

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 10 March 2022 in the Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.00 pm
Concluded 6.15 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	INDEPENDENT
Azam Tait Akhtar D Green Arshad Hussain Nazir	Griffiths	Jenkins

Apologies: Councillors Bibby and Riaz

Councillor Azam in the Chair

68. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest received in matters under consideration.

69. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2022 be signed as a correct record.

70. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

71. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals were made to the Committee.

72. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREVENT STRATEGY IN THE BRADFORD (Previous Reference Minute 19 2020/21)

The report of the Strategic Director, Place (**Document “AF”**) outlined the approach to delivering the national Prevent strategy in the Bradford district and highlighted progress made in the last twelve months against the District Prevent Action Plan.

At the meeting on 18th March 2021, the Committee requested more detailed outcomes against projects being delivered as part of the Prevent Strategy for the District and the attached Appendix 1 addresses that request.

It was explained that as the Covid pandemic continues, it is still having a considerable impact on the risk from extremists and radicalisation. These groups continue to utilise the online space to spread hate, conspiracy theories and mistrust between communities. Far right groups particularly, have continued to use conspiracy theories about COVID-19 as a recruiting tool to attract younger supporters into their realms during 2021.

Self-initiated terrorism continues to be a risk, due to the low sophistication of the methods used and the ease at which things can be planned. The continued isolation and suspicion amongst some individuals, makes the potential for such attacks high. This is not linked to any particular ideology and very much taps into suspicion over the pandemic, narratives associated with free speech, conspiracy theories and those with mixed, unclear and unstable ideologies.

The Independent Review of the national Prevent programme is due to be published. Bradford Prevent has fully participated and welcomes hearing the results.

The specific programmes delivered in the district were alluded to and they were detailed in the report.

During the discussion the Chair stated that at a local level, the Prevent Programme had delivered some tangible outcomes, with good input and engagement from the community, elected Members and Council officers. However he expressed concern that at a national, the delays in the publication of the long awaited independent review on the Prevent Programme was causing resentment around the Programme and impacting on delivery at a local level.

Officers acknowledged that delays to the outcomes of the national review were a concern, however the pandemic had played a part in this delay. However they were happy to express the Committee's concerns to the Home Office around the delays and the need to urgently publish the findings.

A Member stated that the report did not contain tangible outcomes that were measurable against the objectives of the Programme, or what social value it had achieved. In response it was stated that ultimately the aim was to ensure that individuals referred to the Programme were de-radicalised, however this was difficult to measure in an exact manner. However changing of perceptions had been recorded, and therefore the benefits from the Programme could be seen.

A Member in welcoming the benefits of the Programme in a Bradford context, expressed concerns at recent events in the Ukraine and ensuring that individuals were not tempted to travel to the region to fight. In response it was stated that as a Council the message was to try and help and provide support locally to refugees fleeing the war, as well as the Ukrainian and Russian communities living in the district.

There was a discussion around far right extremism and linkages to covid conspiracies as well as individuals or groups displaying anti-democratic sentiments. Officers acknowledged that this was a particular area of focus and how this could be better monitored from a Prevent perspective.

Resolved –

- (1) This Committee requests that a further report be presented in 12 months, which also focuses on outcomes delivered from projects.**
- (2) That the findings of the Independent Review of the National Prevent Programme, be presented to this Committee, when they are available.**
- (3) The Committee expresses its concern in the delay relating to the findings of the Independent Review of the National Prevent Programme and the committee requests that they are informed of the reasons for the delay.**

ACTION: Strategic Director, Place.

**73. VOLUNTEERING INITIATIVES ACROSS THE BRADFORD DISTRICT-
PROGRESS REPORT**

The Strategic Director, Place, presented a report (**Document “AG”**) which provided an update on the work of volunteering initiatives supported by the Council and external partners.

It was explained that Bradford District has a strong and vibrant civil society sector with an estimated 5,000 plus voluntary and community groups, 30,000 regular volunteers and 100,000 occasional volunteers committed to making Bradford District a better place to live. Our projects are connecting more and more people to volunteering opportunities in which they can make a difference. We also support community organisations offering volunteering opportunities to provide valuable local services in challenging financial times.

Volunteering also provided a platform for communities to engage in neighbourhood activities through events and enabling them to self-identify the key

issues that they want our support with. This collective working of people in common causes brings down barriers to integration and cohesion in neighbourhoods, helps to strengthen our communications generally and improve environments where they live.

Members welcomed the volunteering activities undertaken in the district and welcomed that the better coordination of activities, would encourage more volunteering, however it was acknowledged that many volunteering activities remained anonymous.

In response it was stated that Citizen Coin would be a useful tool in accruing benefits for volunteers, as well as encourage more people to volunteer.

Resolved –

- (1) The Committee acknowledges the initiatives and volunteering that supports services to local communities.**
- (2) This Committee requests that a further report be presented in 12 months, which focuses on an update on the impact of the VCSE Service Improvement Programme and the Volunteer Co-ordinator to support volunteering across the District.**

ACTION: Strategic Director, Place

Chair

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