

## Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 28 September 2017 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30 pm  
Concluded 7.40 pm

### Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
BM Smith Riaz	Warburton Watson Bacon Duffy Shaheen

Observers: Councillors Jabar and Imran Khan

Apologies: Councillor Jeanette Sunderland

### Councillor Duffy in the Chair

#### 14. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

#### 15. MINUTES

**Resolved –**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2017 be signed as a correct record.**

#### 16. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

## 17. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the Committee.

## 18. UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF THE PREVENT STRATEGY IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT

The Strategic Director Place submitted a report (**Document “G”**) which outlined the requirements of the statutory Prevent Duty and progress towards the Prevent Action Plan for the district.

The Prevent Coordinator gave an overview of the Prevent Strategy, stating that its principle aim was about protecting vulnerable individuals from extremism in all its different forms. He alluded to the components of the Prevent Strategy around the key elements of safeguarding and channelling individuals from extremism, adding that the Programme was transparent and open to scrutiny, including scrutiny from this Committee, and although resources were limited, reliance on partnership working was a crucial element of the Strategy and its effectiveness.

The Prevent lead for Bradford College was also present at the meeting and gave a brief overview of the work being undertaken at Bradford College around the Prevent agenda. She alluded to how Prevent was incorporated within the Colleges UNITED values framework, which was about ensuring core values and respect for individuals were central to the life of every student at the College. The College also actively challenged stereotypes and discussed with students issues surrounding hate crimes, personal experiences and violent extremism.

A project around safeguarding which had been developed to actively work with mothers was also showcased, and how it had empowered mothers to talk about radicalisation, which in turn enabled them to talk about the issue at home and challenge views. Mothers who had been involved with the project were present at the meeting and they stated that the project had given them a platform to have conversations with their children around what was a very sensitive issue, and through this process empower their children to be happy and healthy.

The Prevent Coordinator stressed that West Yorkshire Police were also a crucial element in the Prevent agenda, particularly in their role as an arbitrator and building faith across a number of agencies and organisations.

During the discussion a Member ascertained how stereotypes were challenged and how much people were aware of the issue of radicalisation. In response it was stated that radicalisation did not just affect Muslim communities, and that attitudes had to be challenged across the piece.



In response to a question regarding resources, it was stated that more resources were always welcomed and to this end conversations were being had with the Home Office to dedicate more resources, given the Bradford demographics with a particular focus on having additional resources to deal with mental health issues, in the context of referrals that were made via the Prevent Programme.

In response to a question on what the advice was on those travelling to the border areas of Turkey, it was stressed that up to date travel advice was available via the Government Foreign Travel Advice website.

The work being undertaken in Mosques and Madressahs which were supplementary schools on Safeguarding procedures and understanding and challenging extremism were also alluded to, and how it was being rolled out across the district, with early indications suggesting a good level of engagement and response from the Mosque and Madressah Committees and representatives.

A Member acknowledged the good work done via the Prevent agenda and despite the early setbacks the work was bearing fruit, however the report did not really give a flavour of outcomes and tangible progress within a Bradford context which would have been useful and given some direction of travel. In response the Prevent Coordinator explained that given the relatively small number of referrals made it was always difficult to give an indication around outcomes and the direction of travel, however some further analysis could be provided at a future meeting once agreement is sought from the Home Office around what types of information can be shared.

In response to a question around the history of Prevent, it was stressed that Prevent had had a chequered history and that it was important to differentiate between the different strands of Prevent and the key element remained around safeguarding communities.

In response to a question to the Neighbourhoods and Community Safety Portfolio Holder around progress and outcomes, the Portfolio Holder stressed that Prevent was a multi faceted programme approach and difficult to analyse in a tangible manner.

The Assistant Director suggested that it would be a useful exercise to brief individual political groups around Prevent, so that they could gauge the usefulness of the Programme and understand its context.

The Prevent Coordinator added that community support of the programme was crucial to the future success of Prevent and tackling the negative connotations around the Programme was an important component.



The Assistant Director also stated that different community engagement work was going on to tackle radicalisation at different levels and that there was an onus on everyone to talk about Prevent, and the positive impact it had in safeguarding individuals from radicalisation, as well as tackling the negative headlines around Prevent.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That this Committee requests that a further progress report be presented in 6 months.**
- (2) That this Committee seeks clarification on the reporting of progress against Bradford’s Prevent Action Plans.**
- (3) That this Committee requests that all future Prevent reports contain a breakdown of grants that are made available for Bradford’s Prevent Programme.**
- (4) That this Committee requests that training in relation to the Prevent Programme be presented to all the political groups.**

***ACTION: Strategic Director Place***

**19. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REVIEW FINDINGS AND IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN 2017**

Bradford Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake an independent Corporate Peer Challenge review, which took place in March 2017.

The Assistant Director Office of the Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “H”**) which detailed the areas the review looked at, its findings and the Council’s response in the form of an Improvement Action Plan.

The Assistant Director gave an overview of the Peer review and its findings which were detailed in the report, drawing attention to the positive messages and the Council’s direction of travel. Particular emphasis was given to the Council’s ‘People Can approach’ and how services were being structured around this initiative.

During the discussion, a Member questioned the balance of the Peer Review team, and it was stated that the Peer Review Team always consisted of an elected member, normally a Leader or Deputy Leader of a Council.



In relation to the comments made by the review team pertaining to Scrutiny, a Member commented that a distinction had to be made in terms of policy making and policy shaping, as there was scope for Scrutiny to be more involved in policy development.

On a related issue, a Member stated the role of Scrutiny was crucial in challenging policy and the decision making by the Executive.

In response to the finding by the review team that the transformation fund was insufficient, the Deputy Leader acknowledged that the amount allocated would be kept under review.

The Chair suggested that in the context of the review teams' comments on the 'People Can Approach', this Committee should receive a report back on its progress to date.

#### **Resolved –**

- (1) That this Committee requests that a report in relation to the progress being made against the Improvement Plan be presented in 12 months.**
- (2) That a further report be presented in 6 months time which focuses on engaging with residents through the "People Can" approach.**

***ACTION: Assistant Director Office of the Chief Executive***

## **20. BUSINESS RATES**

The Strategic Director Corporate Services submitted a report (**Document "I"**) which set out the Council's performance in, and the challenges for, the collection of Business Rates. The report also examined the impact on the Council and businesses of the revaluation of rateable values; and considered the future of Business Rates retention.

The Assistant Director Revenue, Benefits and Payroll explained that Local Government finance was evolving quickly and Business Rates had to be seen in that context. Following an overview of the report, he reported that discussions were being had around putting in a pilot bid to pool Business Rates between the West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire authorities, however these discussions were at a very early stage and therefore the details were scarce. He also alluded to the increasing number of Business Rates appeals being lodged, which was a national issue.



During the discussion, a Member raised a question about overall collection rates in terms of the debt element, to which the Assistant Director responded that 98.5% to 99% of the debt was collected, however this was resulting in approximately £1.5m in loss revenue. He also referred to a number of businesses using legal loopholes to avoid payment of business rates, and again this was an issue affecting authorities across the country.

The Assistant Director stressed that his officers were working tirelessly to ensure businesses paid on time, and this area of work was increasingly challenging.

**Resolved –**

**That a further Business Rates report be presented at the end of the Financial Year.**

***ACTION: Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits and Payroll***

**21. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18**

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “J”**) which set out the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2017/18.

**Resolved –**

**That an item on Housing Benefit Appeals backlog be added to the Committee’s Work Programme and that future agendas have a more thematic approach.**

***ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead***

Chair

**Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

