

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

### Meeting held 25 March 2021

(NOTE: This meeting was held as a remote meeting in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.)

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Ian Auckland, Steve Ayris, Denise Fox, Tim Huggan, Douglas Johnson, Mike Levery, Cate McDonald and Jim Steinke

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#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ben Curran, Sioned-Mair Richards and Jack Scott.

#### **2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

##### **4.1 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28th January 2021, were approved as a correct record and, arising from a query raised by Councillor Mike Levery, the Chair of the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee (Councillor Denise Fox) stated the Rural Strategy would be included on that Committee's Work Programme for 2021/22.

##### **4.2 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th February 2021, were approved as a correct record.

#### **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 The following questions were received from Ruth Hubbard:-

(a) In the Labour Group amendment submitted to the extraordinary meeting of the Council held last week, Voluntary Action Sheffield are quoted as

though to suggest they are in full support of the proposals. However, it is my understanding that VAS had not seen the report nor proposals. Can OSMC provide an explanation?

5.1.1 In response, the Chair stated that Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) was aware of the process, and that they would be invited to raise any concerns thereon. To date, the Council had not received any complaint from them.

(b) I would like to ask OSMC about the lack of consultation with anyone, and OSMC role in scrutinising Council plans, for so-called "empowering communities" (including the involvement of stakeholders in that).

5.1.2 In response, Councillor Terry Fox (Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Governance) stated that the Council would be engaging with all stakeholders, as had been done as part of the Big City Conversation. Councillor Fox disputed the assertion that the proposals had been rushed through the Council, and referred to the extensive public engagement work undertaken by this Committee, which comprised several meetings in 2019, to which various relevant groups and organisations had been invited to put forward their views. He added that, as part of the Big City Conversation, residents had informed the Council that they wanted to be involved in its decision-making processes. It was the aim of the Council to reach out to, and work in, local communities throughout the city, and the proposals would provide such an opportunity. The Council would welcome any ideas or suggestions as to how the Local Area Committees should operate.

(c) I'd also like to ask where the EIA is for the proposals and why, on such a key issue, this did not appear to have been done in advance.

5.1.3 In response, Laurie Brennan (Head of Policy and Partnerships) stated that the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had been prepared as part of the Cabinet report, as was always the procedure, and had been published with the Cabinet papers, as well as being available on request. In this specific case, the EIA was a live document, given the iterative and developing nature of the decision, and the manner in how the Council engaged with the public would be fundamental to the development of the EIA. As part of the public engagement process, the Council would ensure it fully assessed the demographic characteristics of the areas, as well as looking at proposals regarding devolved funding to the Local Area Committees.

## **6. EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Head of Policy and Partnerships attaching the Annual Equalities Report 2019/20 and the Workforce Employee Report 2019/20.

6.2 Present for this item were Councillor Terry Fox (Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Governance), Laurie Brennan (Head of Policy and Partnerships), Adele Robinson (Equalities and Engagement Manager) and Adeola Banjoko (Equalities and Engagement Officer).

6.3 Laurie Brennan introduced the report, indicating that it had been produced as part of the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act, and associated public sector duties. The report celebrated the extensive diverse nature of the city, and looked at the city's population, specifically the protected characteristics under the Equality Act. Mr Brennan stated that the report highlighted the inequality in the city and set out details of the city's possible equality objectives, together with the work required to achieve such objectives. Adele Robinson provided a brief overview of the contents of the report.

6.4 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided :-

- Whilst there was reference to the work of the Race Equality Commission in the report, the majority of the Commission's work started after the end of this reporting period of March 2020, therefore reference to the major part of this work would be included in the Annual Report 2020/21. This would involve a huge piece of work, which would continue throughout 2021/22.
- In terms of staff diversity and satisfaction, officers had found that disabled staff had been the least satisfied over the last few years. Over the same period, it had been identified that satisfaction levels of BAME staff had remained broadly static, but had dropped a little this year. Officers were focusing on this area of work at the moment, particularly in the light of recent worldwide events, and this issue would be highlighted in more detail in the Annual Report 2020/21.
- No officers present could provide an explanation as to whether or not anyone from the Equalities and Engagement Team had been involved in the decision to remove the Access-Able Policy from the Council's Licencing Policy. Officers would look into this and provide a response to the Committee. There were Equality Lead Officers in each of the Council's portfolios, who worked closely with the Equalities and Engagement Team, and when decisions regarding changes in policy were taken, an Equality Impact Assessment was produced, therefore issues such as the removal of Access Able from the Licencing Policy should have been picked up at that time.
- Internal Audit had reviewed the Council's procedures regarding EIAs and, as one of the findings, they had requested that the statements should be appended to reports when published. The Equalities and Engagement Team was currently in the process of implementing the findings of the review. Consideration could be given to commissioning an external body, with the relevant expertise, to undertake a review of the Council's procedures regarding EIAs.
- It was acknowledged that the Council could undertake more work in looking at how Members could be more informed in terms of how the Council's workforce could be better supported. It was also acknowledged that there was a need for improved communication by the Equalities and Engagement Team on this issue, with both staff and Members, and discussions would be

held with Councillor Terry Fox on how best this could be facilitated.

- It was hoped that the Equalities and Engagement Team would be able to produce a preliminary report on trends and data regarding local communities, based on the information from the Census 2021. Whilst there was still some uncertainty, it had been indicated that the full results would be received in March 2022, although this could be delayed due to the pandemic. The Team would aim to produce a preliminary report on the inequalities in the city which had been highlighted by the pandemic using data already collated.
- There was a three-year agreement for grant funding for those organisations making up the Equality Partnership, which had been extended for a further period of one year due to the pandemic. This was an open grant round during which any of the organisations could apply. Whilst there were seven Sheffield Equality Partners which formed the Partnership, there were several, smaller representative groups and organisations beneath these lead partners, which ensured a wide range of representation of Sheffield residents. All of the Partnerships were supported by the Team. It was acknowledged that the participation of all the partners on the Partnership, and supported by the Council, was diverse, and that all such groups were able to put forward their views. The Council, together with the Charity Commission, had a duty to monitor the seven organisations supporting the Partnerships, and ensure that they were all accountable, as well as to review the work they undertook.
- The issues of online bullying were linked to the wider digital agenda, and there had been a strong focus on this issue during the pandemic, as young people had been forced to use online learning, thereby increasing the risks of online bullying. The Council would look at data from national studies as it was not believed that such data was available at a city level at this time.
- Work would be undertaken to look at male suicide rates as part of the overall work to assess the effects of the pandemic on wellbeing and mental health. The Team had discussed this issue with colleagues in Human Resources, particularly with regard to how men could be better encouraged to talk about their problems.
- The Council had a considerable amount of work to undertake in terms of looking at the diversity of its workforce, with age being one element of that work.

6.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the Annual Equalities Report 2019/20 and the Workforce Employee Report 2019/20 now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks (i) Councillor Terry Fox, Laurie Brennan, Adele Robinson and Adeola Banjoko for attending the meeting and responding to the questions

raised, and (ii) the officers in the Equalities and Engagement Team for the excellent work undertaken in drafting the reports and for the ongoing work in connection with equalities and engagement within the Council and in the city; and

- (c) requests the Head of Policy and Partnerships to (i) look at developing an improved mechanism for keeping Members better informed and updated of the work undertaken by the Equalities and Engagement Team in terms of how the Council's workforce was supported, and (ii) update the Committee, at the earliest possible opportunity, on Sheffield's Census 2021 data.

## **7. FOOD POVERTY – INTERIM REPORT**

7.1 The Committee received an interim report of the Food Poverty Working Group, which had been established by this Committee, and had met throughout February and March 2021, to (a) consider (i) the extent, impact and experience of food poverty in the city and (ii) the support and services in place across the city to tackle food poverty, and (b) review the Council's response to food poverty.

7.2 Councillor Cate McDonald introduced the report, indicating that the work had comprised an interesting and intense piece of work, undertaken within a relatively short timescale, and that, subject to the approval of this Committee, the report, which comprised the first phase of the work, would be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration. Councillor McDonald indicated that the Working Group had acknowledged that food poverty comprised just one element of poverty faced by some residents.

7.3 Emily Standbrook-Shaw (Policy and Improvement Officer) referred to the other areas of poverty that the Working Group had identified as part of its work, and which would be included on this Committee's Work Programme for 2021/22. She highlighted the excellent work currently being undertaken by numerous groups and organisations in terms of helping to tackle food poverty.

7.4 In response to a question raised, it was stated that, following news of a food bank in Gleadless Valley found to be struggling due to high demand, and which was unaware of arrangements in other areas of the city, an officer had been requested to map out the location of all food banks in the city so as to make it clear where people should be directed to.

7.5 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the interim report on the work of the Food Poverty Working Group now submitted, together with the comments now made and response to the question raised;
- (b) thanks (i) those Committee Members on the Working Group for the excellent work undertaken within a relatively short timescale and (ii) Emily Standbrook-Shaw (Policy and Improvement Officer) for co-ordinating the work of the Group;

- (c) approves the recommendations set out in the report, and submission of the report to the Cabinet, for a response; and
- (d) requests that the report be referred to the Health and Wellbeing Board for comment.

## **8. SCRUTINY OVERVIEW - ISSUES TO RAISE FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

- 8.1 Councillor Denise Fox reported that the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee had received an update from Waste Management on issues regarding waste, fly-tipping and litter during the Covid-19 pandemic, which had included a contribution from volunteers of Sheffield Litter Pickers Group, and had considered a call-in of the Cabinet decision on the West Bar Square Update, at its last meeting held on 23rd March 2021.
- 8.2 Councillor Cate MacDonald reported that the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee had looked at mental health, which had included listening to the views of the Health and Social Care Trust and discussing the Mental Health Action Plan, at its last meeting held on 10th March 2021.
- 8.3 Councillor Mike Levery reported that the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee had discussed Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST) and Elective Home Education its last meeting held on 25th February 2021, with the latter subject raising a number of issues and concerns.
- 8.4 The Committee noted the information now reported.

## **9. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21 AND FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

- 9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer (Alice Nicholson) containing the Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21 and the future Work Programme.
- 9.2 Ms Nicholson referred to the potential items listed for consideration by the Committee during the Municipal Year 2021/22, which included climate emergency/climate change, and highlighted the need for the Committee to discuss this issue as soon as possible in the year. She also referred to suggestions raised at this meeting with regard to looking at equalities and engagement throughout the year.
- 9.3 Councillor Tim Huggan suggested that Local Area Committees and Governance be added to the Committee's Work Programme for 2021/22.
- 9.4 **RESOLVED:** That, subject to the above comments and suggestions, the Committee noted and approved the Work Programme for 2020/21 and the future Work Programme.

**10. COUNCILLOR MICK ROONEY**

- 10.1 RESOLVED: That the Committee places on record its thanks and appreciation to Councillor Mick Rooney for chairing the Committee during the Municipal Year 2020/21.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on a date to be arranged.