

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING**

Monday, 26th September, 2022

Present:- **Councillors** Karen Warrington, Winston Duguid, Mark Elliott, Lucy Hodge, Shaun Hughes, Hal MacFie, Alastair Singleton and Sally Davis

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Andrew Furse

#### **13 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **14 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Furse sent apologies.

#### **16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **17 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none.

#### **18 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING**

There were none.

#### **19 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

Councillor Tom Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Council House Building, gave an update to the Panel which covered the following:

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter outturn report will be considered at the November meeting of the Cabinet. The '2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy' will be coming to this Panel at the November meeting.
- The Leader has signed off a grant to Cleveland Pools.
- 117 Newbridge Hill – the first 7 units of Council Housing at the end of this month.

- Commercial Estate – arrears have fallen from £10m to £2.5m. There are some strong new lettings of which 50% are independent retailers.

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Elliott asked if the offer to staff represented a variance from what was originally budgeted. The Cabinet Member stated that it was a variance but had now been factored in.

In response to a query from Councillor Hughes about the software issues for Council Tax rebates, the Cabinet Member stated that there was nothing to suggest that this system would be used again for any of the cost of living measures. Councillor Davis stated that staff had been very helpful regarding this rebate.

Councillor MacFie asked how many of the new lettings were retail, the Cabinet Member stated that 78% were retail.

The Cabinet Member stated that he would find out information regarding whether lettings figures are down on pre-pandemic levels.

In response to a query from Councillor Warrington, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the 7 units at 117 Newbridge would be for social rent.

## **20 MINUTES**

Confirmation of the minutes was deferred to the next meeting of the Panel.

## **21 EQUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Cherry Bennett - Director of People and Policy - and Councillor Dine Romero - Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Communities and Culture - introduced the item.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Warrington congratulated the officers on the work and the report. She asked that another column be added to show moves between red/amber/green.

Councillor Davis mentioned the issue of access to schools regarding pavements outside of the school building. She has recently had a case where the issue had been with highways for 2 years. This must be considered in terms of school accessibility. Councillor Warrington asked that the Council be proactive in this type of situation. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the situation was quickly dealt with as soon as we were made aware. Samantha Jones, Inclusive Communities Manager, added that a post was being recruited for an accessibility officer regarding infrastructure changes and developments, including new buildings (50m ring around the facility).

Councillor Hodge asked the following questions (*Officer responses shown in italics*):

- It would be useful to have more information on targets met which needs quantifying initiatives/impacts. Performance Indicators are hard to develop. *It is a challenge to produce KPIs that are data driven. The group is going to work on this as a high priority.*
- Why is financial reporting shown as red and what is the plan to improve? *We always do an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) as part of a budget report. We need to look at the cumulative impact rather than separate directorates. The EIA should be done before the decision making process on a budget.*
- Strategies around communication and access seem to focus on digital solutions, can we also consider non-digital solutions. *We are working looking at a more community approach to consultation and also capturing verbal feedback at a familiar/accessible venue.*
- Why was the census data late? *This is not a function of council reporting so we can only guess but we believe it is partially due to Covid and also the system and processes being developed.*

Councillor Duguid asked the following questions (*Officer responses shown in italics*):

- How far has Covid put us back? *A year or maybe more, it is very difficult to tell.*
- What is the staff monitoring process? *The Performance Management process has moved away from an annual appraisal to more regular conversations. We now have the facility to capture information on a software platform and have done management training to support this. We also now have staff networks which can provide challenge.*

Councillor Warrington asked about the networking groups and if they have equalities and inclusion embedded into their culture. She asked how people would convey their concerns. *The officer explained that colleagues are able to share in the network groups and can raise issues with their line manager. There is also a 'reasonable adjustment' panel; policies on domestic abuse; an Independent Advisory Group; Corporate Equalities Steering Group Board and also links with the Trade Unions.*

Councillor MacFie asked if age is a consideration regarding equalities work. The officer advised that around a third of the workforce is age 55 and over and this is threaded through the work we do. Councillor Warrington stated that it is good to see that everything is linked and layered.

Councillor Singleton stated that this was an ambitious and exciting piece of work and asked the following questions (*Officer responses shown in italics*):

- Is there mandatory training for the leading together and managing together cohorts? *The officer stated that she would find out and reflect on mandatory training.*
- Regarding political groups – it is a good ambition regarding increasing diversity but hard to work out where the line is. *There is a member advocate on the Steering Group. We have asked for an update in terms of LGA training they are due to be attending so that the learning is shared.* Councillor Warrington stated that each party has its own processes in place to increase

diversity. The Cabinet member stated that it is about finding different mechanisms to have a Councillor body that reflects the population.

## **22 PANEL WORKPLAN**

It was noted that the Panel would be discussing the '2023/24 Medium Term Financial Strategy' at their November meeting. The Somer Valley Enterprise Zone will be discussed at a meeting in January (new meeting date TBC)

The meeting ended at 5.09 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**