
MEETING	CORPORATE AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
DATE	12 NOVEMBER 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS WISEMAN (CHAIR), BARNES, HORTON, MCILVEEN, POTTER, STEWART, WARTERS AND REID (SUB FOR CLLR RUNCIMAN)
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLOR GILLIES
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS KING AND RUNCIMAN

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No declarations were made.

25. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 10 September 2012 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

26. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

27. PRESENTATION ON WELFARE REFORMS UPDATE

Members received a joint presentation from the Council's Strategic Welfare Benefits and Partnership Manager and the Assistant Director of Customer & Business Support Services (Customers & Employees), on work being undertaken in respect of the current Welfare Reforms (the full presentation has been attached as an annex to the online agenda for this meeting). An overview of the proposals and implementation dates were reported together with further information on the following issues:

- Abolition of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses. Funding transferred to Local Authorities for establishment of alternative Local Welfare Assistance. A cap would be imposed to limit the benefits to no more than average household earnings
- Employment and Support Allowance changes
- Improvements to Work Capability Assessment
- Disability Living Allowance to be replaced by new Personal Independence Payment for eligible working age people with a timetable for introduction between April 2013 and March 2016
- Overview of Universal Credit – replacement of a range of working age benefits with a single payment designed to ensure that ‘work will always pay’, including a timetable for gradual introduction between 2012 and 2017
- Challenges in relation to Universal Credit
- Timetable for specific Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance related changes
- From April 2013 Local Council Tax Support would replace Council Tax Benefit
- Details of steps already taken by the authority to assist customers which included the appointment of 2 additional Community Debt Worker posts, formation of a Welfare Reform Task Group, a Tang Hall ‘Advice Hub’ pilot and a down sizing incentive scheme.
- Further information on the impacts to the current service.

Members went on to question the following aspects of the presentation and verbal update:

- Proposed customer access being ‘digital by default’. Concern at reduction in face to face contact with customers who had no access to online facilities.
- Queries regarding the loss of income and budget provision for these changes. Officers confirmed that they were factoring into the budget the anticipated impact on collections.
- Need for signposting for residents on the CYC website to enable them to gain assistance with any issues arising from these changes.
- Signposting information also required for members to enable them to advise their residents, with details for possible inclusion in a future Members’ Bulletin, and a possible media presentation.¹

Following further discussion Members thanked Officers for their presentation and update on this complex subject.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and verbal update be received and noted.

REASON: To update Members on the proposed reforms to the social security system and the work already undertaken and that proposed for implementation.

Action Required

1. Prepare and submit item for Members' Bulletin. JM

28. UPDATE REPORT - CITY CENTRE ACCESS AD HOC SCRUTINY REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report which updated the Committee on the City Centre Access Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review, submitted in June 2011. The aim of which had been to minimise vehicular movement in the city centre footstreets and immediate area to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

Councillor Gillies, as Chair of the Committee and instigator of the scrutiny topic, was in attendance and outlined the work of the Committee to date. In particular he highlighted the significant delays encountered and missed opportunities. He referred to the cross party support for the review and thanked both Committee Members and the Scrutiny Officer for their work. Concern was expressed at the time spent on this review, over 13 months, during which nothing had been achieved owing to a lack of real engagement and minimal time input from senior officers involved. Little or no information sharing had taken place with the ongoing Footstreets Review taking precedence and no weight being given to the Scrutiny Committees work.

Concern was also raised that one of the key objectives of the review, appropriate disabled access and parking provision, had not been addressed. It was pointed out that there was no meaningful enforcement of traffic restrictions, in the city centre, with contraventions largely being unenforced. Cllr Gillies expressed extreme disappointment that a fundamental part of the democratic process appeared to have been disregarded and time wasted on this review. He therefore recommended the disbanding of the Committee for this review as the Cabinet Member was undertaking a full footstreets review as part of a wider strategic review.

Officers detailed the work of the footstreets review pointing out that one of the key elements had been to tackle a number of conflicting interests which included the abuse of regulations and accommodation of those with mobility needs. It was acknowledged that it had taken some time to obtain agreement on the scrutiny questionnaire owing to a particularly busy period for the department. It was pointed out the Footstreets Review report was however broadly in line with the Scrutiny Committee's aims and objectives. It was confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability had been notified of all the relevant Scrutiny meetings and work undertaken.

Members expressed concern at the money and time spent on undertaking this review with no apparent outcome. Reference was made to the need to address the issue in respect of moving and non-moving traffic offences. In answer to Members questions Officers confirmed that it had not been possible to forward any recommendations to the Cabinet Member as any recommendations required evidencing. Other scrutiny committee members also expressed their frustrations at being sidelined, lack of scrutiny support by officers in general and a lack of recognition for the work undertaken to date.

Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee members confirmed their understanding of the frustrations encountered during the scrutiny review. They recommended forwarding this information to the Chief Executive and Chief Officers to raise their awareness of the problems being encountered to gain improvements in the scrutiny process generally. Rather than abandon the valuable scrutiny work already undertaken it was suggested that comments should be forwarded to the Cabinet Member to take into account when considering the options for the City Centre Footstreets review at his Decision Session on 19 November 2012.

Cllr Gillies undertook to collate the various issues raised by Scrutiny Committee members undertaking the review for consideration by the Cabinet Member prior to him taking a decision on the City Centre Footstreets report.

Following further lengthy discussion consideration was then given to the following options:

- Option 1 Agree that there is no further role for this Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee in relation to this review.

Option 2 Continue the work of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee giving clear objectives in order that it can be completed.

- RESOLVED: i) That, as there is no further role for the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee in relation to the City Centre Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Sustainability be provided with the findings of the Committee prior to his Decision Session on 19 November 2012. ¹
- ii) That the CSMC Chair be requested to pass on the Committee's concerns to the Chief Executive regarding levels of commitment and corporate support for scrutiny in general at a senior level within the organisation, highlighting the issues raised by the City Centre review. ²
- iii) *That one further meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee be convened in order to collate a full summary of the Committee's findings for submission to the Cabinet Member prior to his final decisions in respect of the City Centre Footstreets Review.*

REASON: In order to progress and complete the City Centre Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee review.

[As amended at the CSMC meeting on 21 January 2013]

Action Required

1. Forward findings of the Committee to Cabinet Member, prior to 19 November meeting. TW
2. In conjunction with Chair submit Committees concerns to Chief Executive. DS

29. IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Scrutiny Officer updated Members on progress to date with the scoping of the scrutiny review on improving customer engagement. The Task Group had made the decision to carry out a comparison between two wards with differing levels of deprivation to examine the reasons for a lack of engagement focussing their review on the Heworth and Rural West wards.

Response rates to the Big York Survey in these wards had been low, leading members to agree to the grouping of similar wards, thereby increasing response rates in order to gain a wider view. In addition, customer service enquiries and information received from the neighbourhood teams were also being gathered.

Members confirmed that a broad remit had now been set for the review however there was still a need to identify tangible outcomes. This would require measures to show the success or failure of any subsequent outcomes.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be received and noted.

REASON: To update the Committee on the work of this Task Group.

30. WORK PLAN 2012-13

Consideration was given to the Committee's work plan for the remainder of the 2012/13 municipal year.

It was noted that a more detailed briefing had been requested on 'Operation Outreach' and that this would be included in the update on the Workforce Strategy scheduled for the Committee's January meeting.

The Chair made reference to the scrutiny budget which had not been well utilised during the year and asked members to bear this in mind in relation to their reviews.

Following further discussion it was

RESOLVED: That the work plan and update be received and noted.

REASON: To assist in the formulation of the Committee's work plan for the remainder of the municipal year.

Councillor S Wiseman, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.40 pm].