained that it depended on the projects involved and the stages of payments.

The number of older people receiving care packages from the Council had reduced and a member asked if this was due to more people being cared for in Nursing homes and not their own home, or had the threshold levels been increased as this seemed to be against national trends. This information would be supplied to the Committee.

A question was asked on the 'savings tracker' graph in the report and why the quarter 3 and quarter 4 targets were below the expected target of £11.3m. In response it was explained that these were the figures expected to achieve, however, it was hoped that the outturn would be closer to the target when everything was taken into account.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) The report be noted;
- b) Future performance reports containing information on obesity be split into geographical areas.
- c) Healthy Lifestyles and the work of the Public Health team be considered by the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee at an appropriate time.
- d) Results of the commissioned Tourism study by Destination Staffordshire be taken to a Select Committee for further scrutiny.
- e) Information on the reason for the reduction in number of older people receiving packages from the Council be supplied to the Committee.
- f) Details of the SEND transformation Plan be considered by the relevant Select Committee.

4. Select Committee Work Programmes

The Scrutiny and Support Manager explained that it had previously been agreed that Select Committee work programmes would be considered on a quarterly basis by this Committee to enable debate on the work areas and to stop duplication and highlight any gaps in scrutiny.

Each of the Select Committee Chairmen present, briefly ran through the main items that their Committee were considering over the next few months.

A Member raised the question of Carers Hubs and which committee this fell under. The Scrutiny and Support Manager agreed to discuss this with the relevant Chairman and report back to a future Committee.

RESOLVED:

- a) The work programmes of the Select Committees be noted;
- b) The Scrutiny and Support Manager discuss with the relevant Chairman where Carer Hubs best fits under the Select Committee remit.

5. Work Programme

The Scrutiny and Support introduced the Committees draft Work Programme.

The membership of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Working Group was discussed. The following members were appointed:

- Susan Woodward
- Charlotte Atkins
- Colin Greatorex
- Johnny McMahon
- John Francis
- Michael Greatorex
- Members not present at the meeting be asked if they wish to take part.

The Committee were informed that the Scrutiny outcomes report was normally considered every six months and Performance reports every quarter.

RESOLVED: That the draft work programme be noted.

6. Review of the Property Strategy

The Leader, Councillor Philip Atkins, the Director of Corporate Services, John Tradewell and The Head of Commercial and Property, Ian Turner attended the meeting to present the report.

The Committee considered the draft Property Strategy 2019-2024. The Strategy was aimed at providing a high level framework to base decisions and actions and was closely aligned to the MTFS. The Strategy was to be considered by Cabinet later this year, the Committee's comments would be considered prior to this.

The property interests of the Council were large and included Schools, Regeneration projects, Farms and partnership working with other organisations such as the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) and Stoke on Trent City Council.

A Member asked if the strategy covered green issues and the residential impact on the environment and how the Council manages the estate. In response, the Leader informed the Committee that targets had been set to reduce CO2 levels and more work was needed particularly on food production, the location of housing sites and the planting of trees to ensure that productive land was not wasted.

It was felt that the strategy needed to be expanded to reflect the importance of the environmental agenda. The Strategy also included the guidance from CIPFA and ICS which set targets on building efficiencies.

RESOLVED: That the Committees comments be noted and fed into the development of the strategy.

7. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of Local Government Act 1972.

(Exemption Paragraph 3)

8. Review of the Property Sub-Committee Decisions from December 2017 to December 2019

(Exemption paragraph 3)

Chairman