

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 6 July 2020 at 6.00 pm



This was a virtual meeting.

Present:

Members: Councillors Nathan Boyd (Chair), Ron Batstone, Cheryl Briggs, Andy Foulsham, Robert Maddison, Mike Pighills, and Patrick O'Leary (in place of Max Thompson)

Also: Councillor Debby Hallett, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Officers: Adrianna Partridge, Candida Mckelvey, Michelle Wells and Steve Culliford

Sc.33 Chairman's announcements

Councillor Boyd, committee chairman, welcomed the committee members and explained the virtual meeting procedure for participation.

Sc.34 Appoint a vice-chair

Councillor Ron Batstone was appointed to be vice-chair for the rest of the 2019-20 municipal year.

Sc.35 Apologies for absence

Councillor Max Thompson gave his apologies ahead of the meeting, and Councillor Patrick O'Leary was present as his substitute.

Sc.36 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 6 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting. The chairman will sign them as such.

Sc.37 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.38 Public participation

None.

Sc.39 Urgent business

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None.

Sc.40 Review and comment on the draft Corporate Plan 2020-2024 for public consultation

The Cabinet member for Corporate Services introduced the papers. Creating the draft Corporate Plan took time and was an enriching and rewarding process. There are key themes, underneath which there will be areas of work, which will produce related projects (programmes). These will be well defined lower level projects as the council is provided with more information from Central Government.

There have been changes related to Covid-19 and Local Government funding which leaves current uncertainty about what we have to spend. A local government restructure is due, with a White Paper to be issued in September 2020. The Corporate Plan encompasses our aspirations and values.

Committee Chairman led the committee through the themes of the draft Corporate Plan.

Theme 1 – providing the homes people need:

- Discussion regarding what the aims were for affordable housing – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services informed the committee that certain measures of affordability would be explored as part of the Corporate Plan and likely to be one of the first projects to move forward.
- Climate Emergency Advisory Committee recommendations at the meeting of 1 July were supported by the scrutiny committee. Commitment to sustainability was agreed, and Cabinet member for Corporate Services added that the wording would be changed to include sustainability.

Theme 2 – Climate emergency

- It was confirmed that the district ambitions of 75% reduction in council emissions by 2025 has been assessed as ambitious yet achievable by the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) and accepted by Cabinet.
- Committee asked how the district council currently measures its emissions. Cabinet member for Corporate Services advised a review of the council's website, and if there were specific questions to direct them to the Cabinet member for Housing and Environment.
- Monitor energy use in offices and leisure centres and so on.

Theme 3 – Building healthy communities

- It was agreed this was a strong section.

Theme 4 – Building stable finances

- This section will be defined further. Committee endorsed the change made (as a result of the CEAC meeting) to the phrase 'financially sensible'.
- CIPFA code of practice – Section 151 officer asked for this to be included as an example project, and this was supported by the committee.

Theme 5 - Working in partnership

- Support shown for Youth Council project
- Committee asked what the benefit of a mooted economic development review project would be to council (it's one of the examples provided). Cabinet member for corporate services explained that local businesses will be affected by the lockdown; unemployment is expected to rise, so we are intending to help businesses of all sizes to survive.

Theme 6 – working in an open and inclusive way

- Want representation from all backgrounds. The groups are yet to be defined. Council should represent communities.
- Committee wondered if Zoom meetings would be our future (under programme 6.1). Cabinet member for corporate services answered that we were using new technology to try to reach groups we hadn't been able to before.
- An idea was raised about helping the public to access meetings – if we do go back to face-to-face meetings – can we still live stream meetings online so that people can easily join meetings as they wish. There are cost considerations to setting this up.
- Be creative, and in tune with social media.
- Training on unconscious bias was discussed.

General comments

- Will there be a corporate action plan and performance indicators in September? It was confirmed that there would be, and the indicators would be meaningful – measure what is important to us, and also monthly reporting.

The chairman thanked the Cabinet member for Corporate Services and the officers for their work and additional work for the Covid-19 community support.

Recommendation:

To welcome the progress of the draft Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan 2020-24, and ask that Cabinet notes the comments from the scrutiny committee on 6 July 2020 and the recommendations from the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee on 1 July 2020.

Sc.41 Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The work programme is in a fluid state whilst the Cabinet work programme settles down.

Committee Chairman asked that if the committee members have anything to add on the item regarding A34 diversion, please let him know so it forms part of the discussion.

The next meeting of the committee is on 20 July 2020.

The meeting closed at 6.48 pm