

Meeting Communities and Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date 20 January 2016

Present Councillors Gunnell (Chair), Cullwick (Substitute), Richardson (Vice-Chair), Funnell, Kramm, K Myers and Orrell

Apologies Councillor Mason

36. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interests they may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

37. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 17th November 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Add wording to the resolution at minute item 29 to highlight the issues raised regarding inequality across the city of Green Bin collections and ask that the Executive Member continues to monitor this.

38. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

39. Attendance of the Executive Member for Environment

The Executive Member for Environment and the Leader of the Council attended the meeting to provide a verbal update on the recent floods.

It was confirmed that the Leader was responsible for the emergency planning aspects of the floods and the Executive Member for Environment was responsible for the environmental issues.

The Chair questioned the Executive Member and Leader as to why a report had not been brought to the meeting, despite her request, as flooding fell under the remit of this scrutiny committee. The Leader confirmed that due to time restraints it would not have been possible for the Executive or Officers to provide a written report so soon after the event and that a public inquiry was now in the process of being set up. Group Leaders had not considered a Council scrutiny committee to be the most appropriate forum to look at an incident of this magnitude, although they were supportive of the committee receiving any information it required for future meetings.

It was reported that at present, steps were being taken to select and appoint a Chair of the public inquiry and that a report would be going to the Executive setting out its terms of reference. Whilst the Executive Member and Leader appreciated the support of the scrutiny committee, it was felt that an independent inquiry was the most suitable course of action and the best way of responding to public concerns as well as ensuring participation from agencies such as the Police, British Telecom and the Environment Agency.

The Executive Member and Leader were asked if they had any suggestions as to how the committee could support the work of the public enquiry. It was suggested that initially, the committee should perhaps take a step back to enable the inquiry to get underway and then begin to look at specific areas which the inquiry may not choose to look at in great detail.

Possible areas of focus for the committee could be:

- The Council's use of volunteers
- Flood Wardens
- How the Council identified vulnerable people
- Sandbagging

- Long term flow of water

Members also pointed out that a lot of questions relating to specific geographical areas of the City were yet to be answered and that meetings would be taking place within Wards in the next few weeks to discuss. The Executive Member urged members to contact him with any specific localised concerns whilst the floods were still fresh in peoples minds to ensure nothing is missed.

The Executive Member and Leader were thanked for their attendance at the meeting.

Resolved: That Members noted the verbal updates provided.

Reason: To ensure Members are informed of the priorities and challenges of the Executive Member and Leader following the recent floods.

40. 2015/16 Second Quarter Finance and Performance Monitoring Report

Members gave consideration to a report that provided details of the 2015/16 Monitor 2 Finance and Performance for services within City and Environmental Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods.

Members noted that the position was similar to at Quarter 1 with a significant overspend on waste.

Discussion took place on the Housing Revenue business plan and officers confirmed they were still awaiting confirmation of the property value thresholds for York from the Department of Communities and Local Government before the business plan could be finalised.

Resolved: That the financial information contained in the report be noted.

Reason: To update the scrutiny committee on the latest finance position.

41. Safer York Partnership Bi-Annual Performance Report

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the work of the Safer York Partnership.

Members' attention was drawn to the year end data which showed that although overall crime levels were predicted to be lower than they were in 2014/15, some crimes had been increasing in York in 2015 in line with national trends. In relation to the increase in violent crime, this could be explained by the changes to the types of crime which now fall within the Home Office 'violent crime' category.

Members raised concerns about river safety and noted that a dedicated River Safety sub group had been set up, although the risk hadn't diminished with further river incidents occurring in recent months. Members requested a report to a future meeting on River Safety to explore the possibility of a scrutiny review on the subject.

Members queried paragraph 5.9 of the report which stated that hate crime data was currently unavailable. Officers confirmed that this meant that the data had not been provided at the time the report was being compiled rather than it wasn't available at all. A number of agencies were currently working on a hate crime action plan. Members requested an update on this action plan to a future meeting.

Members noted that a renewal of the Community Safety Action Plan was being undertaken and that a further update on this would be provided to members in the new municipal year.

- Resolved:
- (i) That the report be noted.
 - (ii) That a more detailed reports on river safety and the hate crime action plan from the Safer York Partnership be presented to a future meeting.

- Reason:
- (i) To provide the committee with an overview of the data contained within the Safer York Partner Bi-Annual Performance Report.
 - (ii) To update the committee on work being undertaken to tackle river safety and hate crime.

42. Safer York Partnership Report on Domestic Violence

Members considered a report which provided an update on Domestic Abuse as requested by members at a previous meeting.

In response to questions from members, officers confirmed the following:

- In relation to the use of the words 'standard risk victim' in paragraph 3.1 of the report, it was confirmed that a number of criteria were used to assess victims circumstances and work was ongoing to prevent victims graded as standard risk from increasing to a higher risk level.
- In the case of 'Troubled Families' referred to at paragraph 5.2, it was confirmed that although a number of families are identified by the Police, some are referred by Children's Services to the troubled families programme and a lot of multi agency work is undertaken to ensure services are aligned.

Members commented that the report was helpful and informative and that they would like to keep the domestic violence update reports on the public agendas for this meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To provide an update on the work being carried out to tackle domestic Violence.

43. Consultation report on Review of Neighbourhood Working Arrangements

Members considered a report which sought input into a review of the Council's neighbourhood working arrangements.

Members made the following comments:

- A member felt that the words 'Ward Committee' made it difficult for some residents to understand what is involved in the meetings. It was suggested that to encourage better engagement, a better explanation about the purpose and format of the meetings could be provided or they could be given a different title.
- Any support work carried out more locally was welcomed as each Ward has unique issues
- Members raised concerns about the work loads of the community officers. The Head of Communities advised that if members found their ward officer unavailable then any queries could be referred to another officer on the team.
- It was felt that some wards did not have sufficient information and knowledge in order to make decisions about their ward budgets.

Resolved: That Members commented on the neighbourhood working arrangements as outlined above.

Reason: To provide feedback for the Executive Member and inform plans for 2016/17.

44. Report on York Tenancy Strategy and City of York Council Allocations Policy

It was reported that officers had requested for this item to be deferred to the next meeting. This was due to the report authors being directly involved in the recent emergency response to the floods.

Resolved: That Members noted the reason for deferral and agreed to the report being added to the agenda for the meeting on 15th March.

Reason: To keep members informed of changes to the committee's work plan.

45. Workplan 2015-16

Consideration was given to the committees work plan for 2015/16.

It was noted that the following items would be added to the agenda for the March 2015 meeting:

- The deferred Tenancy Strategy report
- Update on the Floods Public Enquiry
- Goose Management Scrutiny review final report
- Update on the Hate Crime Action Plan.

A report on the review of the community safety action plan would be brought to a meeting in the next municipal year.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

Reason: To ensure the committee has a planned programme of work in place.

Councillor Gunnell, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.05 pm].