

Nottingham City Council

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 13 March 2024 from 10.01 am to 11.43 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Imran Jalil
Councillor Devontay Okure (Chair)
Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Andrew Rule
Councillor Naim Salim

Absent

Councillor Leslie Ayoola
Councillor Sam Harris
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Adrian Mann - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer
Councillor David Mellen - Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Regeneration and Communications
James Rhodes - Acting Assistant Chief Executive
Damon Stanton - Scrutiny and Audit Support Officer

38 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Leslie Ayoola – work commitments
Councillor Sam Harris – work commitments
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora – unwell

39 Declarations of Interest

None

40 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2024 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Committee requested that a draft version of the Council's new Performance Management Framework currently under development is shared with the staff Trade Unions as soon as possible. This had been a recommendation made by the Committee at its meeting in November.

41 Scrutiny Chairs Catch-Up

Councillor Imran Jalil, Chair of the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee, and Councillor Georgia Power, Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee, provided an update on the current and future work taking place within their Committee's remits. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee met during February to discuss the Council's rating of 'requires improvement' following the Care Quality Commission's pilot assessment of how it is meeting its duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014, and how achieving improvement could be impacted by the Council's 2024/25 budget proposals. The Committee also considered the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust's new Workforce Inclusion Strategy, as part of its wider programme of improvement and transformation.
- b) The Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee met earlier in March to consider the activity of the Community Safety Partnership and the work carried out by the Council's Environmental Health and Public Protection teams. The Committee also intends to carry out a 'spotlight' review of the options available regarding the future of the District Heating Network.

The Committee noted the updates from the Scrutiny Committee Chairs.

42 Strategic Council Plan

Councillor David Mellen, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Regeneration and Communications, and James Rhodes, Assistant Chief Executive, presented a report on the recent refresh of the Strategic Council Plan (SCP). The following points were raised:

- a) The initial SCP 2023-27 was agreed at Full Council on 6 March 2023. The SCP was to be refreshed following the Council elections in May 2023 to include the Administration's Manifesto pledges, but this had to be delayed until the Full Council meeting on 4 March 2024 to ensure that the SCP could be fully aligned and integrated with the Council's extremely challenging proposed 2024/25 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Business Plans for service provision have been produced in the context of the 2024/25 budget and the requirements of the Independent Assurance Board, to ensure that the SCP can be delivered within the Council's current financial context.
- b) The SCP sets out a vision that "Nottingham is Healthy, Safe, Clean, Green, Proud and Ambitious". It contains ten outcomes across the three themes of 'People', 'Neighbourhoods' and 'City'. The SCP contains both the statutory duties that the Council discharges and the Administration's 111 pledges made in its Manifesto. Currently, 99 of the pledges have been integrated into the SCP and associated divisional Business Plans, and 7 of the pledges have been delivered on to date. Unfortunately, it has been necessary to pause 12 pledges due to a lack of resources needed for their effective delivery. However, these pledges will remain under regular review and will be re-included in the SCP if suitable funding to support their delivery can be identified.
- c) A full performance management structure is in place to ensure the delivery of the SCP across all areas of the Council. Reporting on delivery performance in relation to the 'business as usual' Critical Indicators will resume in Quarter 4, with performance reporting on the commitments made in the Administration's Manifesto taking place on an annual basis.

- a) Ultimately, future amendments to the SCP may be needed due to the appointment of Commissioners to the Council (who have required that an Improvement Plan is produced within the next three months), or based on the deliverability position in light of any further savings required to bridge existing or future budget gaps over the SCP period.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- b) The Committee asked what would be required to enable the Council to develop and launch an Anti-Poverty Strategy – as this represented one of the 12 currently paused pledges. It was explained that there are not currently the resources available to produce an effective strategy that would be implementable in practice. However, discussions will be carried out with Nottingham’s universities and the community and voluntary sector on potential funding models that could be used to support the development and deployment of a strong Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- c) The Committee raised concerns that the SCP would not be deliverable within the context of the 2024/25 budget and MTFP. It was set out that the Council aimed to maintain an ambitious SCP, balanced against what will be achievable within the current financial context. However, the SCP will focus on improving delivery in the most difficult areas and, as it covers the 2023-27 period, it has the scope to be developed further and deliver more if the wider financial position improves. It will be vital for the Council to work alongside as many communities and partners as possible to ensure and maintain the facilities that everyone in the city needs – and to engage with the other stakeholders involved in the delivery and support of statutory services.
- d) The Committee queried how the delivery of pledges made within the SCP could be measured effectively to convey clear outcomes. It was explained that, in the current financial context, the Council would need to identify data that can be collected and analysed as easily as possible. The available information that can be collected will be reviewed so that indicative outcomes regarding the delivery of the SCP can be established.
- e) The Committee asked how it would be ensured that the Asset Rationalisation process needed to fund the SCP would not result in the loss of important venues needed for the delivery of services at the community level, including support for mental health needs. It was reported that a full review of property assets is being carried out, but that the Council would still be maintaining community facilities for the local delivery of services. Some of the services provided by the Council relating to sexual and mental health are not statutory requirements, so it will work with communities, partners and providers to ensure that there is appropriate support available from suitable facilities. The SCP does not simply represent what the Council delivers directly through its own buildings, but also how it delivers a number of services in partnership with other organisations.
- f) The Committee asked what impact the establishment of the East Midlands Combined County Authority (CCA) would have on the delivery of the SCP. It was explained that the election for the Mayor for the CCA would take place at the start of May. However, funding to the CCA for certain purposes (such as the

development of transport infrastructure) has been formally allocated already, so these opportunities have been factored into the SCP.

- g) The Committee queried how mobile CCTV would be maintained to ensure an ongoing deterrent to fly-tipping, when free entry had been available at Nottingham Castle, and how the Council would work with partners to ensure that there were freely accessible toilets available across the city. It was set out that the monitoring of fly-tipping hotspots had achieved some successes, so consideration was being given to how a central fund could be established for the relocation of CCTV equipment when required. However, the SCP represents the Council's overall vision for 2023-27, so there is still a great deal of work to be done in planning how this vision will be implemented.
- h) The Committee asked how the Council would meet its obligations to its tenants to ensure that homes were safe and free from damp and mould, how it would ensure that properties that it purchased as new social housing were fit for purpose, and how it would ensure that it complied with the new economic and consumer standards for social housing. It was reported that the Council does everything that it can as a landlord to eliminate damp and mould, but this can be a recurring problem within certain types of housing in the city. However, this is a priority area for Housing Services to address, to ensure the health and wellbeing of tenants. All homes that the Council purchases for new social housing are fully assessed to ensure that they are, or can be brought up to, a suitable standard. A full survey of the current social housing stock is taking place and work is underway to ensure improvements to the quality of the Council's social homes.
- i) The Committee asked what would be done to mitigate the impact of reductions in services on children and young people, and to ensure that local communities are involved and engaged in the decisions that affect them. It was set out that the SCP continues to develop Nottingham as a Child-Friendly City, and that it is important to ensure the maintenance of open green spaces and a good public transport infrastructure. However, there is a national context of child poverty levels increasing and many families are struggling, so this represents a significant issue across the country.
- j) The Committee queried how the actual impacts of the Council's 2024/25 budget on local people would be measured, and what information would be collected directly from Nottingham citizens. It was explained that it was not currently possible to resource surveying Nottingham people directly, but information would be gathered from all Council departments on service usage and user experiences, going forward – to inform how the Council can use the resources that it has to achieve the greatest impact possible. Contact between councillors and the people of their wards will be vital in building up an understanding of the community impacts.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

- 1) To request that further information is provided on when there is free access to Nottingham Castle, previously and in the future.**
- 2) To recommend that the SCP is refined so that it fully aligns with the Council Plan.**
- 3) To recommend that whilst the Anti-Poverty Strategy is on hold due to budget pressures, a Poverty Alleviation Strategy/Framework is considered to assist in mitigating the impacts of the budget. This would be specific to service delivery and focussed on how the Council can indirectly support residents (such as signposting to other organisations).**
- 4) To recommend that the metrics in the SCP used to measure how the Council will know it is on track in achieving its intended outcomes be reviewed so that they are clear and measurable.**

43 Recommendation Tracker

The Chair presented the latest responses received to the Committee's recommendations from the relevant Portfolio Holders. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Committee considered that the Council should have a general corporate strategy in place regarding its approach to the alleviation of poverty and the provision of community support, delivered in collaboration with other partners and stakeholders. The methods used for the delivery of all Council services should include specific measures to seek to alleviate poverty in the city wherever possible.
- b) The Committee requested that an update is provided as soon as possible in relation to the development of all final Equality Impact Assessments relevant to the implementation of the Council's 2024/25 budget.

The Committee noted the Recommendation Tracker.

44 Work Programme

The Chair presented the Committee's current Work Programme. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Committee's current meeting represents the last one of the 2023/24 municipal year. The Committee will meet next in May, following the start of the new 2024/25 municipal year.

Resolved:

- 1) That the 2023/24 Corporate Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be signed off as complete.**