

Nottingham City Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Dining Room - The Council House, Old Market Square, Nottingham, NG1 2DT on 7 July 2021 from 2.01 pm - 3.55 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Anne Peach (Chair)
Councillor Carole McCulloch (Vice Chair)
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor Sajid Mohammed
Councillor Toby Neal
Councillor Angharad Roberts
Councillor Andrew Rule

Absent

Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Audra Wynter

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Mel Barrett - Chief Executive
Richard Beckett - Head of Major Projects
Beth Brown - Head of Legal and Governance
Councillor Sally Longford - Deputy Leader, and Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services
Kate Morris - Governance Officer
Ita O'Donovan - Interim Director of Strategy and Policy
James Rhodes - Strategic Insight Manager
Laura Wilson - Senior Governance Officer

15 Apologies for absence

Councillor Georgia Power – Personal
Councillor Ethan Radford – Leave
Councillor Audra Wynter – Other Council Business

Councillor David Mellen – Leader of the Council

16 Declarations of interests

None

17 Minutes

Committee members requested that additional wording be added to the minute 12 to include specific reference to grass trimming being an issue in a number of wards. They also indicated that specific reference to the question of whether resources devoted to the public realm should be recorded.

Subject to these amendments the Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

18 Council Strategic Plan 2021-2023

Councillor Sally Longford, Deputy Leader of the Council introduced the item detailing the work that has taken place to refresh the Councils Strategic Plan 2021-2023. Ita O'Donovan, Interim Director of Strategy and Policy, and James Rhodes, Head of Analysis and Insight provided a detailed presentation highlighting the following points:

- (a) Following on from the recommendations set out in the Non-Statutory Review the Council has begun to work on refreshing the Strategic Council Plan (SCP). Some elements have been retained, some reduced, others removed. For example the need to provide a new College Hub has been removed from the plan as this is already established. Some commitments have been reduced, as funding these is unrealistic given the change in financial situation, and economic expectation;
- (b) The review called for the statutory duties of the Council to feature within the plan to ensure that it is a more holistic document and reflects the whole work of the Council. A new performance management framework has been created to underpin the delivery the refreshed SCP. This will ensure a consistent approach is taken across the Authority to work towards delivery of the Plan;
- (c) One of the key elements of the Plan is establishing and maintaining financial stability through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This will address the challenges facing the Council over the next few years, and will allow the Authority to address the long term funding gap;
- (d) A new way to present the vision for the Council has been developed, it highlights the 11 Headline Outcomes along with the 4 key actions, Do, Check, Act and Plan that will ensure targets are achieved and performance targets met with an emphasis on outcome based finance budgeting;
- (e) Each of the 11 Headline Outcomes has the same format, details about the ambition, work done to date and what the Council will do to achieve the targets. There is also detail around how improvement will be measured and key activities to support the outcome;
- (f) There are 4 key elements to ensuring that the SCP is embedded. The first is that the SCP is linked into the MTFS. The second is that this is then linked to the service planning process ensuring that it is deliverable within the current financial situation. The third element is linking performance appraisal with service plans, clearly articulating how individuals help to deliver outcomes. The fourth is performance management, understanding what needs to be measured, how it is effectively measured and how it can feed into the quarterly corporate reporting process;
- (g) To integrate these changes the Council is using a 3 phase approach. The first phase includes alignment of the SCP, service planning and the development of the MTFS. Public consultation and engagement with citizens is currently ongoing as is consultation with businesses and partner organisations. This will

all feed into the finalised SCP, which is due to go before the meeting of Full Council in September 2021 for approval;

- (h) The second phase includes ongoing work on service renewal and redesign and drafting the MTFs for consultation. Both involve ongoing public consultation with the public, partners, trade unions and Scrutiny committee;
- (i) The third phase will include review of the consultation responses and finalising 2022/23 Service Plans and the MTFP. The aim is for the MTFP to be agreed by the end of March 2022. This will allow the Council to demonstrate robust plans to address the funding gaps over the period of 2022/23 – 2025/26;

In response to questions from the Committee and in the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (j) The Council will continue to liaise with the citizens of Nottingham City to ensure that they are receiving the level of service delivery they need. There will be comparisons from previous customer service survey results to the most recent ones to ensure citizens are satisfied;
- (k) As part of standard monthly reporting Executive Councillors receive reports on performance within their portfolio remit, this lets them know that services are performing as expected. In addition to this feedback Ward Councillors will also be linking in with their communities and receiving feedback ensuring that, whilst a service may look and be delivered differently, the quality is maintained;
- (l) Throughout the process of streamlining services feedback will be welcomed and encouraged. There will be further opportunities to improve services through the use of technology and customer satisfaction will continue to be a high priority. Transformed services do equate to reduced quality;
- (m) Delivery of the Plan will be supported by a culture change programme for the organisation including new ways of managing performance and ensuring individual roles and performance targets are linked into delivery of the outcomes. The Non-Statutory Review called for better ways of working and a rewritten constitution to allow a reemphasis on outcomes and be better suited to purpose further supporting the delivery of the SCP;
- (n) The Public consultation has been advertised in the Evening post, and via all relevant channels. There was/is a Public consultation event on in June and a further piece on the consultation will be featured in the Arrow publication received by Nottingham City citizens;
- (o) Council staff have been very responsive to the new Plan. The formal performance management recording will be done electronically, but throughout the process there is a real emphasis on conversations. There have been engagement sessions with Staff, online videos and regular updates via the internal intranet site and a consultation process is underway. Managers have been encouraged to engage with teams around the new management structure and promote the consultation;

- (p) Eventually the background functions of the performance management process will be automated, so monthly reporting of Key Performance Indicators will happen automatically. This will ensure standardised reporting of performance to a directorate level;
- (q) During the early stages of development the 11 priorities became evident quickly. They all align with the need to create financial stability and fulfil statutory obligations;
- (r) The Covid 19 pandemic has caused additional financial pressure on local authorities across the country. Many are going through a similar process at present realigning plans within the available financial envelope and the development of the SCP allows the Council to demonstrate to the improvement board that it has a plan to achieve financial stability;
- (s) Performance of community groups that the Council commissions for services will also be managed and monitored with the method still being developed. There will be a focus on conversations as with staff performance management and local knowledge of service managers. Further development sessions are due to take place with service providers and partner organisations to establish the most effective method;

Committee members thanked staff for the hard work put into producing the revised SCP. The Chair urged committee members to get involved in the consultation process and to encourage others to do so.

Resolved to receive a written report updating this committee once the consultation has been completed and responses collated.

19 Council Recovery and Improvement

Councillor Sally Longford introduced the item updating the Committee on the Council Recovery and Improvement following the recommendations set out in the report arising from the Non-Statutory Review. Mel Barrett, Chief Executive, and Richard Beckett, Head of Major Projects provided further details and the following points were highlighted:

- (a) Following the publication of the report from the Non Statutory Review the Improvement and Assurance Board was established to hold Nottingham City Council to account throughout its Improvement Programme;
- (b) The Recovery and Improvement Plan (R&IP) is a complex document and is split into eight sections, with different work streams taking place across the whole of the Council. There has already been significant progress towards the targets set by the Plan.
- (c) Throughout the lockdown the council has been focused on doing things differently that allowed services to be maintained. This transformation has resulted in more effective service delivery on a decreased budget;

- (d) Disposal of assets is also being used as a way to manage and maintain the capital programme and allow the delivery of key projects across the city;
- (e) In addition to these measures, there is also an ongoing review of all of the council owned companies and their governance structure. Decisions about their future are being made individually and where necessary, following external advice. A new "Shareholder" unit has been established and further additional training for Directors of the companies has been put in place to address this potential weakness highlighted by the Non-Statutory Review;
- (f) The Capital Programme and Capital Strategy has been reviewed, and a voluntary debt reduction policy has been approved. This has resulted in a grant award for work on the Broadmarsh development and the establishment of the advisory group being established;
- (g) A group of officers and members was created to facilitate the rewrite of the Constitution with a view to clarifying roles and responsibilities of officers and members. Portfolios were reviewed and member development has been considered by this group which has resulted in a new Councillor/Officer Protocol being agreed, along with refreshed Terms of Reference for Committees. This large piece of work is almost complete and will be taken to the September meeting of Council for approval;
- (h) There has also been a focus on the culture of the organisation. There has been a significant review of the structure and a new performance management programme established to be rolled out across the Council. Work has taken place with the Local Government Association and other Local Authorities around decision making process and new Key Performance Indicators have been agreed for the Performance management programme;
- (i) Progress is reported through the Improvement Board to the Secretary of State and published on their website. The Council has a strategic plan to ensure sustainability and is already moving forward, building on elements that are working well and addressing those that are in need of improvement. It is a challenge and complex but work is underway to improve;
- (j) The scale and pace of improvements is important. The Non-Statutory Review requires improvements to be made within certain timescales. A positive improvement plan is in place, but timescales are challenging. Making positive progress against the comprehensive plan will allow the Council to move forward. Large scale change programmes are difficult to run especially alongside the "business as usual" functions of the Council, however Officers have been responsive and open to the changes needed.

During questions and comments from committee members, the following additional information was highlighted:

- (k) The sale of some assets has slipped past the September 2021 timescale, the Improvement Board is aware of the slippages. The Non-Statutory Review suggests quick sales of assets to fund the capital programme, but advice has suggested a balance between speed of sale and achieving best value for

money for the Council. The Improvement Board are regularly updated and any asset sale is done transparently. Although no guarantees can be given that a debt cap will not be imposed on the Council, the Voluntary debt cap is in place and this is currently being maintained;

- (l) In order to best support the work programme the Overview and Scrutiny committee can look closely at some issues ensuring clear process and policy framework is in place. The timeliness of the work programme and financial stability are rich and helpful topics for the committee to examine. This committee along with others need to liaise to ensure that all topics are covered and that there is not overlap. Once the transformation work starts to embed the committee will need to be happy that changes are not affecting performance;
- (m) Each work stream and theme within the recovery and Improvement plan has its own risk register, and these are fed into the corporate risk register that is reviewed regularly by the Corporate Leadership Team. This has highlighted a number of complex interdependencies and the development of the interdependency matrix has allowed cross stream work to take place in a timely manner, and ensure a whole organisation approach to transformation;
- (n) The Recovery and Improvement plan runs for 3 years, however change and improvement will continue beyond this point. Following on from the initial change programme there will be a period of embedding new practices and new ways of working when the cultural change within the organisation becomes even more important to ensure sustained change and informant.
- (o) It is important that feedback from frontline staff, service users, partners and the public be taken into account. If suggestions cannot be used then it is important to explain why. In the past citizens have expressed feelings that consultation does not take on board their input, and that their contribution has not been listened to. Openness about consultation responses is important and the Council want to encourage citizens to participate in the system by being accountable to them;

20 Work Programme

The committee considered the Work Programme as set out in the published agenda. They agreed that a follow up on the Street Scene and ground maintenance item should be scheduled in as should an item on the commercial ventures of the Council.

They also asked for an annual update from the Crime and Drug Partnership (CDP) and suggested November 2021 for this item to allow for the head of the CDP to be invited to attend the committee meeting.

There was discussion around the possible need for working groups to cover the variety of items raised as part of the Recovery and Improvement Plan, however this is not currently something that could receive governance administrative support.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 7.07.21

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that she would liaise closely with the chairs of other scrutiny committees and the Chair of Audit Committee to ensure topics in need of scrutiny, receive it.