

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 9 July 2014 from 14.00 - 15.20

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Neghat Nawaz Khan
Councillor Thulani Molife
Councillor Anne Peach
Councillor Carole-Ann Jones

Absent

Councillor Glyn Jenkins (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ginny Klein
Councillor Mohammed Saghir
Councillor Roger Steel
Councillor Marcia Watson

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Jon Collins - Leader of the Council
Rebecca Wilson - Political Assistant to the Labour Group
Jane Garrard - Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Angelika Kaufhold - Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Glyn Jenkins – other Council business
Council Ginny Klein – personal
Councillor Mohammed Saghir
Councillor Roger Steel – other Council business
Councillor Marcia Watson - personal

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

17 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2014 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

18 DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR JON COLLINS - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Jon Collins, Leader of the Council presented information on his assessment of the key priorities for the Council in 2014/15. He identified his three key priorities for the year ahead as:

1. taking advantage of opportunities presented by a rising property market

2. focusing on education in schools, particularly secondary schools
3. addressing budget pressures facing the Council.

In relation to addressing budget pressures facing the Council, Councillor Collins provided the following information:

- a) The Council's budget position is difficult due to loss of government grant, alongside other pressures such as changing population demographics. The Council needs to take £54 million out of its budget over the next two years.
- b) It is important to still be ambitious for the City and not just focus on making budget savings.
- c) Mechanisms for meeting budget pressures include:
 - i. Identifying opportunities for income generation
 - ii. Reviewing and, where appropriate, sharpening budget assumptions
 - iii. Maximising benefits from good commissioning
 - iv. Changing services to deliver the same outcome at a reduced cost by identifying creative solutions, driving out bureaucracy and changing attitudes and culture
 - v. Once the above options have been exhausted it may then be necessary to review what services the Council can afford to provide.

In relation to education and schools, Councillor Collins provided the following information:

- d) The schools in Special Measures are making progress.
- e) There is a need to look at how the Council interacts with schools. It is increasingly hard to interact effectively in a fragmented system and with less resource.
- f) The Council needs to be clear about its vision for education, what it will take an active interest in and identify opportunities to provide added value and really make a difference. The Council needs to make the best of the situation created by national policy.
- g) It is important to try and build partnerships between schools.
- h) It is intended to review how the Council supports good school governance, with the aim of developing a Governors Academy by September 2014 to train school governors.
- i) The Council could 'add value' by supporting schools in recruitment of high quality teaching staff. The Council could undertake work to 'market' Nottingham to potential new employees by making it an attractive place to move to and live. This could include promoting Nottingham at national recruitment events.
- j) The campaign on school attendance has been successful and in the future there will be a focus on behaviour. As a wider societal issue, not just a concern in schools, this is an area in which the Council can add value.

In relation to maximising redevelopment opportunities, Councillor Collins provided the following information:

- k) Nottingham has been successful in obtaining a significant amount of funding through the City Deal due to its clarity on priorities and the number of big projects taking place in the City.
- l) Examples of significant projects taking place in the City include £30 million made available for a new skills hub, new development at BioCity, funding

for the Enterprise Zone, redevelopment of Sneinton market, the Creative Quarter and the Guildhall site, Unity Square development and infrastructure projects such as widening of the A453, tram extension and train station improvement.

- m) As one of the Core Cities, Nottingham is pressing the Government for devolution of powers and funding. Progress is being achieved in making this case.
- n) East Midlands Councils will host a programme board for HS2.

Following questions from councillors, Councillor Jon Collins made the following additional points:

- o) Consultation is currently taking place on proposals for the future of the Challenge Board. It is proposed to implement a new structure based around OFSTED themes, with accountability back to the Board. It should be independent of the local authority and it is proposed to continue with an independent chair. There is also a proposal to rename it the 'Improvement Board' so as to be more inclusive of all schools.
- p) Primary school performance is continuing to improve but significant challenges remain. One of the challenges is engaging with parents whose first or second language is not English and Councillor Collins suggested that funding may be sought to provide language courses for these parents.
- q) The transition between primary and secondary schools is a challenging period because of the risk of learning loss and the fact that some pupils chose to go to County schools instead of City schools. Opportunities to address this could be found in developing more all age schools, such as Nottingham Academy. Innovative solutions are required to improve the transition period.
- r) Redevelopment of Broadmarsh Shopping Centre is definitely taking place and members of the public can view the plans in the Broadmarsh Centre.
- s) Current levers available to the Council to help reduce youth unemployment are the Nottingham Jobs Fund, the Council's apprenticeship scheme and making the Council's apprenticeships and entry level jobs only available to City residents. The Council could do more directly if it had more power devolved from Government.
- t) Governance in schools is too weak and the Council can help to strengthen this. The Council is working with the universities on developing the Governors Academy. The aim is that training is provided before anyone can become a local authority governor, and hopefully this will be through an accredited qualification. It is hoped that schools will encourage other governors to undertake accredited training. There are also plans to involve businesses to support their employees in becoming governors, as part of their corporate social responsibility.
- u) There is demand for council housing and it is financially viable to renew existing council housing and build new houses. The Council could also play a role in making low cost housing available for rent or sale, and there could be scope for Nottingham City Homes to undertake this role. It is also important to encourage developers to build large family houses in the City to meet demand from all parts of the market. There is a need for ambitious targets in relation to housing over the next 4 years.
- v) The number of vacant commercial properties owned by the Council is declining but due to the size of the property portfolio the Council will

- probably never have sufficient resource to manage it as necessary. Alternative ways of managing the portfolio are being explored, for example involving a partner in property management.
- w) The Leader of the Council's portfolio now includes 'schools', but it is about influencing rather than controlling the schools agenda. The ambition is for every child in the City to be taught in a school judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by OFSTED. The Council's role is to be a champion for children and parents and make sure support offers to schools add value.
 - x) Grant aid to the community and voluntary sector has not been cut but it is being managed differently. It is intended to reduce the value of the Infrastructure contract and shift funding to area based grant, giving more control to local areas. The current balance of funding between areas is historic but it should reflect the level of need. The Council is working to achieve this but it can't be done immediately because the voluntary sector needs time to adapt. The value of contracts held by the voluntary sector has reduced due to overall value of contracts being reduced but the proportion of contract values held by the voluntary sector remains broadly the same.

The Chair thanked Councillor Collins for attending the meeting and identified the following issues raised during discussion that the Committee should take account of in its future work:

- (1) activity taking place to strengthen school governance will have implications for the point at which the Committee re-engages on school accountability issues;
- (2) health scrutiny councillors should be mindful of Councillor Collins' concern that public health is able to demonstrably show outcomes; and
- (3) progress on redevelopment will need to be reviewed when the Committee revisits the Growth Plan.

19 PROGRAMME FOR SCRUTINY

Angelika Kaufhold introduced a report of the Head of Democratic Services detailing the scrutiny work programme for 2014/15. She highlighted that the Committee will be looking at progress against the Nottingham Plan in September and several councillors will be asked to take part in the separate One Nottingham Board Performance Session. She also advised the Committee that in September it would need to agree the programme of scrutiny reviews to be carried out during 2014/15.

RESOLVED that

- (1) scoping of a possible review of female genital mutilation be undertaken and brought back to the Committee for consideration; and**
- (2) the following items be added to the scrutiny work programme:**
 - i. Nottingham City Safeguarding Board Annual Report**
 - ii. A scrutiny review of the Council's implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014, with a particular focus on school attendance and the rate of transitioning arrangements of existing statements and issuing of the new Educational Health and Care Plans for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.**