

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 27 June 2023 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.00 pm
Concluded 7.15 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	GREEN
Azam Alipoor Robinson D Green Mohammed	Davies F Ahmed	Stubbs	Love

Councillor Azam in the Chair

1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency, Councillor Davies declared that she was a member of the ISG Board (Minute 7).

ACTION: Director of Legal and Governance

2. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 be signed as a correct record.

3. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

4. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

5. **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PREVENT STRATEGY IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT**

The Strategic Director Place submitted a report (**Document “A”**) which outlined the approach to delivering the national Prevent strategy in the Bradford district and highlighted progress made in the last fifteen months against the District Prevent Action Plan.

At its meeting on 10 March 2022, this Committee resolved that a report be presented in 12 months' time which also focused on outcomes delivered from projects; findings of the Independent Review of the National Prevent Programme, and the reasons for the delays relating to the findings of the Independent Review

The Prevent Programme Manager stated that in response to the delays on the findings of the Review, the feelings of the Committee were communicated to the Home Office after the last meeting. The Home Office were unable to give a reason for the delay as it was being conducted independently. The Committee were advised to contact the review team directly with any queries. The findings of the Independent Review were incidentally published on 8th February 2023

The Prevent Programme Manager stated that this report provided an update on the Prevent work that had been undertaken over the last fifteen months, how it met the threats in our district and the impact that this work has had. It also addressed our plans for future Prevent work.

It was explained that the extreme over reliance on the online space, especially by the young, continued to have a considerable impact on the risk from extremists and radicalisation; Many of the referrals and queries were increasingly referencing concerns about young people quoting online misogynistic influencers and being introduced to more dangerous viewpoints after following them; self-initiated terrorism continued to be a risk, due to the low sophistication of the methods used and the ease at which things can be planned and mixed, unclear and unstable ideologies were increasingly a focus in our queries and Channel referrals

The Independent Review of the National Prevent Programme had recently been published. The Bradford Prevent team had fully participated and we had attached the outcomes found and the recommendations given by William Shawcross and his team. There were 34 recommendations, all of which the Government had accepted.

The Home Office were still working on the measures that would be implemented to meet the recommendations from the Review. An online briefing by the Home Office for Bradford elected members, had been offered. This would give an update on the Independent Review, what had been done so far and what is planned for the future.

In a Bradford context Bradford Council and partners had always sought to tailor the Prevent programme to the needs of the district's communities and the ever developing risks they face.

The Prevent Team is committed to engaging grass roots projects (of which there

have been seven this year) wherever possible to help build resilience and to ensure support is offered to vulnerable people of all ages and backgrounds to meet these risks. The Team continue to make efforts to engage communities and elected members and to build awareness of and engagement in the Prevent programme across the district. Four community roundtables events had been held since the last Overview and Scrutiny in Bradford West, Bradford South, Bradford East and Shipley.

Under the Prevent strategy the local authority and partners continued to develop projects to reduce the risk of people becoming involved in terrorist activity. Funding granted for the 2022/23 period was in the region of £296,000 and we were awarded the full amount of what we bid for. Most projects were community and education based, focusing on the key risks in our district. Some of the key work was detailed in the report; however specific reference was made to Supplementary Schools Against Radicalisation Programme; Oddarts and the Manningham Mills Project.

The Prevent team had also provided specialist training to trainee GPs, staff and students at Mencap and also those working with Housing, particularly those in hotels across the district. Plans were also in place to deliver training to refugees and asylum seekers in hotels on the dangers of extremism, particularly on the internet.

In May 2023, the Home Office evaluated local performance of the Prevent Duty. The good evaluation we had received reflected on the hard work of the Prevent team this past year.

During the discussion, the Chair questioned the basis of the Prevent Strategy and what it was meant to achieve; that we had been waiting over three years on the outcomes on the Independent Review into Prevent and now that it had been received, it had to be said that the review suggested Prevent place more focus on Islamist extremism, and suggested there had been too much focus on right wing extremism. In the context of the documented historic remarks expressed by the Independent Chair of the Review on “Islam in Europe”; the finding from the Review gave little comfort and that results of the review made it difficult to support Prevent going forward as the review was “Islamophobic”, and this in turn threatened the future delivery of the Prevent Strategy in the district.

He added that the review had been criticised by many groups, who point out that here had been a worrying rise in right wing extremism in recent years, however the Review was urging a move away from this threat.

A Member stated that that challenge was that groups might refuse to have people from Prevent come in because of the perception of the policy. He added that the review says the focus should be on Islamist threats, but from my understanding tackling far right threats is a growing issue. He stressed that if the Home Office goes down these lines then it will do further damage to Prevent, a policy with some aims I have sympathy with. However, if you don't take the community with you it is a bit like a stick with no carrot. He added that developing a local model that worked was paramount if we were to move forward on this.

In response the Prevent Programme Manager and the Assistant Director

Neighbourhoods and Community Safety acknowledged some of the concerns expressed by Members and that some of the politics behind the Strategy had overshadowed the excellent engagement work done at a local level and that safeguarding was a key focus in all this.

The Chair stated that the Government and the Independent Review had not listened to our views and perspectives and that the findings from the Review showed a lack of sincerity, and it was therefore difficult for the community to have faith in the Programme and expect them to engage with Prevent. He acknowledged that that local team had undertaken some good, projects which he had also visited, however going forward he couldn't foresee how progress could be made on this agenda.

In response to a question regarding emerging threats, it was explained that the Islamist threat still posed the greatest risk; however, there was an emerging far right threat and that other ideologies also posed risks. To this end our approach locally would be to look at what the data was telling us and respond appropriately. It was also confirmed that the Channel scheme, to which many people are referred due to extremist views, was seeing a rise in far right and "multi-issue" referrals.

A Member stated that she had attended a number of the briefing sessions on Prevent and it was important not to lose focus on the main threat posed by Islamist terrorism and that some excellent work had been done at a local level to tackle radicalisation.

A Member stressed that intervening at an early stage before radical views took root was key; however, the Government had failed to see this and Prevent scared people and they were finding it difficult to engage with the Programme.

The Assistant Director stressed that notwithstanding the issues that had been raised by Members and the outcomes of the Review, the Home Office view was that our delivery of the Prevent Programme, locally was well thought of and we will do our best to make sure our responses are based on what comes through to us and what we are seeing and tailor the Programme accordingly. In Bradford we are led by data. The data might tell us that the referrals do not back up what the review is saying.

The Chair stressed that he was no longer comfortable promoting Prevent and suggested that the Council should move responsibility for Prevent locally to either the Police or the Hate Crime Alliance.

In response a Member stated that the fact that we as a local authority have a small element of control over this gives it democratic oversight and that he would not be happy with the suggestion of moving it to another organisation outside of the Council, adding having it under Council oversight meant any discussion or debate was conducted in an open meeting and this was unlikely if Prevent was under another organisation's remit, thus taking Prevent out of democratic oversight would be a backwards step. He suggested that we should request the Executive to contact the Home Office, outlining the concerns of this Committee in relation to the outcomes of the independent review of Prevent, which appears to prioritise work with particular groups at the expense of other, equally worrying

potential threats.

A Member stated we are elected as Councillors to do a job, we shouldn't be washing our hands of it when it came to Prevent.

The Programme Manager stressed that we had to be creative in how we engaged with communities and Prevent was primarily about safeguarding as well as promoting universal values and that trust had to be built over time. It was also stated that the Service was planning to do a peer review with Leeds and Kirklees Councils on the effectiveness of the Local Prevent Strategy.

Members suggested that our recommendations needed to reflect that the Prevent brand has been tainted over the years, and that the district needed a more localised, not regionalised programme.

In addition, a future report should also include a full financial breakdown for the last five years to include project outcomes, not outputs, and how staff salaries had been utilised and how engagement with specific groups with whom currently there is no engagement was taking place, such as different Islamic groups and far right groups.

Members also requested officers to consider the local review of Prevent across the District to be an independent one, and for the Terms of Reference to be brought back to this Committee, and it was therefore:

Resolved –

- (1) That this Committee requests the Executive to contact the Home Office, outlining the concerns of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee in relation to the outcomes of the independent review of Prevent, which appears to prioritise work with particular groups at the expense of other equally worrying potential threats.**
- (2) That this Committee requests the Executive to note that the Prevent brand has been tainted over the years, and that the District needs a more localised, not regionalised programme.**
- (3) That this Committee requests a further report be presented in six months, which specifically focuses on:**
 - A full financial breakdown for the last 5 years to include project outcomes, not outputs, and how staff salaries have been utilised;**
 - Engagement with specific groups with whom currently there is no engagement taking place, such as different Islamic groups and far right groups.**
- (4) That members request officers to consider the local review of Prevent across the District to be an independent one and for the Terms of Reference for this review to be brought to the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee.**

ACTION: Strategic Director for Place

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved –

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item relating to Industrial Services Group (ISG) on the grounds that it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if they were present, exempt information within Paragraph 3 (Finance or Business Affairs) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), would be disclosed and it is considered that, in all the circumstances, the public interest in excluding public access to the relevant part of the proceedings outweighs the interest in publication of the report.

It is in the public interest in maintaining these exemptions because it is in the overriding interest of proper administration that Members are made fully aware of the financial implications of any decision.

7. INDUSTRIAL SERVICES GROUP (ISG) - FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Strategic Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report (**Not for Publication Document “B”**) which provided an update to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the performance of ISG.

Resolved –

- (1) The Committee thanked the officers, for the work undertaken.**
- (2) That a further report be presented to this Committee, which also specifically focuses on the approached being used to increase the numbers of apprenticeships within ISG.**
- (3) That this Committee requests a site visit be arranged for members of this Committee.**

ACTION: Strategic Director for Corporate Resources

8. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24.

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “C”**) which included proposed items for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft work programme for 2023/24. The Committee was asked to consider which items it wished to include in the work programme.

The Overview and Scrutiny Lead added that an invitation would be extended to West Yorkshire Joint Services to attend the Committee in January 2024. In addition, a number of sessions would be held on the Call for Action into Anti-social behaviour. It was suggested that these local meetings be organised in conjunction with the respective Area Coordinators' office.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Committee discussed and approved the 2023-24 work programme.
- (2) That members agreed on the next steps, in proceeding with the Call for Action Enquiry into Anti-Social Behaviour.

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