

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 21st November, 2017.

Present: Cllr David Harrington(Chairman), Cllr Gillian Corr(Interim Vice Chair), Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Lisa Grainge, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Norma Stephenson O.B.E(vice Cllr Tracey Stott), Cllr Laura Tunney, Cllr Matthew Vickers, Cllr David Wilburn.

Officers: Reuben Kench (CE&L), Ian Coxon (F&BS), Peter Mennear, Gary Woods, Kirsty Wannop (DCE)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Chris Clough,Cllr Tony Hampton,Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Tracey Stott.

1 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllr David Wilburn declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 – Council Plan Annual Report 2016-17 Update as he worked for a previous company that carried out the independent market research at SIRF.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th October 2017 - For Approval and Signature

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2017.

AGREED that the minutes be approved and signed as a correct record.

4 Council Plan Annual Report 2016-17 Update

Members considered a report that provided, as requested, the Committee with some additional contextual information behind five specific facts and figures included in the Council Plan infographic.

The information provided included the following:-

- SIRF: estimated number of attendees, additional spend and satisfaction for 2015, 2016 and 2017.
- Preston Hall: visitor numbers for 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17.
- Libraries: visitor numbers and number of active borrowers for 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17.
- Free School Meals: numbers eligible and those taken up as at January 2015, January 2016 and January 2017 (snapshot taken on January 'census day').
- Planning Applications: major, minor, other and total applications for 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17.

A new Till system was being developed to improve the capture of visitor numbers at Preston Park.

Members were given opportunity to make comments/ask questions that could be summarised as follows:-

- Libraries: The number of active borrowers dropped - why? It was explained that the number of borrowers had declined due to people using the available online services (e.g. free internet), and there had been some closures and reduced hours which would have impacted on the numbers. It was also noted that although active borrowers had decreased, the services and knowledge available at libraries from its staff was invaluable. It was recognised that in future there needed to be better ways of capturing use of library digital services, for example.
- It was noticed that additional work had been commissioned to capture the nature of library visits, and this would be used to influence future services. It was explained that all the information received during the previous consultation collected was presented to Cabinet at the time of the Review decision making. This additional commissioned work would provide more detailed information on the types of people using different sites, the services they use on each occasion, and the patterns of use by time of the day and day of the week. Members commented that people use libraries for a wide variety of reasons, including for their own mental health and wellbeing needs.
- Did the number of library visits include those in Prison settings and those who may be visiting the customer services where there was a library in the same building? It was thought that it did include libraries in prison settings but Officers would confirm after the meeting. The numbers would also capture some of those visits that were to any of the co-located customer services facilities.
- Anecdotally, it was suggested by a Member present that SIRF was not as good as previous years, although this contradicted the satisfaction levels from the market research. In terms of estimated visitor numbers it was noted that this was provided by a combination of assessments by Police and event production staff, cross-referenced with data from the footfall counters, and the overall trend data was important, rather than specific figures.
- It was questioned how the independent research was collected for SIRF and how reliable this was. It was explained that reports regarding the statistics were available on request, and had been produced via an established independent company, which produced statistically and methodologically robust reports, showing the information that was collected. Any evidence that surveys were not being completed in a fair manner needed to be reported.
- Members noted that SIRF allowed those from all socioeconomic backgrounds to experience arts and culture free of charge.

AGREED that:

1. The information be noted.
2. The further clarification of information be provided.

5 Scrutiny Review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Preparation for Adulthood

The Committee considered the final report from the Children and Young People Select Committee's Scrutiny Review of Special Education Needs and Disabilities – Preparation for Adulthood. It had already been considered and agreed by Cabinet.

AGREED that the final report be noted.

6 Scrutiny Review of Asylum Seeker Services

Members considered the final report from the Place Select Committee's Scrutiny Review of Asylum Seekers. The review had been very interesting and challenging. The Committee did note that during the review it was reported that asylum seekers felt supported in the Borough. It had already been considered and agreed by Cabinet.

AGREED that the report be noted.

7 Scrutiny Review of Sickness Absence

Consideration was given to the final report from People Select Committee's Scrutiny Review of Sickness Absence, which had been agreed by the Select Committee yesterday. The review had helped to shape a new attendance management policy.

The Committee felt that it would be good to share the report regionally as good practice.

AGREED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Officers investigate the most appropriate avenue for sharing the report regionally.

8 2017-18 Scrutiny Work Programme Update

Members were provided with an update on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2017/18, and considered how a review of Community Participation Budgets (CPB) could be accommodated within the current year's work programme. It was agreed that a 'reporting-in' review, led by the Director of Economic Growth and Development, should report to the December 2017 meeting of the People Select Committee on the operation of CPBs and future options for Member challenge and discussion.

AGREED that Community Participation Budgets be completed as a 'reporting-in' review to People Select Committee.

9 Statutory Forward Plan

The Statutory Forward Plan was noted.

10 Select Committee Chairs' Updates

Members considered the Select Committee updates.

AGREED that the information be noted.

11 Chair's Update and Executive Scrutiny Work Programme

The Committee considered its work programme. It was agreed that the December 2017 meeting would be cancelled.

Members thanked Scrutiny Officers for their work and the reports produced. It was highlighted that due to the ambitious work programme that had been set for 2017/18, there were still reviews that were waiting to be completed. Councillors needed to be mindful of this when suggesting review topics for 2018/19.

Members suggested that, due to the amount of new Councillors since the last scrutiny training, it was timely to consider running some further sessions.

AGREED that:

1. The work programme be noted.
2. The December 2017 meeting be cancelled.
3. Scrutiny training be organised.

12 Scrutiny Developments

It was explained that, where it was suggested for the final report for Sickness Absence to be shared regionally, this may be possible through the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). The Knowledge Hub may also be suitable for this type of information.