

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 16 September 2021 at 5.00 pm in the Banqueting Hall - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.00 pm
Concluded 7.30 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP	INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST
Azam Tait D Green Nazir Salam Wood	Bibby Birch	J Sunderland	V Jenkins

Councillor Azam in the Chair

17. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

Councillor Salam for Councillor Akhtar.
Councillor Wood for Councillor Arshad Hussain.

18. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest in matters under discussion.

19. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 July 2021, be approved.

20. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

No request to remove the restriction on a report or background paper was made.

21. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

22. VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY SECTOR AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (VCSE) INFRASTRUCTURE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Officers from the Department of Place informed Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members of the forthcoming procurement of a combined Voluntary Community Sector Enterprise (VCSE) Infrastructure Procurement Strategy.

Members learned that this was a combined VCSE grant with a value in excess of £2million, in line with the requirements of Contracts Standing Orders (CSO 7.2.1) and members were being informed of this, prior to the commencement of the procurement process.

Members were keen to understand how the contract would be monitored, especially in terms of value for money.

In response, officers indicated that a team would be created to monitor this. Members of the committee were extremely concerned that they had not been given enough time and opportunity, before the contract was due to go to the market, as well as not knowing what members were actually considering and that members had not actually been consulted with on this. In addition to this, as this contract would have to be advertised nationally, potentially there could be a national charity bidding for the work and they would not have any local knowledge.

Officers replied by saying that a baseline was undertaken in 2019, where a number of Councillors were consulted.

Members were unanimous in their agreement that they did not have enough information to make an informed decision, especially in the areas relating to:

- Associated costs;
- Actual project specifications;
- Performance management;
- Consultation process.

Resolved –

- (1) This Committee requests that a completed and detailed specification, along with options and recommendations be presented to the Committee in early October 2021.
- (2) That the appropriate Strategic Director and Assistant Director, also attend the meeting in early October 2021, when this is re-considered by members.

(Ian Day – 01274 433507)

23. ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

Bradford Council officers provided Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members with an overview of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, along with a review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to poverty work being undertaken across the District.

As well as this, officers also provided members with examples of the work being undertaken across the District to support the poorest and most vulnerable communities through and beyond the pandemic, including work being carried out to address Period Poverty.

Members of the Committee heard that the Anti-Poverty Strategy is centred around the following themes:

- Boost income and reduce costs;
- Deliver an effective benefit system;
- Promote long term inclusive growth benefitting everyone;
- Improve education standards and raise skills;
- Strengthen families and communities.

Members were keen to understand what the outcomes and benefits of the financial advice, as this was not contained in the report.

In response, Officers informed members that they would bring this back to the Committee for consideration.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members stressed the importance of working with local employers to help support and upskill individuals and recruiting to jobs that people have left due to Brexit.

Moreover, as there are a large number of people not in jobs, employers needed to be on board with the training and upskilling of people.

Furthermore, members stated that a lot of food banks were not accessible as others, so residents were missing out on food for their families, as well as some residents being turned away from food banks. Members were concerned about this and stated that this needed to be reviewed. Also, members felt that Bradford Council needed to be much clearer on supporting poverty and that even though there was a lot of data, it was not being used.

Continuing on, members highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the level and how common food poverty was across the District and members were astonished to notice the level at which food poverty in the District was currently at. Moreover, members expressed that wider views of poverty needed to be gathered as to what poverty actually is and that to do this, it was imperative to speak to those people who are actually living in poverty; rather than Bradford Council developing its own approach to poverty.

Moving forward, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members wanted to see what poverty is; what the Council is doing to address poverty; what is the lived experience of people living in poverty actually is.

Members stated that food parcels were not sustainable, especially in terms of the types of foods that were contained in food parcels and a more sustainable system

was needed that provided food to all the communities in the District, who needed it.

In response officers indicated that the level of food poverty had increased and acknowledged that a lot more work needed to be done in relation to this. Councillors indicated that the Council should have been better prepared for COVID-19, given the level of poverty across the wards in the District and that communities across the District had been left to deal with the effects of COVID-19 and that no clear outcomes could be seen from the work undertaken.

In response, Bradford Council officers did inform members that they did a lot of work with communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and agreed that the outcomes from the work undertaken were not clear enough.

Resolved –

- (1) This Committee requests that the Anti-Poverty Strategy progress report in 12 months' time, specifically focuses on the mapping of anti-poverty work across the Council and its Partners, along with outcomes that have been achieved.
- (2) The report should also include the impact from the reductions in Universal Credit and other financial support that the Council has provided to residents, which is no longer available.

(Michelle Taylor – 01274 431813)

24. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee members discussed the work programme and commented on the ongoing detailed scrutiny reviews being undertaken by the Committee.

Resolved –

Members discussed and agreed the work programme.

(Mustansir Butt - 01274 432574)

Chair

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