

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2018

PRESENT

Councillor M. Young (in the Chair).

Councillors M. Cordingley (Vice-Chairman), R. Bowker, C. Boyes, K. Carter, J. Holden, M. Hyman, A. Mitchell, D. Western and A.M. Whyte

Note: Cllr M. Cordingley Chaired the first part of the meeting, covering items 1 to 4 and the first part of item 5, with Cllr M. Young assuming the Chairmanship on his arrival at 18:47.

Also Present

Cllr J. Reilly - Executive Members for Highways, Parks & Environmental Services

Cllr B. Shaw - Deputy Executive Members for Highways, Parks & Environmental Services

In attendance

J. Colbert - Corporate Director Children, Families and Wellbeing

J. Hyde - Corporate Director Transformation and Resources

M. Wise - Director One Trafford Partnership

P. Helsby - Interim Director One Trafford Partnership

D. Lucas - Head of HR Business Partnering

D. Findley - Highways Manager

S. Tilby - Traffic and Road Safety Manager

C. Gaffey - Democratic & Scrutiny Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. P. Dixon and J. Harding.

31. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 15 November 2017 and 28 November 2017, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mike Cordingley declared an interest in relation to item 7 on the agenda, in view of his status as a member of the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee.

33. BUDGET SCRUTINY REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

The Scrutiny Committee's Review of the Executive's Draft Budget Proposals for 2018-19 was presented for information. The report and its recommendations would be considered at the Executive meeting scheduled for 29 January 2018, and a formal response would be expected in due course.

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It was noted that since the report's publication, the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announcement had been made. The Executive would be asked to take this into consideration when providing their formal response, highlighting any proposed changes as a result of the announcement.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

34. SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director, Transformation and Resources, providing an update on absence levels and wellbeing activity in the Council. The report also provided a summary of the review of workforce health and wellbeing in the Children, Families and Wellbeing Directorate. The Committee were advised that the Employment Committee received regular updates on sickness absence.

For a number of years, the Council had set a sickness absence target of 9 days absence per employee, per annum. Members were advised that at the end of 2015/16, this target was achieved, and to drive further improvement, a stretch target of 8.5 days was set for the following year. It was acknowledged that the target was not currently being achieved. However, Trafford's performance was about the average over AGMA as demonstrated by the benchmarking table in section 2.2 of the report. Members asked whether the direction of travel for the AGMA Authorities' performance could be reflected in the regular reports taken to the Employment Committee.

The Committee discussed the Authority's action plan to combat the impact of flu on the workforce, and whether international epidemics had an effect on sickness absence in general. It was noted that Trafford offered flu jabs to all staff, including social care staff, however the most common reasons for sickness absence was stress / mental health, and muscular / skeletal issues. The Authority kept in regular contact with staff on long term sickness absence, with assistance offered whenever possible, including access to physiotherapy and counselling. Members were also advised of a nurse led pilot scheme being considered in partnership with Pennine Care, where nurses could potentially call staff to give the appropriate sickness advice over the phone as opposed to the staff member having to visit a GP, which wasn't always necessary.

Members discussed the effect of sickness absence on other members of staff, and the measures in place to maintain staff wellbeing when workloads were increased due to staff absences. Members were assured that HR processes were in place to ensure that no service was left without sufficient cover, with temporary staff employed if required to ensure services were being adequately delivered.

The Committee discussed the importance of adopting measures to help combat stress, and Officers advised of the mindfulness work that the Authority regularly undertook, including yoga and other drop in sessions.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

35. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S TASK & FINISH GROUP REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CRM SYSTEM

The Committee received a report of the Task and Finish Group setup to conduct a review of the Council's CRM system. Since the report's publication, the Chairman of the Group had been informed of further delays to the scheduled implementation of some of the new CRM functions. When presenting the report to the Executive at their meeting on 29 January 2018, the Chairman would request that the latest delays be addressed. The Executive's formal response should confirm the cause of the delays, any lessons learnt, as well as provide an updated timeline.

RESOLVED: That the report and its recommendations be endorsed by the Committee for referral to the Executive.

36. PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Member for Highways, Parks and Environmental Services detailing the process undertaken to consider the introduction of Pedestrian Crossings within Trafford. The report identified the key stages of the process, as well as providing information on funding and the involvement with TfGM in introducing Signal Controlled Crossings within the Borough.

Members thanked the Executive Member and attending Officers for an informative report. The Committee discussed many aspects of the report, including the challenges faced with reducing pollution and increasing pedestrian footfall. Members discussed the costs associated with different types of crossings, and it was noted that the Highways Team only reviewed crossings when a specific deficiency or issue had been reported. The Committee also discussed the effects of the 'school run' and how parents might be encouraged to take their children to school on foot or via public transport.

Issues at Davyhulme Park and the crossing of Edge Lane / Chester Road were raised by Members. The Highways Team agreed to look into the issue at Davyhulme Park, but advised that talks with TfGM were already scheduled to discuss the Edge Lane / Chester Road crossing. When discussing the crossing with TfGM previously, Trafford were advised that the crossing was consistent with national policy. However, it was hoped that these discussions could lead to further improvements. Members also discussed the light timings for some crossings, and the Highways Manager agreed to raise some of the Members' concerns at the TfGM workshop he would be attending later in the month.

Some Members felt that the Authority's approach to pedestrian crossing and traffic management was inconsistent with the Public Health service's recently published report, which aimed to encourage residents to become more active. Members felt that the Pedestrian Crossing policy should be more aligned with Public Health, and should be actively aiming to encourage more pedestrians. It was suggested that the Highways Team and the Interim Director of Public Health be formally introduced to discuss the possible alignment of strategies.

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Some Members requested that a further update on Traffic Management be considered for the 2018/19 Scrutiny Committee work programme. It was felt that future national policies would have an emphasis on increasing pedestrian footfall and reducing vehicular traffic, and this would be an opportunity for the Authority to consider how it might tackle this at an early stage.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That consideration be given to having a coordinated policy on Traffic Management and Public Health.

37. CLG COMMITTEE: PUBLICATION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPORT

The Committee received the Communities and Local Government Committee's First Report of Session 2017-19 on the effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees, along with the associated press release. The report included a list of recommended changes to Scrutiny guidelines for Local Authorities.

Members discussed the Council's current Scrutiny processes and how these arrangements might be improved. The Committee discussed whether Scrutiny could be more effective by scheduling more meetings and dedicating additional resources to the service, and discussions took place on the type and quality of information provided to Scrutiny in advance of meetings. Some Members also felt that raising Scrutiny's profile at Full Council meetings would be beneficial.

It was agreed that a Task & Finish Group would be set up to review the report and its recommendations, with a view to producing a Trafford specific report and accompanying recommendations on how the Authority's Scrutiny processes could be improved. The Group would aim to produce the report in time for the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14 March 2018 for endorsement, before presenting this to full Council on 21 March 2018. Councillors Michael Young, Mike Cordingley, John Holden and Karina Carter registered their interest in participating in the review.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a Task & Finish Group be setup to conduct a review of the Scrutiny process in Trafford.

38. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Committee received a report of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee detailing the Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the remainder of the 2017/18 municipal year.

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Members requested that an update be provided following the Task & Finish Group review into the Council's EHCP process. The Democratic & Scrutiny Officer advised that a written update had been produced by the services recently, and would recirculate this to Members of the Task & Finish Group for their information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.34 pm and finished at 7.55 pm