

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 11 November 2013

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Ian Auckland, Penny Baker, Roger Davison, Gill Furniss, Cate McDonald, Mick Rooney and Andrew Sangar

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 No apologies for absence were received.

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 13th February 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th February 2013, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, Councillor Mick Rooney, Chair of the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, stated that the service previously provided by the Council, to provide free of charge, the provision and fitting of small items of daily living equipment costing less than £50, had now been stopped for financial reasons.

4.2 15th May 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th May 2013, were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 There were no petitions submitted and the Chair agreed that any public questions should be raised under Item 6.

6. SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL ELECTORAL REVIEW - UPDATE ON REVIEW, PREPARATION AND DISCUSSION PAPER ON COUNCIL SIZE

6.1 The Director of Policy, Performance and Communications, submitted a report containing a summary of the evidence which had been presented to an informal meeting of the Committee held on 11th July 2013, by organisations

and members of the public, regarding the size of the City Council and the proposed submission on Council size. The report was accompanied by the draft submission on Council size, which was to be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. A paper containing the results of a survey of Elected Members, undertaken in order to inform the Council's submission on Council size, together with details of the methodology used as part of the survey were circulated at the meeting.

6.2 The following representations were made:-

6.2.1 Mr Alan Kewley

Mr Kewley indicated that he had not been able to attend the informal meeting of the Committee held on 11th July 2013, but had submitted representations which were included in the report now submitted. Mr Kewley elaborated on the representations he had made, indicating that he had not been able to comment on what he believed to be anomalies as part of the last boundary review undertaken 10 years ago due to an issue regarding time limits. He had been in contact with the Boundary Commission and expressed his concerns that, as part of this review, there were no plans to increase the number of Councillors. Mr Kewley also questioned how the Council could make public information more accessible and when the Council would be announcing its proposals in connection with changes to its Ward boundaries.

6.2.2 Mr Jonathan Harston

Mr Harston, who made representations at the informal meeting of the Committee held on 11th July 2013, stated that he had difficulty in commenting on the Council size on the basis that no figures available regarding the forecasted population of the City.

6.3 Victoria Penman, Policy and Improvement Officer, stated that the Council would make its submission on Council size in January 2104 and that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) would carry out consultation on the first stage of the review, which included the number of Councillors to be returned to the Council, from January to March 2014. The Group Leaders had already met with the Boundary Commission and had all agreed that cross-party agreement on this issue was important. It had been proposed that the City Council should continue to comprise 84 Councillors, representing 28 Wards, and it had been identified that the City needed a wide range of Councillors in order to undertake the work required of them in a large City with a strong tradition of local democracy. Whilst there had been losses and reductions in respect of some Council Services as a result of the recent budget cuts, it had been determined that this would not necessarily result in a reduction in Councillors' workloads and could, in some cases, increase such workloads as some residents would require additional help and advice. Ms Penman stated that the decision to recommend maintaining 84 Councillors had been informed by a wide range of evidence, as set out in the report now submitted and the additional information circulated.

6.4 In response to the questions raised by the members of the public, Ms Penman stated that, in terms of the accessibility of papers, officers had been working on the draft of the report for some time and had only recently been in a position to make the papers public. She also agreed that the report would benefit from a contents page. It was planned that the report be submitted to the Full Council at its meeting in January 2014, and that following this, there would be further public consultation, between March and April. Officers had also developed a database comprising those individuals and organisations who wished to be kept informed of the proposals, as part of the consultation process, and attendees who were not already on this database were invited to contact Ms. Penman so they could be added. In response to the question regarding Ward boundaries, it was stated that the Council's proposals on this issue would be announced as part of Stage 2 of the review, which would start in May 2014.

6.5 The following comments were made by Members of the Committee:-

- As part of Stage 2 of the review, regarding Ward boundaries and names, it would be useful if Members could view a relief map of the City as this would make it much clearer and easier to comment on the new boundaries.
- There were no real reasons or grounds for either increasing or decreasing the number of Councillors at the present time. Any decision to increase the number of Councillors would not be accepted by the public, particularly in the recent financial climate. There would be no grounds for reducing the number of Councillors in the light of current workloads and, taking into consideration, the additional duties of Chairs and members of outside bodies.
- It was suggested that the submission could be strengthened by clarifying the range of hours worked by Councillors, as many worked significantly longer than others and including information on population projections and, as an appendix, the summary of the research carried out with Councillors which had been circulated at this meeting.

6.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the additional information circulated;
- (b) in the light of the comments received as part of the survey and the comments made at this meeting, approves the draft submission on Council size, as attached to the report now submitted, and refers it to the Full Council meeting to be held on 8th January 2014, prior to its submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England; and
- (c) thanks Victoria Penman and her colleagues in Policy, Performance and Communications for the excellent work undertaken.

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