

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 21 March 2019 in Committee Room 3 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 6.00 pm
Concluded 8.55 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE
Duffy Bacon Green Kamran Hussain Watson	Cooke M Smith

Observers: Councillor Dunbar (Minute 67)

Apologies: Councillor Jeanette Sunderland

Councillor Azam in the Chair

63. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Councillors Bacon and Green disclosed an interest in the item relating to Gambling (Minute 67); Councillor Bacon's daughter was employed in the sector and Councillor Green occasionally bet on horses.

ACTION: City Solicitor

64. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

65. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

66. BREXIT PREPAREDNESS - VERBAL UPDATE

Members received a verbal update on the Council's preparedness for Brexit. This followed on from the recommendation made by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny on Thursday 14 February 2019.

The Head of Policy and Performance gave a brief summary on Brexit preparedness and the work the Council was undertaking with its partners to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms were in place. The Council was working closely with regional and national partners to ensure that the right processes and clear communications were also in place. Government funding had been made available to assist with some of the preparatory work around Brexit. In addition the following activities around Brexit preparedness were also alluded to:

- There was on going liaison with businesses and sharing of best practice around Brexit to ensure clear signposting.
- Work was on going to prepare a range of advice and information that could be shared with residents and businesses.
- In addition outreach work will be done to assist vulnerable individuals and ensure advice around immigration issues was pertinent.
- Staffing implications for those working in the Adult Social Care sector and the risks involved was also being looked at.

In response to a question on the proposed Keighley event it was mentioned that ward members would be advised accordingly about the event, and in relation to a question on the numbers of Looked After Children, it was stated that this figure was now lower than previously anticipated, as a number of larger families had moved out of the district.

Members thanked officers for the update and it was:

Resolved –

That a further verbal update on Brexit preparedness be provided at the next meeting of the Committee which includes details on hate crime.

ACTION: Head of Policy and Performance

67. GAMBLING IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT

The Strategic Director Place submitted a report (**Document "A"**) which asked Members to consider the prevalence of problem gambling and gambling related harm within the district and development of the Council's approach to problem gambling.

The Licensing and Local Land Charges Manager gave a brief overview of the current gambling regulations, the provision of gambling premises in the district and an understanding of the issue of problem gambling, drawing attention to the Gambling Commissions' Participation Survey which showed that the rate of problem gambling across the country was 0.7%. The Leeds Beckett University study into problem gambling was also alluded to, which found higher rates of problem gambling occur in more northern areas, major urban areas and those living in wards classified as industrial, traditional, manufacturing, prosperous and multi-cultural.

It was also stated that locally, figures suggested that approximately between 2500 and 7000 people in Bradford would be classed as problem gamblers. Current treatment provision and tackling gambling related harm was also alluded to.

A representative from an organisation which campaigns to highlight the dangers of problem gambling – "Gambling with Lives" was present at the meeting to talk about the work of the organisation and how he had lost his own son through problem gambling. During his presentation he alluded to the following:

How problem gambling had affected his families life and ultimately the life of his own son, stating that his son was an ordinary 17 year old when he became involved in gambling, adding that the industry is set up to exploit individuals and will not take responsibility for the misery a gambling addiction can reek.

That many involved in problem gambling were young adult males and that the journey into addiction was normally very rapid, and although gambling patterns and habits varied, they were failed by treatment services.

That gambling addicts were 3-4 times more likely to take their own life compared to other addicts, with Fixed Odds Betting Terminals and casino style games being particularly addictive forms of gambling.

That Gambling with Lives had a 10 point plan to tackle this problem including limiting to the stake on Fixed Odds betting; enforce a statutory levy on the gambling industry to fund research, education and treatment; end illegal underage gambling and ban gambling advertising.

During the discussion a Member stated that an industry representative should have been invited to the meeting today to provide their perspective and respond to questions.

A Councillor who was observing and was campaigner on the issue of problem gambling thanked the representative from Gambling with Lives for giving a candid insight into problem gambling, and he stressed that the impact on young people was very pertinent and that the industry had to start taking responsibility for the issue and not just treat people as pound signs, with the availability of treatment being at the forefront.

A Councillor stressed that the online gambling arena was a particular potent aspect of the industry and where problem gambling was prevalent on a much larger scale than the traditional high street activity, and he urged that education was key to try and curb this growing threat.

A Member stated that in her experience betting shops encouraged problem gambling by offering incentives and promotions to customers.

A Member stated that the bottom line for the industry was to make money and if we could do something locally as a Council such as undertake spot checks to identify and address underage gamblers using betting shops and buying scratch cards, this in turn could have a tangible impact.

Members highlighted that a broader debate needed to be had with the industry on the issue of problem gambling.

Following the discussion Members agreed that a number of areas needed to be looked at in relation to problem gambling and it was therefore:

Resolved –

- (1) That a local area profile be developed to identify areas of greater or specific risks of gambling related harm in the district.**
- (2) For the Council and Partner organisations to take part in activities to raise awareness of problem gambling as part of responsible gambling week in November, including the possibility of a conference on problem gambling, and planned activities be brought back to this Committee prior to the gambling week in November.**
- (3) That this Committee requests that the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and to the Chair of All-Party Parliamentary Group on problem gambling to request the following:**
 - (i) Additional powers that mean local authorities can prevent excessive clustering of betting shops and amusement arcades.**
 - (ii) The introduction of a 1% levy on industry gross profits to pay for much needed research, education and treatment.**
- (4) That this Committee requests that representatives from the gambling industry be invited to a future meeting of this Committee.**
- (5) That Bradford Council officers undertake “spot checks” in betting shops and access to scratch cards across the district in relation to under age gambling.**

- (6) That this Committee requests that education awareness be undertaken in schools, explaining the dangers of gambling to young people.
- (7) That a report be presented to this Committee which focuses on the treatment services that are available across the district.
- (8) That a further progress report be brought back to this Committee which also includes progress in relation to the above recommendations.

ACTION: *Strategic Director Place / Chief Executive*

68. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREVENT STRATEGY IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT

The Strategic Director Place submitted a report (**Document “AG”**) which outlined the approach to delivering the national Prevent Strategy in the Bradford district and highlighted progress made in the last twelve months against the Districts’ Prevent Action Plan.

The Assistant Director and Prevent Coordinator gave a brief outline of the activities that have been undertaken as part of the Prevent programme. The current threat level was alluded to, with 4 far right and 12 islamist plots being thwarted. Lone actors seem to be the modus operandi for most attacks as demonstrated in the recent New Zealand terrorist attack perpetrated by a far right activist. In addition online radicalisation remained a potent threat and an echo chamber for individuals seeking out extremist material online.

The success of the Resilient Families Programme and Mothers Against radicalisation was also alluded to and how it had empowered individuals, was a key factor in addressing radicalisation.

Far Right extremism was a growing threat and resources had been put in place to try and gauge and address this issue as new far right groups were emerging at a rapid rate, adding to the threat level.

During the discussion Members welcomed and endorsed the activities under the Prevent agenda and the progress made, with positive and mature engagement with the Muslim community.

In response to a question on the growing threat from far right extremism and how was this problem being tackled, the Assistant Director stated that intelligence on any threat level was shared with partners by the North East Counter Terrorism Unit and the threat level was closely monitored.

In response to a question on emerging threats, the Assistant Director stated that the online space was a key area of activity and the primary tool used for luring young people into extremism.

In response to a question of what conversations or activities were being

undertaken at a street level to explain the benefits of being a good citizen, the Assistant Director espoused the benefits of the People Can Programme and the Mothers Against Radicalisation Programme as counter narratives. In response the Members stressed that further engagement work was essential and those at greatest risk were unlikely to engage with mainstream society.

Resolved –

- (1) That this Committee would like to thank officers for implementing the Prevent Strategy across the district.**
- (2) That a further progress report be presented in 12 months time.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Place

69. PROGRESS REPORT ON PEOPLE CAN

The Strategic Director Place submitted a report (**Document “AH”**) which gave an update on the progress of People Can with information on projects, key outcomes, application of a community development approach and wider linkage to council and partners communication channels.

During the discussion Members made a number of observations around the People Can Programme which are set out below:

- That many of the projects highlighted in the report were already taking place prior to the emergence of People Can, such as the Friends of Parks Groups and community clean ups, and it was therefore difficult to see what additional value or dimension the People Can Programme added in this respect.
- That in respect of the Library Service there was no choice under the current Council’s budgetary constraints for volunteers but to take on the running of some of the libraries in the district, and therefore the volunteering within the Library Service could not be attributed to the People Can Programme.
- That the Financial and Resourcing of the People Can Programme should be reviewed by officers in order that the Programme offered good value for money.
- That the People Can Programme and the associated bureaucracy had the potential to deter volunteers or diminish what they were already doing in their respective communities.

- That it seemed that the principle objective of People Can was to put all volunteering activities under one umbrella.
- That the Programme in its current form was not using social media effectively and this approach should be fully evaluated.
- That there should be clarity on what projects would be undertaken under the People Can Programme, and how it would be distinct from previous volunteering activities.

In response to some of the issues raised by Members, the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods stated that it was not the intention of the People Can Programme to replicate or take credit for volunteering that was being undertaken in the district, but to provide support, advice and encourage more volunteers to come forward; and he stressed that without People Can initiatives like the Community Stars Award would not take place. He added that People Can would build on the existing volunteering activities and create a district wide momentum as well as build resilience.

In response to the financing and resourcing of the People Can Programme, the Assistant Director was keen to explain that the funding of the £90,000 coordinator post was over a 2 year period, and that the post was an integral part of promoting and coordinating volunteering in the context of reduced Council funding.

Resolved –

- (1) That a further report be presented in 6 months time, which should also demonstrate the social value of the People Can Programme.**
- (2) That this Committee expresses its concerns over the financing and resourcing of People Can and requests that officers reconsider their approach of the financing and resourcing of People Can.**
- (3) That the job description and job specification for the post of People Can Coordinator be circulated to Members of this Committee.**
- (4) That the concerns raised by Members around the People Can Programme be agreed with the Chair, and then circulated to Members of this Committee and to the Chief Executive and Strategic Director Place.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Place

70. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “AJ”**) which set out the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2018/19.

No resolution was passed on this item.

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