

**Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 9  
May 2023**

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chair)

**Attendance**

Tina Clements	Bernard Peters
Mike Davies	Bob Spencer
John Francis	Samantha Thompson (Vice-Chair (Overview))
Gill Heath (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))	Mike Worthington
Kath Perry, MBE	Nigel Yates
Jeremy Pert	

**Also in attendance:** Cabinet Members: Councillors Mark Sutton, and Alan White.

**Officers:** John Tradewell, Catharine Mann, Nisha Gupta and Wendy Thompson

**Apologies:** Councillor Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

**PART ONE**

**64. Declarations of Interest**

None declared at the meeting.

**65. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2023**

**Resolved:** – That, subject to Cllr Spencer’s name being added to the list of members in attendance, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**66. Corporate Delivery Plan 2023/24**

The Leader of the Council introduced the Councils Corporate Delivery Plan for 2023/24 which supported the Strategic Plan for 2022-26. The Delivery Plan set out the key priorities and deliverables for the Council; included clear measures of success and would be monitored by the Committee alongside the Integrated performance report and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Individual objectives could be developed through Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committees if requested.

The main points raised by members were:

- The objectives were supported, and the Key performance measures, target dates and lead officer information welcomed.
- Highway improvements were subject to a transformation plan which included different ways of working. This would be considered at Prosperous O&S Committee.
- It was felt that realistic targets needed to be set, so as not to mislead the public.
- The plan was aspirational and concentrated on things that were within the power of the authority.
- The Climate Change Community Fund would still be available to members during 2023/24. More information would be sent to the committee.
- Renewables with strategic partners would be investigated.
- Tenancy farms; Carbon sequestration; solar panels and other innovation areas of work would be considered if appropriate.
- Permits for recycling centres would be looked at by the Prosperous O&S Committee.
- The use of local contractors, particularly through the Amey partnership would be investigated and reported back to members.
- An objective specifically on recruitment and retention of staff was welcomed. An example of developing potential staff was provided through a Social Work undergraduate course which enabled students to study at the County Council.
- Place marketing and levelling up money should be co-ordinated with the Districts/and Boroughs and should be referenced in the delivery plan.
- The numbers of volunteer hours referred under the 'tackle climate change, enhance our environment and make Staffordshire more sustainable' objective, didn't give a time period or indicate if this was an increase from the previous year.
- It was felt that the dates mentioned on the 'fix more roads and improve transport and digital connections' Highways performance objectives and the new ways of working didn't seem to match the allocation of funds to Amey.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the progress made in developing the draft Corporate Plan 2023/24 be noted.
- b) That the comments of the Committee as listed above be considered prior to the Plan being approved by Cabinet.
- c) That responses to the questions raised by members be circulate after the meeting.

**67. Update on Progress Made Within Children and Families Directorate Following Cabinet Investment**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report which had been requested by the Committee when they were considering the

Integrated Performance report. The Cabinet member explained that an extensive analysis of the workings of the Directorate had been carried out in an attempt to understand the overspend in the areas of Children in Care and the challenges within the SEND service. An extra £5.7m had been agreed for the directorate with a view to improve staffing and workloads which would lead to improvements in recruitment and retention. The agreed increase in funding had been through the MTFS Plans for 2023/24.

During the Committees questions and debate, the following points were established:

- Recruitment to posts was underway with many posts having been filled already.
- Outcomes would be closely monitored and performance against the increased budget would be monitored through the Committees quarterly performance reports.
- Another piece of work was underway into the increasing number of SEND children requiring EHC plans.
- Contact between local councillors and Childrens Centres seemed to have reduced since Covid. The attendance/invites to Family Improvement Boards would be checked.
- Face to face visits was a statutory requirement and was still taking place. Virtual follow up meetings were used, if appropriate.
- More detail of the use of the £5.7m was requested alongside the improvements made. It was explained that this would be available in the Quarter 3 performance report.

**Resolved:** That the report and update be noted.

#### **68. Volunteering for Staffordshire County Council**

The Cabinet member for Children and Families presented the report in the absence of the Cabinet member for Communities and Culture.

The report outlined the County Councils new approach to volunteering and set out the nine new volunteering principles. The principles were designed to ensure that all Council volunteers have a positive and consistent experience. The report and any feedback from this Committee would be considered by Cabinet in June 2023.

The Committee expressed the following views and comments:

- The principles and guidance for county council staff responsible for supporting or managing volunteers was welcomed.
- Key organisations worked with were Support Staffordshire and Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS).
- The need for guidance on the webpage for quick ad hoc groups to address issues such as one off clean ups, would be useful to support local initiatives.

- It was felt that barriers to volunteering were normally: Insurance; Risk assessments and; DBS checks. Assurance was given that these would be addressed and clear guidance provided on line.
- Following a question on whether community groups were audited, officers agreed to check with Support Staffordshire and respond directly to members.
- Members asked that the Communications plan include guidance for communities where English was not their first language.
- Internal communications would be looked at so that all volunteers were directed to an appropriate group so that no volunteer was missed.
- The number of volunteers had dropped post COVID and the Library service was cited as an example.
- Exit interview with retiring employees should be encouraged that they are aware of volunteering opportunities. This could include other public bodies and the private sector.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That the comments and suggestions from the Committee as listed above be referred to Council for consideration along with the Volunteering strategy.

**69. Work Programme**

The next meeting was scheduled for 20 June 2023 where the 2023/24 municipal year work programme would be discussed in detail.

**Resolved:** That the work programme be noted.

**Chairman**