

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at LB 31-32 - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 6 November 2019 from 2:02pm to 4:08pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Anne Peach (Chair)
Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Maria Joannou
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Andrew Rule
Councillor Cate Woodward

Absent

Councillor Georgia Power
Councillor Carole McCulloch
Councillor Sue Johnson

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Jason Gooding	- Head of Parking, Fleet and Transport
Nigel Hallam	- Workplace Parking Levy Service Manager
Lucy Lee	- Head of Customer Services
Adrian Mann	- Governance Officer
Councillor David Mellen	- Leader of the Council / Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Safety and Communications
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

30 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2019 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

31 DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER/PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REGENERATION, SAFETY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Councillor David Mellen, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Safety and Communications, gave a presentation on his main priorities and challenges for the 2019/20 municipal year. The following points were discussed:

- (a) following the May 2019 local elections, the Labour Manifesto was adopted by the Council as the basis of its policies for the next four years. This has now been developed into the Council Plan for 2019-23 and will be presented to the full Council meeting on Monday 11 November for approval. It is essential to work alongside partners across the city area, from the voluntary sector, trade unions and businesses. The Council aims to be people-focussed and do everything possible to support citizens and their needs, and to maintain community resources, despite the current period of high financial constraints and the requirement for making further savings;
- (b) £271million has been made in savings since 2010/11, with further savings required in 2019/20. The Government grant does not fund day-to-day Council services fully and there are significant pressures and overspends in their delivery. The starting gap this year was around £28million, with an assumed 5% reduction in Government support. More money was allocated from the Government than was expected, but the proposed settlement only covers one year and costs are rising, which make it difficult to plan for the future effectively. Every effort will be made to campaign for new Government grants to replace the current European Union (EU) funding for economic development activity in Nottingham – as the city has been very successful in achieving EU investment in the past, and alternative funding sources of similar value are not yet available;
- (c) the Plan's five key objectives are to build or buy 1,000 Council or social homes for rent; create 15,000 new jobs for Nottingham people; build a new Central Library with a particular focus on children, including new green public space; cut crime, and reduce anti-social behaviour by a quarter; and ensure that Nottingham is the cleanest large city in England, with neighbourhoods kept as clean as the city centre;
- (d) currently, 350 new houses have been announced, many of which are social homes in the Bestwood area. However, 80-100 households are presenting to Housing Aid as being at risk of homelessness every week. A great deal of work is being carried out to help prevent people from being made homeless, including collaboration with Framework Housing Association, the Emmanuel House Support Centre, the Fire and Rescue Service, hostels and local churches;
- (e) a number of construction projects are underway across the city, including the renovation project for Nottingham Castle and the Broadmarsh shopping centre redevelopment. Major work is being carried out for the transformation of the south side of the city centre, including the college and the library, and the Broadmarsh car park, bus station and shopping centre. Redevelopment is also planned for Broadmarsh west, including the land to the west of Carrington Street, the Castle College site and the land around the Trip to Jerusalem historic public house, with a new square, public open space and appropriate development to ensure that the Castle is visible and showcased as an important asset of the city;
- (f) work is underway to complete the Nottingham Science Park, Unity Square, Players Site, Energy Park and People's Hall, and progress is being made on the Island Site and Boots to provide employment opportunities for Nottingham people. The Council aims to facilitate the development of at least 500,000 square feet of Grade A office space, to encourage inward investment in the city. A project is also

underway to secure Government funding for a high quality conference centre in Nottingham. In order to secure capital for many of these projects, applications are underway to the Transforming Cities Fund, which is the only large grant source available for significant public realm works. A New War memorial has been unveiled at the Victoria Embankment;

- (g) the need for student accommodation as an integrated part of local communities needs to be given very careful consideration in city planning terms as, although student populations are growing and bring a great deal of benefit to the area, student accommodation does not generate Council Tax and many graduates do not stay in Nottingham once they have completed their studies. Engagement is underway with universities to create suitable provision of accommodation for students, and to encourage graduates to stay in the area. An International Student Welcome event has been introduced, in partnership with Nottingham's businesses and brands;
- (h) further national investment in jobs, infrastructure and industrial growth in the Midlands is required and the HS2 project will be a positive contributor to this, with a station at Toton and the redevelopment of land around Nottingham railway station. The Council will continue to campaign for the full electrification of the Midland Mainline. It will still be necessary to use the dual electric- and diesel-power rolling stock until full electrification is achieved, though East Midlands Railway is working to improve infrastructure for cyclists and introduce further Wi-Fi coverage;
- (i) work is underway to use the Robin Hood travel card as the basis for developing an integrated Derby/Nottingham Metro public transport service. Support plans are in place to double freight traffic at East Midlands Airport in conjunction with the HS2 project, and a campaign for a dual carriageway and passenger rail link to the Airport, Donnington Park and associated employment sites is underway. It is also hoped to develop the airport as an important passenger hub with strong onward transport links to other parts of the country;
- (j) a new, 420-place primary school and 60-place nursery will open in 2021, and the funding for a new secondary school is available. There is a clear need to ensure that local people have the skills required by employers, and this starts by focussing on excellence in primary schools. Local primary schools do have good results relative to the population size and work is underway to increase aspiration and awareness, including the creation of links between primary schools and universities. Engagement is being carried out with the Nottingham Schools Trust and the Futures Group to create goals for children and to encourage families to educate their children in the city – as 20% of secondary school-aged children go to school in other areas, currently;
- (k) although a great deal of planning focuses on the city centre as the major area for employment and economic growth, careful attention also needs to be given to local communities and how they can be best valued by their residents, and how local buildings and facilities can be used to their best effect. Housing developments are very important in these areas, and developers working across the Council area are encouraged strongly to use local contractors and labour;

- (l) the latest figures show that the city has seen a reduction in knife crime (which is a Police categorisation that covers a range of knife-related incidents, at varying levels of severity) of 18.9% in the last year, and a series of proactive policing operations are in place with young people, young adults and students, including the establishment of a new violence reduction unit in participation with the Police and Crime Commissioner and other voluntary sector partners, which now has funding for a further year. Work will be carried out with at least 500 young people each year at risk of becoming involved in gangs and knife crime, or at risk of exploitation;
- (m) the Council will continue to work alongside its partners in a collective approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and crime, with the aim of reducing offences by a quarter. This will include the creation of a dedicated noise nuisance hotline to respond to complaints of noisy neighbours within 48 hours, Rapid Response teams who can be contacted easily to deal with anti-social behaviour and community issues, and the use of Public Space Protection Orders to tackle anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods that need it, including the city centre;
- (n) a campaign is underway to increase the number of Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers on patrol. The Council is working in partnership with the British Transport Police to ensure safety of the public transport network and to tackle related crime. It is also creating a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, working with partners including the Police, transport providers and venues, to address the safety of women and girls in their homes and their communities. It is engaging with the Police to deliver and expand 'Operation Graduate', helping students keep their homes and property safe;
- (o) the findings of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse for Nottingham were published in July. The Council will take the appropriate action to help survivors and ensure that it learns from the past, so that the same mistakes are not made again, and a formal Action Plan will be formalised during November. However, the care budgets continue to be challenging, as the cost of supporting vulnerable children and older people has increased and cannot be met from Council Tax alone.

The Committee thanked Councillor Mellen and noted the presentation.

32 WORKPLACE PARKING LEVY

Nigel Hallam, Workplace Parking Levy Service Manager, and Jason Gooding, Head of Parking, Fleet and Transport, presented a report on the outcomes of the Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) in Nottingham, since its introduction in October 2011. The following points were discussed:

- (a) established through the Transport Act 2000, WPL schemes must be "desirable for directly or indirectly facilitating the achievement of local transport policies", and the net proceeds must be ring-fenced to fund local transport projects – such as the Nottingham railway station Hub Project, the Phase 2 expansion of the tram network and the growth of the Link Bus Network. The proceeds are deployed on the basis of a 5 to 10-year spending plan, and consideration is being given to what future projects the funds can be used to support;

- (b) in 2007, traffic congestion was costing Nottingham approximately £160million per year (half of which fell upon businesses), with 70% of peak period congestion generated by commuters. As congestion was projected to grow (there are now £3million potential commuters within 1 hour's drive of the city centre), the WPL was introduced in 2011 to seek to curb this increase by providing an incentive to employers to discourage car commuting and encourage alternative modes of transport (including car-sharing). The WPL is intended to improve air quality, help develop high quality public transport, protect the city's commerce and inward investment, and improve the city's environment and sustainability;
- (c) this is achieved by implementing levy on employers relating to the amount of workplace parking places that they provide for employees, regular business visitors, and pupils or students (but it does not encompass customer spaces, fleet vehicle spaces, loading/unloading bays and motorcycle spaces). The WPL applies to all employers within the Council's administrative area, and income from the scheme is used to improve public transport in places where provision is less strong. Approximately 2100 employers hold a WPL licence, but less than 500 employers are liable for a WPL charge, with 850 chargeable premises. In assessing liability, the scheme takes into account the occupation of a site, rather than the number of specified parking spaces;
- (d) the scheme is highly automated and is inexpensive to run, and it is designed to be as straightforward as possible in administrative terms. It is a licensing scheme, primarily, rather than an enforcement one – there has been 100% compliance from liable employers and no Penalty Charge Notices have been issued. The annual fee for the levy is consistent across the board and rises with inflation. The WPL has generated £64million in revenue over its first seven years of operation;
- (e) the levy is a charge on the employer – not the employee. It is at the discretion of the employer as whether or not they pass the costs of the levy to their employees. Although they do need to apply for the relevant licence under the scheme, discounts of up to 100% are given to employers with 10 or fewer workplace parking places, charities where a substantial number of workers are volunteers, the Emergency Services, NHS frontline services and places for Disabled Blue Badge Holders, and the ability for local flexibility in charging is important during periods of economic recession. However, a review may be carried out in situations where the employer operates a charging scheme for employee parking in spaces that are in receipt of a discount from the levy. Consideration is also been given to in what circumstances it would be appropriate to cease to discount the levy for hospitals, to seek to improve air quality in their vicinity. Discounts are not offered to schools and there are no proposals to introduce them, but primary schools can receive some subsidies from the Council to help meet the cost;
- (f) the WPL also provides a range of ongoing business support services to employers and employees, including car park management and active travel advice (including on cycling support, training, personal travel plans and electric charging infrastructure), with potential grants of £25,000. A funded program of traffic management works is in place to address parking displacement issues, which can be a significant problem in local communities where commuters park and then use public transport to go into the city centre. Any councillors who have

problem areas for displaced parking in their wards can raise these with the WPL team, so that a suitable traffic management scheme can be considered and developed;

- (g) during the period of the scheme, congestion has increased to a lesser degree in Nottingham than in three out of four of its comparator cities. Public transport usage and cycle mode share has increased, which is vital in an environment where only 55% of people in the Council's area own a car. A survey of 2000 commuters has shown that the WPL is an important reason for their switching away from car usage completely (rather than simply trying to park in the area around their place of work), and analysis has demonstrated that the WPL has had a statistically significant impact on reducing congestion, with evidence that economic and population growth is also offsetting this effect;
- (h) the WPL has been very successful to date and is a multi-award winning scheme. However, funding from central Government for new schemes is decreasing. This has enabled the Council to commercialise and operate the scheme in other Local Authority areas, and to provide consultancy and road-map services for Authorities developing their own schemes. There is also huge academic interest in the WPL initiative, both national and international, and this can help to generate further income streams.

The Committee thanked Nigel Hallam and Jason Gooding, and noted the report.

33 UNIVERSAL CREDIT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Lucy Lee, Head of Customer Services, presented a report on the rollout of the Universal Credit Full Service in Nottingham. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the Universal Credit (UC) Full Service rolled out in Nottingham on 17 October 2018, making it one of the last areas in the county to move to the new system. People move onto UC if they make a new benefit claim or have a change in their circumstances. UC replaces the Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, and the Working Tax Credit. UC does not include any other benefits, including Council Tax Support, which needs to be claimed alongside UC;
- (b) 13,394 people were on UC by August 2019 (9,853 of which are out-of-work claimants), representing 9,333 households in the city. 4,448 households claiming UC have a housing entitlement. Approximately 50 households have applied successfully for more frequent payments and no-one is receiving a split payment to more than one household member. Approximately 28,000 benefit claimants are still to move across to UC;
- (c) 3,454 Nottingham City Homes (NCH) tenants are claiming UC (out of an expected 12,000, ultimately). The level of rent arrears of NCH tenants on UC is currently £1,374,326.64 – last October, the level was at £139,000. The average rent arrears of a NCH tenant on UC is £560.72. So far, 795 Alternative Payment Arrangements have been requested, whereby UC rent payments are made to the landlord directly, and these can be triggered if the tenant has been in arrears under UC or a previous benefit system. Currently, there is a shortfall of £7.77 per

week for people in supported accommodation, for which people cannot claim Discretionary Housing payments. This affects NCH because it is classed as a metropolitan housing association, rather than as solely a provider of social housing. NCH has established a new Universal Credit Team and is making considerable efforts to assist claimants with transitional arrangements and assistance for additional entitlement eligibility. So far, the majority of NCH tenants are IT literate and are able to use the online UC claim system, but they do not always understand the process fully;

- (d) in the private rented sector, Housing Benefit payments that have been capped or reduced have put tenants in a riskier position. Delays in payments are dissuading landlords from renting to people on UC. Although there does not seem to have been an increase in evictions, some landlords are including a 'minimum earning threshold' in their housing adverts. It is difficult for UC tenants to set up direct payments to landlords even when the tenant knows they struggle to budget, as they have to be in arrears before they can move to direct payments. Work is underway to gather further detailed information from private landlords;
- (e) Welfare Rights officers remain very busy. The five-week wait for UC payments to start continues to cause problems for claimants, in addition to the move from weekly to monthly payments. Claimants are able to receive Housing Benefit during that wait period, but only for two of the five weeks. There has been no official change regarding the impact of the 53-week year in 2019. Most of the concerns raised with Welfare Rights relate to Council Tax debt, Personal Independence Payments and multiple debt;
- (f) there has been a 76% increase in foodbank referral since Universal Credit rolled out, with 188 of the 329 food bank vouchers issued during 2018 due to UC. The number of people asking Welfare Rights for foodbank vouchers has increased and the single largest cause of people requiring foodbank vouchers is UC delays and/or the five-week wait. Information from Trussell Trust foodbanks covering Nottinghamshire suggests that 26,678 three-day emergency food supplies were provided in 2018/19, which represents a 14% increase from 2017/18. Nottinghamshire distributed double the number of food supply packages as the next highest East Midlands region;
- (g) the primary ongoing concerns are that the level of rent arrears continues to rise; the five-week wait before the first UC payment is still causing problems; the repayment of any advance payment creates significant issues for claimants; Council Tax support needs to be applied for separately to UC; the Help to Claim funding after March 2020 is not confirmed; there is a lack of capacity for providing advice across a number of agencies; there is a lack of understanding from citizens about the UC process, leading to unnecessary claims; there is an appreciable fraud risk; and there are limited communications from central Government on welfare issues;
- (h) currently, no timescale has been set out for the next managed migration of claimants moving to UC, though ongoing work is underway by NCH, Advice Nottingham, Welfare Rights, Housing Strategy, the Council's Data and Information Team, and the Council's Selective Licensing Team to support citizens claiming UC and improve the social housing stock. The support structures

available will also be reassessed when the Unlocking Loxley project is completed, which aims to concentrate the full range of related services within Loxley House.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) request that the detailed statistics relating to foodbank usage is circulated to the Committee members;**
- (2) request that the detail relating to the Nottingham City Homes rent arrears is provided to the Committee, including a breakdown of the age and ethnicity of those affected, compared against the statistics for the previous year;**
- (3) request that data on any housing evictions linked to Universal Credit is sought from Housing Aid and provided to the Committee;**
- (4) request that a further update is provided to the Committee when a timetable has been established by central Government for the next migration of benefit claimants to Universal Credit.**

34 CITIZEN SURVEY RECOMMENDATION WRITTEN RESPONSE

The Chair reported that, in considering the results of the latest citizen satisfaction survey, the Committee had recommended that, after the next Nottingham Citizen Survey (which will be carried out in the context of the revised ward boundaries), following surveys are carried out every other year, in conjunction with any other surveys that can be procured as part of the same package as a cost-saving measure, and that any further cost-saving measures should be explored in relation to the Citizen Survey.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities has provided the written response that, "As part of the Council Plan, there is a commitment to protect annual residents' surveys. The Citizens Survey will be undertaken in 2019. The proposal from Overview and Scrutiny will be considered as part of the budget process."

RESOLVED to request that feedback is provided to the Committee on the future plans for the Citizen Survey once the upcoming budget process is completed.

35 WORK PROGRAMME

Laura Wilson, Senior Governance Officer, presented the proposed work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year. Due to the coming General Election, the meeting of the Committee on 4 December has been cancelled, so the Work Programme will be rescheduled. The Committee felt that, as such, the discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Growth and the City Centre scheduled for December should be taken at the January meeting.