

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 6 February 2019
from 2.00 pm - 3.29 pm**

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Parbutt (Chair)
Councillor Anne Peach (Vice Chair)
Councillor Jim Armstrong
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Glyn Jenkins
Councillor Mohammed Saghir

Absent

Councillor Sue Johnson
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Cate Woodward

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Graham Chapman - Deputy Leader/Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Commercial Services
Jason Eaves - Manager, Nottingham Credit Union
Lynn Griffin-Pearce - HR Consultant - Reward
Richard Henderson - Director, HR and Customer
Zena West - Senior Governance Officer
Phil Wye - Governance Officer

50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Nicola Heaton – work commitments
Councillor Cate Woodward – personal reasons

51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

52 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

53 DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPUTY LEADER/PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Councillor Graham Chapman, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Commercial Services, delivered a presentation outlining progress within his portfolio against the Council Plan priorities, highlighting the following:

- (a) the council encourages the use of Credit Unions for bank accounts and ethical credit, and refers financially vulnerable people to money advice services. It may bid for European Social Fund funding to resource employment advisors co-located with Benefits and Debt Advisors;
- (b) despite heavy cuts from central government since 2010/11, the council has continued to balance its budget whilst retaining most services to citizens. Joint Service Centres have been set up and have been popular and effective, and many services have been commercialised, generating over £32 million of new external income;
- (c) development is planned by the end of 2019 with the help of the private sector at the Glaisdale Drive Industrial Estate to provide 60 local jobs;
- (d) regeneration has taken place at Bulwell and Clifton town centres, with improvements to shopping facilities, enhancements to the outdoor markets, and better pavements, street furniture, signage and shop fronts. This has resulted in an increased level of growth and footfall in these areas;
- (e) Catering Services have won the 'Soil Association Food for Life' award for providing top quality school meals, locally prepared using local producers and meeting animal welfare standards;
- (f) the council shares its HR and finance functions with Leicestershire through East Midlands Shared Services. This was originally intended to roll out to additional authorities but this has not yet been achieved;
- (g) Southglade Food Park has been expanded providing 150 jobs. A third phase is planned but not yet confirmed;
- (h) there remains an ambition to pursue the development of the Blenheim site as an energy park in order to provide 270 local jobs in the energy sector, but it is unclear if the developer still intends to proceed.
- (i) development sites are selected in order of their ease of development. Some long-standing empty sites are subject to flooding or are owned by the private sector and therefore more difficult to develop;
- (j) the council continues to invest in Robin Hood Energy, to maintain it as a going concern and keep it from saving residents money on their energy bills. Enviroenergy has ongoing debt but this is reducing.

RESOLVED to thank Councillor Chapman for the information provided.

54 CREDIT UNIONS

Lynn Griffin-Pearce, HR Consultant-Reward, and Jason Eaves, Manager of Nottingham Credit Union (NCU), delivered a presentation focussing on how the council interacts with credit unions, the benefits of using them and whether they are an effective way of addressing the increased use of payday lenders. The following information was highlighted:

- (a) banks have become less willing to lend to vulnerable people, and payday lenders have filled the vacuum. A rising proportion of working adults have no or little savings available to them meaning that they are not financially resilient;
- (b) financial worries can lead to stress, anxiety and depression, as well as having an impact on relationships, sleep and work performance;
- (c) a number of Nottingham City Council (NCC) employees use payday lenders, and a number also use the Credit Union for savings and loans;
- (d) NCC has a commitment in its Council Plan to support the Credit Union. It provides financial support and councillors sit on the NCU Board. Pop up shops and money management workshops have been held at Loxley House;
- (e) the partnership between NCC and the NCU is due to continue, in order to encourage better money management, break cycles of debt, improve financial health and ultimately increase employees' disposable income;
- (f) new benefits that complement the NCU offering are planned, and 'soft' market testing is currently underway in order to gain an understanding of external suppliers of financial wellbeing education;
- (g) NCU also offers low interest debt consolidation loans, with payments made directly from salaries.

The following points were raised during the discussion which followed:

- (h) the NCU is not for profit and owned by members, and it can be difficult to compete with commercial providers. The financial regulator insists on increasing reserves, so finding people who need loans is important;
- (i) some people are reluctant to use Credit Unions or seek debt advice as they associate them with deprived people;
- (j) the basic service of the NCU needs improvement and can involve a lot of paperwork. It is seeking additional volunteers to improve the website, social media presence and service;
- (k) NCU membership is higher in some areas of the city such as Bulwell which has a history of its own Credit Union;
- (l) the average loan amount from the NCU is £1,000. The minimum available is £100, and the maximum available is £15,000.

RESOLVED to thank Lynn and Jason for the information provided.

55 WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

RESOLVED to note the Committee's work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.