

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 DECEMBER 2013

PRESENT

Councillor B. Shaw (in the Chair).

Councillors M. Cordingley (Vice-Chairman), S. Adshead, R. Bowker, C. Candish, R Chilton, Mrs. P. Dixon, A. Duffield and J. Lloyd (ex-Officio)

Also in attendance

J.M.J. Maloney - Senior Democratic Services Officer
S. Frost - Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Higgins, J.R. Reilly and D. Western

61. ATTENDANCES

62. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

64. DOMESTIC ABUSE - TRAFFORD'S APPROACH TO PREVENTING AND TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Committee received for information a report of the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, setting out the details of a refreshed approach based on an enhanced strategic approach and partnership working in the context of the Committee's earlier review of Domestic Violence Services. The report was welcomed by the Committee, not least because its underlying principles clearly reflected those advocated in the previous Scrutiny Review of Domestic Violence.

It was noted that historically funding in this area had been non-recurrent and grant based; and further information was therefore requested with regard to the security and mainstreaming from 2014/15 and onwards, for the funding streams as set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted and welcomed.
- (2) That a letter should be sent to the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, seeking assurance in relation to future funding for domestic abuse services.

- (3) That monitoring of the progress of the Domestic Violence Services be incorporated in the Scrutiny Work programme for 2014/15 and beyond.

65. UPDATE ON LOCALISED SCHEME FOR COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS

The Committee received an updated report from the Executive Member for Finance setting out the progress in implementing the localised scheme for Council Tax Benefits. Trafford's Local Council Tax Support Scheme was approved by full Council in January 2013, and rolled out to all new and existing (Council Tax Benefit) claims from April 2013. The report provided the Committee with progress to date including: caseload changes, expenditure, Council Tax collection and recovery, and the new discretionary fund.

Discussions followed and the Committee agreed that the Citizens Advice Bureau should be contacted to seek their views on the impact of their caseload and any increase in residents seeking advice as a result of the changes. Concern was expressed that the applications to the discretionary Council Tax Fund was relatively low, the Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to monitor the number of applications at a future date, in case this suggested that the criteria for applying for the new discretionary fund needed to be revisited.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted and welcomed.
- (2) That the Citizens Advice Bureau be contacted to seek their views on any increase of residents seeking advice as a result of the changes.
- (3) That the Committee will review progress at a suitable future date with regards to the number of applications made to the discretionary Council Tax Fund, and any implications for its application criteria.

66. UPDATE FROM TOPIC GROUPS, INCLUDING BUDGET SCRUTINY

On behalf of the Cycling Topic Group, Councillor Chilton advised the Committee of progress to date, including responses to relevant information from stakeholders. It was noted that meetings of the topic group would be resumed after the Budget Scrutiny Meetings had been completed. He also briefed the Committee that a meeting of the Secondary School Sufficiency Topic Group had taken place. Scrutiny Members had submitted a letter in response to the proposed consultation with recommendations and a request to have a further meeting with the Executive Member and Corporate Director to update on progress after completion of the consultation exercise.

Councillor Cordingley introduced discussions on the Budget Scrutiny, noting that it could be helpful for consideration to be given to changing the format of scrutinising the budget following its implementation rather than in advance. It was noted that

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the timing of the exercise which was challenging, for a number of reasons, and resulted in Scrutiny being undertaken in what was unavoidably a provisional context. The Committee agreed that Trafford's Budget Report was an important project to be scrutinised, but reviewing the outcome of services where specific changes had been implemented should be given more attention and would add value to the scrutiny input

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the content of the updates be noted.
- (2) That in due course Councillor Chilton's Topic Group review the post-consultation scheme in the light of consultation responses to the Secondary School Sufficiency consultation.
- (3) That further discussion take place on potential re-modelling of the Budget Scrutiny process, with attention being placed on what the scrutiny process aims to achieve, and the availability of adequate information to secure this.

The meeting commenced at 5.45 pm and finished at 6.45 pm