

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 5 October 2023 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.00 pm Concluded 7.35 pm

Present - Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	GREEN
Alipoor	Loy	Stubbs	Love
D Green	Davies		
Mohammed			
Regan			
Tait			

Observers: Councillors S Hinchcliffe, S Duffy & A Jabar

Apologies: Councillor Nazam Azam, Councillor Lisa Robinson and Councillor Falak Ahmed

Councillor Alipoor in the Chair

26. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under discussion were received.

27. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023 be signed as a correct record.

28. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

29. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

30. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR RELATED TO FIREWORKS AND PLANS FOR THE BONFIRE PERIOD 2023

The Community Safety Partnership Board submitted a report (**Document "L"**) which provided a summary of the key actions and activities being taken following the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Review of the use of fireworks.

The report included the key partnership approaches and actions to minimise antisocial behaviour during the period around Bonfire Night.

Appended to the report were samples of advertising literature including, posters and postcards, provided as an example of marketing techniques used as part of the year-round campaign to minimise anti-social behaviour. A copy of a letter sent from the Leader of Council to lobby the government to reduce noise levels; stop the sale of the most powerful fireworks and or individuals selling fireworks to require a licence demonstrating they were fit and proper persons was also provided.

Following a detailed presentation Members raised a number of queries and concerns.

In response to a question about the meaning of a Community Protection Warning it was explained that the Anti-Social Behaviour Act provided powers, one of which was the ability to issue a Community Protection Warning. (CPN). Offenders would initially receive a warning which could lead to the issue of a penalty and Criminal Behaviour Orders. A challenge that was currently faced was that fireworks, traditionally, had to be lit individually. Boxes of fireworks were now available that once lit could continue for a considerable period. By the time officers or emergency services were at the scene it was not possible to identify the offenders.

It was explained that firework legislation was the responsibility of a number of bodies including West Yorkshire Trading Standards. West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service were responsible for issuing permits to store fireworks, the police dealt with offences and Council officers utilised the anti-social behaviour powers. Members were advised that a full partnership response had been developed and the issue was becoming less problematic.

A Member reported that she and her colleagues received many complaints about noisy fireworks which frightened people and animals. She questioned the response to letters to government and was advised that a government decision on noise reduction was required. Currently there were four categories of fireworks and only accredited sellers were allowed to sell the fourth category.

The report revealed that Safer Bradford had provided grants of up to £5,000 to focus on minimising the risk of disorder in 'hotspot' locations. A Member asked for more detail on those grants and was advised that each Area Committee managed their own budgets and, in Bradford East, grants had been provided to engage and deter people from anti-social behaviour.

Additional steps which the police could take to protect the emergency service from attack were questioned and it was reported that the Council worked closely

with the police and incidents were reviewed and investigated. Additional support resources were provided during the bonfire period.

It was asked what Council or police presence was available after 11pm during the bonfire weekend. It was explained that the Strategic Operations Room would deploy a localised response across the whole district and that would be continued until activities died down. A first line of defence would be provided by the Youth Service presence across the district as it was believed that an initial uniform presence could cause tension.

The Neighbourhood Police Teams would enhance visibility and look at preventative actions should as prevention of fly tipping and providing diversionary activities.

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services, explained that officers did not want to be too heavy handed and criminalise people. She explained that planning for the bonfire weekend began in the early summer with the analysis of previous issues and the identification of hot spot areas. She also reported that she would be out on the streets, during that period working with the Youth Service. Councillors also worked with their communities, faith groups and community groups to protect their areas and show that communities were united.

A Member thanked the services for their efforts to provide a well-established programme and acknowledged that fireworks could be a year-round problem. She requested that the material appended to the report be provided to Members to share around their communities.

The actions to prevent illegal sales of fireworks was questioned and a Member queried if there had been any success in catching people selling illegal fireworks on the street. It was explained that West Yorkshire Trading Standards carried out test purchases to identify store compliance. Regular visits to shops were made by West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service. Local intelligence was used to identify offenders and Members were asked to provide information they had gained in their local areas. Local area partnerships had identified some illegal sales, and these had been reported to the police.

The report revealed that the majority of wedding venues were compliant, and that statement was questioned by Members. The Safer Communities Delivery Coordinator explained that the information referred to had been provided by Environmental Health officers who had visited and written to all venues. It was reported that wedding couples were provided with a letter requesting that guests not to light fireworks, but this had only resulted in fireworks being lit elsewhere. Members were asked to provide information on any premises they believed were not complying.

The response to letters to the government was queried and it was explained that they were no plans to change legislation.

The report stated that the level of disorder had been declining gradually over recent years. In 2022 that trend had continued with the need for the police to dispatch 'Public Order' response units becoming extremely low relative to the situation a few years ago. It was questioned if that statement referred to only the

bonfire period and it was confirmed that was the case. The need for additional support had reduced but officers were aware there was still significant community concern and they agreed to circulate information on the actual level of decline.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Committee would like to thank officers for their attendance.
- (2) That this Committee requests that the comments and observations raised by members, be considered by officers as part of this years Bonfire events.
- (3) That this Committee requests that officers continue to pursue options for preventing the illegal sale of fireworks.

ACTION: Strategic Director, Place.

31. BRADFORD DISTRICT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY 2022-2027

The Strategic Director, Adult Social Care, presented a report (**Document "N"**) which provided a progress update on the development and implementation of the Bradford District Anti-Poverty Strategy 2022-2027 (BDAPS). Members were advised that the strategy had been developed and was overseen by the District Anti-Poverty Coordination Group (DACG), a multi-partner group consisting of representatives from the Council, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), NHS, Incommunities, the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and higher education.

Document N reported the Adult Services 'Into Employment Programme' and it was questioned if any work had been conducted with the Industrial Services Group. It was explained that the programme included work with people with learning disabilities. It was agreed to provide further information to Members on that programme.

Work on reducing persistent school absence was queried and it was explained that attendance had fallen most in the poorest areas. The work being undertaken was a pilot project and the latest information available was that there had been meetings held during the current week.

Measures to 'poverty proof the school day' were discussed with a Member reporting that schools in his ward still insisted on the purchase of expensive, logo embroidered, blazers. The current costs for providing uniform in his ward was believed to be £100 per pupil. He questioned what action had been taken about schools' insistence on expensive clothing. Some of those schools were local authority controlled. A representative from the Bradford District Credit Union reported work undertaken with the Council on a Uniform Savers initiative. The scheme had helped 285 people x 2 to save for uniforms. They were given £100 and then continued to save for uniform purchases. In the past year they had saved, collectively, £21,000 and the initiative had encouraged and helped residents get into the saving habit. It was reported that the credit union could also provide micro loans of £200 to help with school expenses which had assisted 200

people already and increased their credit scores.

A Member raised her concerns that children, who may not meet the criteria for free school meals, but still be in poverty, would be going to school hungry. The Assistant Director, Revenue, Benefits and Customer Services reported campaigns to encourage the take up of free school meals. She reported work to develop an auto enrolment programme based on an exemplar scheme in Sheffield. Work was also undertaken to maximise entitlement to benefits and a lump sum payment for fuel and food supplies would be available again this year. It was acknowledged that if people had no recourse to public funds support was limited.

Concern about residents not trying to obtain dental or doctors' appointments as they believed they would be not available were raised together with a Members' experience that young people were hesitant to take-up vaccinations. In response she was advised that the Primary Care Network were working to address backlogs since the pandemic. It was agreed that more information would be provided for Members after the meeting. Vaccine campaigns for flu and Covid would be commenced shortly, and it was explained that a lot of work was being done with the Youth Services and communications teams to understand vaccine hesitancy.

Assurances were requested that the DACG were working with health providers, and it was confirmed that the partnership linked with health partners. It was clarified that all partners were developing evidence bases to understand what worked in Bradford and provide a consistent programme. It was reported that over the next three to five years progress would be seen.

The inability for children and adults to obtain dental appointments was raised. It was believed there were nearly one million children this year and 200,000 adults in the last two years, in West Yorkshire, who had not been able to access appointments. It was questioned what was being done to ensure access to health. The Leader of Council responded and reported work conducted by the West Yorkshire Heath and Care Partnership (ICS) which had been pushing on that issue. The NHS had recently devolved responsibility for commissioning to the ICS and there would be improvements. It was explained, however, that rolling contracts issued in 2006 must be continued and the ability to change fundamental issues was limited. That situation was a national problem. The Leader agreed to share further information on those issues.

The Council's Policy Officer explained there was ongoing work to identify priorities on health inequalities. Members were also advised of work undertaken by health visitors who encouraged healthy diets and appropriate teeth brushing habits.

It was questioned who the food savers network worked with and where it was located. In response it was explained that this was a pilot project developed two years ago and provided a community pantry, developed like a corner shop. Residents were given six pounds, one of which, was put into the credit union. There were 18 community pantries across the district and the whereabouts of those were reported on their website. One thousand people had participated, 400 of which were in the credit union and £37,000 had been saved. It was reiterated that when people were given a vehicle to save, they continued to do so. The

project was a nationally funded initiative and like the uniform savers had begun in Bradford.

The credit union interest rates were discussed with a Member expressing concern that those rates were higher than high street banks. She asked if members were encouraged to compare rates. In response she was advised that the credit union had been set up by the Council 30 years ago. The lending rate was set by government, and they could not go below that rate. Members were encouraged to compare rates, however, only 40% of the UK population could access the high street bank rates. It was acknowledged that the credit union rates were higher, but they were significantly lower than doorstep lenders.

The methods used to develop contact with vulnerable individuals, who could be isolated because of vulnerability, but did not attend community groups or churches, living in affluent areas, was questioned. The Children & Families Portfolio Holder addressed the meeting and reported the production of an invaluable booklet which had been produced and issued to all partners listing services available. A Senior Public Health Specialist reported that household support funding had been used to support a "safe sleeping scheme" which had supported 363 referrals by health visitors or midwives for people who could not afford to purchase cots or bedding.

The Assistant Director, Revenue, Benefits and Customer Services, reported that all council tax bills contained information sign posting residents to the comprehensive cost of living website. The Policy Officer acknowledged the need to ensure equal levels of support and confirmed that work was ongoing to identify data. It was stressed that the Anti-Poverty Strategy was a living document which would evolve over time.

The Integrated Employment Support, Careers and Technical Education Offer revealed that, in partnership with education and employment partners, the Council continued to develop the successful integrated careers and technical education offer. This was delivered through the SkillsHouse. To date more than 45,000 adults had been supported into education and training since August 2020 and, in the academic year 2022/23, over 9,000 residents of all ages accessed information, advice and guidance support. The careers and technical education approach for young people was also delivered through the SkillsHouse. In 2022-23, just over 7,068 young people (age 16-18) were supported to participate in education and training, and 16,000 accessed sector specific career pathway education. A Member requested a breakdown of the outcomes of that support, and it was agreed to provide more details to all Members after the meeting.

Whilst discussing support for children and young people in care a Member reported discussions she had held with a local employer which had resulted in work placements being provided. She asked her colleagues to keep need for placements in mind and to consider what support may be available in their communities.

A Member believed that after recent years of financial pressure there may be residents requiring support for the first time and that they would not have the living knowledge of where to find help. He believed that non-payment of council tax may evidence financial difficulty and questioned if that had been witnessed.

In response it was confirmed that it was not being seen at the moment as funding had been available to residents. A lot of the support for cost-of-living expenses was dependent on being in receipt of welfare benefit so those without that entitlement may struggle. Assurances were provided that when people contacted Revenue, Benefits and Customer Services they were sign posted to other support.

Resolved -

That this Committee requests a progress report be presented in 12 months, which also focuses on the outcomes delivered, as part of the work undertaken, under the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

ACTION: Strategic Director, Adult Social Care.

32. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Director of Human Resources provided a report (**Document "M"**) which set out the progress made in the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 further developing the Council's approach to workforce development since the last report to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 September 2022.

The Workforce Learning and Development Manager confirmed that the report contained, at Appendix F, information on professional career development spend in Council departments with a breakdown on grade. That information had been requested at the meeting held in October 2022.

Whilst acknowledging achievements in the Document "M" a Member reported that funding had previously been used on direct skills to improve current jobs and support promotion. He felt it was difficult to assess the impact of the information provided in the report and felt that funding had been used on the ethos but not tools.

In response the Director of Human Resources advised that the report detailed corporate training, leadership and management development and strategic issues. Leadership management and development was to ensure that managers had the skills and tools to listen and conduct difficult conversations. The information contained in Appendix F was more service specific.

Concern was expressed that, despite there being an increase in the number of staff having had an annual Performance Appraisal, the figure of 64% was still not good enough. A reduction in the number of managers who had completed Evolve Performance Training from 34% last year to the current 22% was also discussed. In response it was explained that, as new managers were in post, there had not been the capacity to provide that training. It was planned to launch 'lunch and learn' sessions shortly.

The Director of Human Resources acknowledged that performance compliance was not where it was wanted to be and there was a need to ensure training was accessible. It was found that there was a rush for manager training at the beginning of the performance cycle. A Member questioned the percentage of

managers who had completed the Evolve Performance Management training and it was agreed to circulate the information, from 2016/17 to the current day, after the meeting.

Concerns about the 36% of employees who had not received a performance appraisal were raised. Members were assured that more may have been undertaken but had not been recorded on the system. It was questioned if it was usually the same people who had not completed the appraisal and it was agreed to compile that information for Members.

The coaching eLearning figures revealed that 2400 people had registered whilst only 1004 had completed courses. It was explained that some of the coaching sessions were offered on a 'dip in dip out' basis and also that some people registered for courses and had then forgotten they had done so.

A Member queried the number of people who had benefitted from the 'Living Well Stop Smoking' service at a cost of £11,650 and was advised that it had been a difficult task to provide the information in the report as some management systems recorded learning and development differently.

A Member felt that the report focussed on courses whilst it was known that training could include measures such as mentoring or the informal 'lunch and learn' sessions planned. She believed that the member training figures were difficult to assess as some training was not required annually. She reiterated the belief that 64% of completed appraisals was not something to be proud about and reported that pay increases were dependant on appraisal in the private sector. In response it was stressed that all appraisals may not be recorded. The difficulty in conducting appraisals for differing roles was discussed. Some people may only work limited hours at various locations as opposed to office based full time staff who were more easily accessible.

It was questioned how people could become an ally and believed that more than the recorded figure of 18 elected members had been interested in that scheme. In response it was confirmed that the figure had been correct at the time of writing but had now increased.

Some negative apprentice and graduate feedback, identifying a lack of structure and support, was discussed. It was questioned if that was because it was a new programme. In response it was confirmed that this was due to it being the first programme involving only a small cohort. Discussions had been had with those concerned and it was hoped that the next cohort would have a more positive experience.

A Member queried statements in the report about a commitment to staff having a minimum of five learning and development days per year and an option at the end of the report to consider if five learning days per annum was pragmatic given there were currently no systems available to track or monitor engagement. He questioned if the commitment had been abandoned. It was explained that discussions had been held at Corporate Management Team meetings to decide if the stipulation for five days training was pragmatic. This was because there was, currently, no mechanism to capture that information.

At the meeting held last year questions had been raised about the number of staff with access to ICT. It was questioned if there was more confidence, one year on, that more people had that access. In response it was confirmed that 82% of the workforce had access to the corporate management system. The situation had improved but the aim was for 100% to have access within the next two to three years.

Resolved -

That this Committee requests that a further report be presented in 12 months, to also specifically focus on the work being done to improve performance appraisals across the Council.

ACTION: Director of Human Resources

33. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REFRESHED EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION PLAN 2022-25

The Assistant Director, Chief Executive's Office presented a report (**Document** "O") which updated the Committee on the progress made in relation to implementation of actions within the refreshed Equality Diversity and Inclusion Plan Objectives 2022-25.

It was confirmed in response to previous questions that the Allyship programme had 718 allies committed, 20 of which were elected members.

The report revealed that 4.6% of employees had chosen to disclose that they had a disability, and it was queried if that figure included the Industrial Services Group (ISG). It was confirmed that those employees were included, and it was agreed to provide a breakdown of that statistic.

Document "O" reported the number of families living in poor quality housing had increased by 1%. It was questioned if that was an error, and it was agreed to investigate those figures.

The percentage of Year 1 pupils achieving the phonics standards and the percentage of pupils achieving stage 2 reading, writing and maths at expected standard were worsening and it was questioned if this decline was due to the disruption from the Covid pandemic. In response it was reported that schools in the district had struggled more because of the pandemic and the gap between attainment with the national figures was more difficult to close.

The report revealed a small rise in the number of BAME employees and it was questioned if this was because vacancies were not available or BAME candidates were not interested. It was clarified that data captured all employee hires. Some BAME staff may have moved up the promotion ladder. The Council was seeing more diverse starters than leavers. Progress was also being made towards breaking the glass ceiling. It was agreed that more clarity would be provided in the next report presented.

Median earnings of employees in the area (average) had improved, however, it

was questioned if those earnings had improved as much in Bradford as in other areas. It was also suggested that recruitment panels should include a diverse range of officers. It was confirmed that recruitment panels were diverse, and that more information could be provided on pay gaps between areas. It was requested that future reports include the previous year's national figures to allow comparisons to be made.

The numbers of people aged between 18 and 25 accessing Council delivered or procured support to develop skills was questioned and it was explained that the figures in the report were for people who were not in education, employment of training (NEET) and some who were in education or work. It was agreed that more accurate information would be provided.

Resolved -

That this Committee requests a further progress report be presented in 12 months, which also includes the comments and observations made by members.

ACTION: Assistant Director, Chief Executives Office

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

The Chair of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document "P"**) which included the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2023/24, which was attached as appendix 1 to Document "P"

Also attached as appendix 2, was a list of unscheduled topics for 2023-24.

The Overview and Scrutiny Lead reported that sessions had been held to discuss the inquiry into anti-social behaviour with another session planned for 2 November 2023 at St Johns?, Thorpe Edge, Bradford. The feedback from those session would be collated.

Resolved -

That the committee discussed and amended the work programme.

ACTION: Overview & 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