

Notes

of an informal meeting of

Scrutiny Committee members

held on Thursday, 24 March 2022 at 6.00 pm
Virtual meeting

This meeting was broadcasted live. The recording can be watched here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Gwxs7er3xg>

Open to the public, including the press

Present

Councillors: Nathan Boyd (Chair), Jerry Avery, Hayleigh Gascoigne, David Grant, Max Thompson, Eric de la Harpe, Ben Mabbett and Patrick O'Leary

Cabinet Member: Councillor Debby Hallett (Corporate Services) and Bethia Thomas (Engagement)

Officers: Harry Barrington-Mountford (Head of Policy and Programmes), Candida Mckelvey (Democratic Services Officer), Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive - Transformation and Operations) and Shona Ware (Communication and Engagement Manager).

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Ron Batstone.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Urgent business and chair's announcements

Chair had no urgent business, but chair did remind the committee of the virtual meeting housekeeping rules.

4. Minutes

Committee reviewed the minutes of the meeting on 1 February 2022 and there were no comments raised.

5. Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings

The A34 diversion routing will be added to the work programme for follow up. Chair asked that if anybody had any scope or requests for the public consultations item, please email him.

6. Public participation

None.

7. Quarter 3 corporate plan performance monitoring report

Chair advised committee to contact Cabinet Member and relevant officers regarding specific questions, and members were invited to request a more specific item of interest to the work programme for a more granular, high detail review. Officers were thanked for the work in producing these reports.

Cabinet Member for corporate services presented this item.

Committee raised comments as follows:

- A member asked whether Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spend could be included by spend type, amount and area. Cabinet Member responded that the team were replacing the standard board reports, which will be presented as a landing page on the website, that can signpost people to the various reports, including CIL spending. Cabinet Member will make a note to add this. She felt that CIL spend would not be detailed in the quarterly corporate plan reporting. Head of Policy and Programmes added that there was more detail under PHPN 2.3 on page 24.
- Typo on page 38 noted – the wording was meant to be ‘contained outbreak management fund’.
- Typo – should read ‘healthy communities’ on the contents.
- Praise given on the information, accountability and simple to read introducing paragraphs. It was queried whether there was press release for this – accessibility of the report. Can we have links to relevant reports? Head of Policy and Programmes explained that this would link to the board report landing page – this should meet all of those needs. Hoping to add interesting graphics to the corporate plan reporting page. Cabinet member for Engagement added that social media may be helpful for promoting this reporting.
- What happens to completed line items? Head of Policy and Programmes explained that those line items would remain, in case other items of work developed from the original item.
- BSF1.2: Recruiting of an external funding lead – it was explained that the post had just been offered to an applicant.
- Leisure decarbonisation project being a model for future bids – it was responded that work with Concept Energy was occurring to produce a ready-to-go bid framework to help save time and improve excellence where there was not much time to put a bid forward (as in recent bids).
- Data from analytics (Google) – analytics options were being explored currently.

The team of officers and Cabinet Member were thanked for their work.

8. Joint communications and engagement strategy

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement presented this item. She explained that the communications team was important to engagement, and this strategy was important for guiding the team, which was central to the council’s work.

The councils needed a communications strategy to govern their communications and ensure consistent and tailored messaging reach its diverse audiences.

The strategy also covers engagement as the councils’ Public Engagement Charter needed reviewing and given the natural synergy between communications and engagement it was an opportunity to bring the work streams together and reflect the service’s structure.

Cabinet Member welcomed councillor feedback, as councillors were key to the success of the strategy.

Comments and suggestions to Cabinet Member were as follows:

- Page 85 of the pack – list of member responsibilities. The last bullet point was viewed as important, “Actively fulfill their role as critical links in the chain of communication with stakeholders through sharing the views of the public to the council and keeping their wards briefed on service information and issues”. It was requested that communications team should inform ward members ahead of any local press release. Cabinet Member explained it was a council-wide responsibility, with different teams needing to feed into the communications team. Communication and Engagement Manager drew attention to the InFocus newsletter and Town and Parish council newsletters, as current effective tools for ward members.
- Asked for clarification over the previous point “Seek professional advice from the communications and engagement team before agreeing to any corporate communications and engagement approaches/activities including specific messages, how to deliver those messages, campaigns, literature etc”. It was responded by Communications and Engagement Manager that this was regarding corporate communications – the advice was to speak to communications first for advice on the best methods.
- Will there been training on best practice for councillor communications with wards?
- Cabinet Member explained that more detailed action plans would follow as the strategy was the overview. This was a strategic document to help the cultural change that was required.
- Exhibition events
- Residents newsletter
- Reaching more people in communities – groups we had historically failed to reach – who were these groups? What was the council doing to reach who don’t or can’t access the usual communication channels? Cabinet member explained that Covid was a learning experience in regard to reaching isolated people. Engagement Manager added that these groups would be identified in the diversity and inclusion strategy work. The perspective of these groups may be that they were not hard to reach, but as a council we would need to find out how they prefer to engage. Example – visuals for those who do not read English.
- Will this strengthen role of the communications team? Cabinet Member suggested that team leaders can filter information to communications team, for them to distribute. The communications team had oversight of most communications that go out, the strategy could strengthen this.
- Standards on page 80 were good – can we add “know who your audience is”? It was responded that mapping out of audiences would be done in conjunction with diversity and inclusion work, and proactive planning of communications. Communications and Engagement Manager responded that it was for officer and members to live up to. There will be occasions where teams deal with specific stakeholders that communications team would not be dealing with, and an audience list would help support this.
- Action plan - tools we use or individual consultation/engagement? What was envisaged? Communications and Engagement Manager responded that it would include training, reviewing social media services, identify metrics, baseline data, briefings. It will not be a forward plan of communications campaigns.
- What about receiving information from the public? Example - “fix my street” tool. Can we encourage people to attend meetings? Do people feel empowered to come and speak, do they know about the YouTube recordings etc.

Officers and Cabinet Member were thanked for their work.

The meeting closed at 19:15

Chair:

Date: