

Nottingham City Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at remotely via Zoom and livestreamed on the Council's YouTube channel on 4 November 2020 from 2.01 pm - 4.14 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Anne Peach (Chair)
Councillor Georgia Power (Vice Chair)
Councillor Steve Battlemuch
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Angharad Roberts
Councillor Andrew Rule
Councillor Cate Woodward

Absent

Councillor Carole McCulloch (Vice Chair)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Philip Broxholme	- Senior Community Safety Manager
Vernon Coaker	- Chair of the Crime and Drugs Partnership Board
Elaine Fox	- Corporate Policy and Performance Officer
Superintendent Mat Healy	- City Commander, Nottinghamshire Police
Councillor Neghat Khan	- Portfolio Holder for Employment and Community Protection
Lucy Lee	- Head of Customer Services
Mary Lester	- Head of Security and Logistics
Councillor David Mellen	- Leader/Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Schools and Communications
Laura Patterson	- Crime and Drugs Partnership Policy Officer
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer

24 Change of Membership

The Committee noted that Councillor Steve Battlemuch has replaced Councillor Maria Joannou as a member of the Committee.

25 Apologies for absence

None.

26 Declarations of interests

None.

27 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2020 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

28 Scrutiny of the Leader/Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Schools and Communications

Councillor David Mellen, Leader/Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Schools and Communications, gave a presentation on the current issues in relation to his role as Leader, and the current position of his portfolio and performance in relation to his Council Plan priorities around Regeneration, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) the schools element of the portfolio will be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and there are no Council Plan commitments in relation to Communications, although this has been a busy area of work over the last 6 months;
- (b) there are 9 Council Plan commitments for the Regeneration element of the portfolio. 2 have an expected outcome of Red, 5 have an expected outcome of Amber, and 2 have an expected outcome of Green:
 - those with an expected outcome of Green are:
 - complete Nottingham Science Park, Unity Square, Players Site, Energy Park and People's Hall, and progress the Island Site and Boots to provide employment opportunities for Nottingham people;
 - continue to develop Nottingham and Derby's Metro Strategy, building on already strong partnership working with Gedling and Derby, and including other neighbourhood authorities;
 - those with an expected outcome of Amber are:
 - build a new Central Library, making it the best children's library in the UK;
 - complete the transformation of the south side of the city centre, including the college, library and Broadmarsh car park, bus station and shopping centre;
 - ensure the development of at least 500,000 square feet of Grade A office space to encourage inward investment in the city;
 - fight to ensure that UK government funding replaces current EU funding for economic development activity in Nottingham;
 - start the redevelopment of Broadmarsh west, including west of Carrington Street, Castle College Site, Trip to Jerusalem Site, etc;
 - those with an expected outcome of red are:
 - generate £3m more income by rationalising and consolidating the Council's land holdings and reinvesting to bring in additional income;
 - work to secure government funding for a high quality conference centre in Nottingham;
- (c) performance highlights include:
 - Nottingham Science Park's Elizabeth Garrett Anderson building has been completed and is expected to formally open in a few months' time;
 - Unity Square and the student development on Station Street have progressed well;

- work has continued with Derby City Council to develop the Metro Strategy;
 - between April 2019 and March 2020, 50,000sqft of office space was developed, including 25,000sqft of Grade 'A' B1a offices;
- (d) challenges and opportunities for the portfolio going forward include:
- the Covid-19 lockdown has had an adverse impact on the development of some of the city's large regeneration projects, but these are not progressing again;
 - despite initial delay due to Covid-19, design works for the new Central Library have been given the approval to progress, as well as for the site opposite Nottingham Station;
- (e) in respect of Covid-19:
- since the outbreak earlier this year, the Council has worked extremely hard to continue to support people across the city;
 - workstreams have been set up to respond to the pandemic and supported 18,000 vulnerable citizens in Nottingham through the shielding programme;
 - the Council has sourced PPE, established a 'golden number' for local people to call for assistance, distributed business grants and lobbied for additional funding;
 - Tier 3 and further lockdown restrictions come into force on Thursday;
- (f) challenges for the Council include:
- the Report in the Public Interest published in August, alongside the Council's Action Plan. The plan mentions taking advice from outside of Nottingham to help address the issues raised in the report, and discussions with MHCLG have been part of ongoing work to respond to the areas highlighted in the Report in the Public Interest;
 - there is a MHCLG Non-Statutory Review, which is a short focussed review and is seen as part of the Council's commitment to seek external advice and to ensure public accountability to the actions being taken;
 - the development of the Broadmarsh Shopping Centre, but there is a once in a generation opportunity to reshape a significant space;
 - there is a lack of financial support from the Government;
- (g) financial challenges for the Council include:
- there are significant challenges arising from non-funded Covid-19 costs;
 - the gross Covid-19 impact for 2020/21 is £69.9m, the confirmed funding from Government is £23.5m, estimated funding from the Income Compensation Scheme is £16.2m and an additional £10.7m, resulting in a funding gap of £21.1m;
 - an in-year budget process has been launched and delivered budget proposals for £12.5m;
 - a Voluntary Redundancy Programme has been put in place with a total of 210 jobs and ongoing savings of £6.6m;
 - the Government has been lobbied for more funding.

During the discussion which followed, the following points were raised:

- (h) an Improvement Board is being established next week to address the Report in the Public Interest and the Action Plan in response;
- (i) work to make Broadmarsh safe was needed, so a decision was taken to extend the contract with McAlpine to carry out the works. They already knew the site, and a contract extension was the most cost effective way to secure the site;
- (j) the sale of Exchange Buildings relates to the offices behind the Council House. Whoever buys them will have to develop them in line with the history of the building;
- (k) the capital is needed from the sale of Angel Row before the new Central Library can be developed, but it is hoped to be finished in 2022;
- (l) regeneration is a challenge in the current climate, but businesses still want to develop so there is some movement;
- (m) there is an East Midlands Development Corporation which involves a number of East Midlands Councils. The impact of the Corporation should be more jobs for people to travel to, but there is a concern that it may take businesses away from the city;
- (n) there are 2 types of reserves – earmarked and unearmarked, and the Council is intending to borrow from reserves to meet the budget gap, but the more compensation received from Government, the less needs to be borrowed from reserves;
- (o) the whole capital programme is under pressure, so mitigating measures need to be put in place, eg there is no longer the ability to build Crocus Place so the Council will get the capital receipt for the land, but will lose the future rental income;
- (p) rental income has reduced during the pandemic to enable tenants to stay during a difficult trading time;
- (q) the issues around Robin Hood Energy are well known and will result in a loss for the Council;
- (r) the pandemic has shown that some services can operate without being in the office, but it's not always positive for colleagues being away from their team, so future ways of working, plus the estate the Council needs, will all need to be considered.

29 Crime and Drugs Partnership Plan Performance

The Committee was presented with information on the work of the Crime and Drugs Partnership, and its performance in relation to the Crime and Drugs Partnership Plan.

Vernon Coaker, Chair of the Crime and Drugs Partnership Board, introduced his team. Philip Broxholme, Senior Community Safety Manager, gave a presentation and highlighted the following points:

- (a) the Crime and Drugs Partnership (CDP) is a multi-agency community safety partnership responsible for tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, and reoffending. It was established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and its duties and responsibilities have been amended by subsequent legislation;
- (b) the CDP is formed of six 'Responsible Authorities':
- Nottingham City Council;
 - Nottinghamshire Police;
 - National Probation Service;
 - Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland Community Rehabilitation Company;
 - Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Groups/Clinical Commissioning Partnership;
 - Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- Alongside a number of other public bodies on a voluntary basis:
- Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner;
 - University of Nottingham;
 - Nottingham Trent University;
 - Nottingham City Homes;
 - HMP Nottingham;
- (c) the aims of the Partnership are to reduce:
- crime;
 - reoffending;
 - substance misuse;
 - anti-social behaviour;
- (d) the responsibilities of the Partnership are:
- local strategic management;
 - engage and consult with the local community;
 - commissioning of a local strategic assessment;
 - development of a local delivery plan;
 - overseeing delivery and performance against targets;
 - commissioning of services for substance misuse and domestic and sexual violence and abuse;
- (e) the headline targets for the Partnership Plan 2020-23 are:
- to reduce crime;
 - to reduce hate crime repeat victimisation by 10%;
 - to reduce anti-social behaviour by 25%;
 - to maintain performance on respect of successful completions from substance misuse treatment;
- (f) the 2019 strategic assessment identified six key priorities:
- weapon enabled offending;
 - modern slavery and exploitation;
 - domestic and sexual violence;
 - drugs and alcohol;

- hate crime;
 - burglary;
- (g) performance indicators show that crime is reducing, anti-social behaviour has increased, and hate crime and substance misuse has remained stable;
- (h) the impact of Covid-19:
- all crime has reduced, except in 2 wards;
 - domestic violence and abuse has increased;
 - hate crime has remained at a similar level to last year, but it was expected that it would reduce without the night time economy;
 - anti-social behaviour has seen the biggest increase, mainly in noise related complaints;
 - the percentage of people successfully completing substance misuse programmes has reduced slightly, but remains above the national average.

During the discussion which followed, the following points were raised:

- (i) the increase in anti-social behaviour is not unique to lockdown, and includes breaches of lockdown rules, such as going out for more than one run, having visitors, etc;
- (j) all officers were allocated to anti-social behaviour, and resources were targeted to the most problematic areas;
- (k) the CDP focuses on delivery, and the partnership working is strong, which makes it successful. The profile needs to be raised so that more people are aware of the work it carries out, and more partners can become involved;
- (l) the most deprived areas suffer the greatest levels of anti-social behaviour and need more resources and faster response times. There needs to be a more proactive approach at the grass roots level to have an impact;
- (m) the Police prioritise attending incidents that could lead to harm, but Operation Reacher is being rolled out and is looking at local priorities so should have an impact;
- (n) the plans for a Rapid Response Team for anti-social behaviour have been delayed, but will be put in place;
- (o) mental health can have an impact on crime rates, and the Police have a triage care with a mental health nurse on board to help resolve issues;
- (p) child sexual exploitation is well resourced, but the shift to online criminality is challenging.

30 Universal Credit Implementation Update

Lucy Lee, Head of Customer Services, supported by Elaine Fox, Corporate Policy and Performance Officer, gave a presentation updating the Committee on the impact of Universal Credit, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) the Universal Credit Full Service rolled out in Nottingham on 17 October 2018. People move onto Universal Credit if they make a new benefit claim or have a change in their circumstances. Nottingham was one of the last places in the country where Universal Credit rolled out. It replaces Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, and Working Tax Credit. Universal Credit does not include any other benefits, including Council Tax Support, which can be claimed alongside Universal Credit;
- (b) in Nottingham:
- 35,000 people are on Universal Credit (as at September 2020);
 - 11,750 people are employed but still claiming the equivalent of Tax Credits/Housing Benefit;
 - 15,475 people are unemployed claimants;
 - 2,135 people are planning or preparing for work – they are not currently expected to look for work as they have a health condition which is likely to improve, or a child aged 1 or 2 for whom they have caring responsibilities;
 - 5,547 people are out of work and have no requirement to look for work. This group is made up of people with health conditions which are not expected to improve, and people with children under 1;
 - approximately 25,000 benefit claimants are still to move across to Universal Credit. These are individuals who are claiming Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Job Seekers' Allowance;
- (c) the impact of Universal Credit on Nottingham City Homes (NCH) includes:
- just over 6,000 tenants are claiming Universal Credit, which is half of the expected final total and twice the number reported last November;
 - rent arrears of tenants on Universal Credit currently stands at £2,874,003. Last November the figure was £1,374,326;
 - average rent arrears of tenants on Universal Credit is £618.33, and increase from £560.72 last November;
 - 1,818 Alternative Payment Arrangements have been requested, compared to 795 last year;
 - food bank referrals remain higher than pre-Universal Credit levels;
 - there is a shortfall of £7.90 per week for people in supported accommodation, for which people cannot get Discretionary Housing Payments – this affects Nottingham City Homes as it is classed as a metropolitan housing association rather than social housing. Last year, the shortfall was £7.77 per week;
 - Covid-19 has heavily impacted Universal Credit with a large increase in claims due to the pandemic. As claimants are not paid until 5 weeks after they have made their initial claim, this has had a negative impact on rent arrears;
- (d) the impact on Welfare Rights include:
- there has been a reduction in enquiries;
 - foodbank referrals have increased significantly, with 259 since mid-March;

- calls to Nottingham City Council's 'golden number', set up to support vulnerable people during Covid-19, which related to financial worries were referred to Welfare Rights;
- (e) the impact on the Trussell Trust includes:
- working with local foodbanks to establish usage in Nottingham. Nationally during the start of the pandemic, around half of people who used a foodbank had never needed one before, and families with children have been most affected;
 - the Trust analysis forecasts a 61% increase in food parcels needed across its UK network in October to December, which equates to 6 parcels given out every minute;
 - the Trust has made a series of recommendations regarding welfare assistance in light of their recent report:
 - protect people's incomes by locking in the £20 rise to Universal Credit brought in at the start of the pandemic;
 - help people hold on to more of their benefits through the economic crisis by suspending benefit debt deductions until a fairer approach to repayments can be introduced;
 - make local safety nets as strong as possible by investing £250m in local welfare assistance in England;
- (f) ongoing concerns include:
- the level of rent arrears continue to rise;
 - the 5 week wait before the first award is received is still causing problems;
 - repaying any advance payment means people struggle further down the line;
 - Council Tax Support needs to be applied for separately;
 - the plans for a 'managed migration, remain unclear. There was little feedback on the pilot in Harrogate, except for reports that far fewer people moved onto Universal Credit than were expected to;
 - Covid-19 has seen many more people move into Universal Credit, meaning even more families and individuals are struggling to cope with low income and the wait for their first payment;
 - unemployment may rise further, potentially exacerbated by the end of the Government's furlough scheme and the additional Tier 2 lockdown measures which now apply in the city.

During the discussion which followed, the following points were raised:

- (g) the ban on evictions ended in September, but there is support for tenants and they can't be evicted without 6 months' notice without good reason;
- (h) lots of homeless people are still being accommodated in hotels;
- (i) those that don't have recourse to public funds are signposted to the relevant support services;
- (j) part of the reason that Welfare Rights have had fewer queries is because the DWP have stopped sanctions during the lockdown;

- (k) the DWP have provided assurance that they advise claimants to only take the amount of money they need if they take an advance.

31 Work Programme

Laura Wilson, Senior Governance Officer, presented a report on the work programme detailing issue for scrutiny by the Committee for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that a review of the Action Plan in response to the Public Interest Report on the Council's governance arrangements for Robin Hood Energy would be scheduled for December and then every 2 months.

Committee members requested that the following items be considered for inclusion on the work programme:

- the Council's response to the MHCLG non-statutory review;
- the Council's response to the second lockdown and lessons learned.