

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 APRIL 2024

PRESENT:

Councillors Norman (Chair), Leung (Vice-Chair), Ball, Booker, Ho, Trent, Ray, Robertson, Whitehouse, Woodward and B Yeates

63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Before asking if there were any apologies the Chair drew attention to the number of items on the agenda and asked for members to be concise with their questions so that there would be no need to extend the meeting past 9pm. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Holland and Sonia Wilcox.

64 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr Paul Ray declared a personal interest in Item 10, as a family member had previous recreational involvement with MicroSports.

65 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on January 30, 2024, were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

66 YOUTH COUNCIL REVIEW

The report was presented to the committee by Councillor Richard Cox. He thanked officers for their support in the operation of Youth Council and praised the enthusiasm of members at meetings even when those meetings have lower attendance.

Members asked which secondary schools had been engaged with. The Cabinet Member stated that as far as he is aware every school in the district was invited to get involved. The Cabinet member confirmed he would check the list of who was invited and what those responses were. Members highlighted South Staffordshire College, Bridge Academy and Maple Hays school as schools that were apparently not engaged with the Youth Council. He highlighted that the council could not force schools to engage with the Youth Council. The Cabinet member confirmed he would examine how to better engage with pupils who may go to schools outside the district but who actually live within Lichfield District, as well as re-engaging with schools who previously had participated but had stopped.

Members also suggested the possibility of engaging with primary schools early, in Year 6, to foster interest amongst younger pupils going forward. The Cabinet member supported this idea. Kerry Dove (Chief Operating Officer) also highlighted the opportunity of empowering youth councils to lead on that engagement themselves.

Members highlighted the lack of visibility of youth council members from colleges and those who are home schooled. The cabinet member confirmed invites were extended to home schooled children.

It was confirmed that officers were being pressed to present reports to Youth Council and engage in truly meaningful consultation with the forum. Members suggested that the input of youth councillors should be highlighted to help promote engagement of the elected youth council members.

Members asked whether the budget was an appropriate size and if there was any way of ensuring it is allocated to projects that help develop personal skills.

The Chair extended an open invitation to the Chair and Vice-Chair of Youth Council to attend O&S and provide views.

RESOLVED: The committee reviewed the activities of Youth Council over this year of operation and recommend changes and improvements that could be implemented.

67 HEALTH MATTERS

The Vice-Chair confirmed that she had questioned officers at SCC about the Samuel Johnson maternity unit, as has the new Cabinet Member Mike Wilcox. The Vice-Chair explained that the committee had discussed the struggles of unpaid carers, how best to support these individuals and how to engage with carers early on – particularly those from non-white communities where engagement has historically been lacking. The Vice-Chair highlighted that there is much that district councillors can do to promote healthy living within the district amongst residents. She encouraged all members to contact her with any issues they may want to raise.

Members praised the work of the Vice-Chair in fulfilling her role.

Members asked how we, the district council, were taking this information and data and incorporating it into its work to improve the health and wellbeing of the residents.

The Vice-Chair agreed to pass on the email address of SCC officers to discuss the educational attainment of young carers.

68 NOTES FROM TASK GROUPS

Chair of the City Masterplan Task Group, Cllr Ball, presented the notes of the City Masterplan Task Group and highlighted that he was hoping to arrange a meeting in either May or June to engage with all the relevant officers and Cabinet Members. Members agreed that the task group needed a good overview of the wider plans to develop the Birmingham Road Site.

Members highlighted the meanwhile use for the multistorey car park should utilise the opportunity to increase the level of disabled parking.

The Chair presented the notes of the Pedestrianisation Task Group. Members highlighted the importance of bringing further work and decisions on Pedestrianisation to O&S for consultation beforehand.

69 NOTES AND REVISED MATRIX FROM THE CIVIC MATRIX TASK GROUP

Chair of the Civic Matrix Review Task Group, Cllr Robertson, presented the notes of the Civic Matrix Review Task Group to members. He highlighted that the role of the task group was to review the administration of civic events - not to review the value and function of the civic role itself.

Members asked for more details about the provision to allow Chairs to go to events without the support of LDC. It was confirmed that under the proposed scoring grid, if an event does not meet the necessary point threshold, LDC would not support the Chairs attendance through financial means or resources. The council would not however, prevent the individual from attending events under their own resources and volition.

RESOLVED: The committee agreed to recommend the work of the task group - including the proposed scoring grid - to Cabinet.

70 REVIEW OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FUNCTION AT THE COUNCIL

Will Stevenson (Principal Governance Officer) and Kerry Dove (Chief Operating Officer) presented the report to the committee.

Members noted that Scrutiny achieves best value when Cabinet takes the views of the committee on board. Clarification was requested on 3.1(3) selection of topics, and 3.1(6) regarding tracking timelines. It was confirmed that 3.1(3) references how members can best bring items to the attention of O&S, whilst 3.1(6) refers to how officers should ensure that items requested by scrutiny are actioned and go through the correct processes and forums in a timely manner.

Members that had experienced the previous O&S committee system agreed that the new arrangements were much better in comparison. Members that were new to the committee stated that they believed the structure and operation of the committee to be first class.

Mr Stevenson agreed that any ways of improving the efficiency of task groups should be utilised to help support the committee and confirmed that some task groups were already being arranged via Teams to improve flexibility for attendees. Members suggested reinforcing completion dates for task groups to ensure they were 'task & finish groups' as originally intended.

Members and officers encouraged non-O&S members to volunteer for task groups to increase the range of views and input to the scrutiny process.

RESOLVED: To provide comments and feedback on the operation of the Overview & Scrutiny structure and function for 2023-2024.

71 LICHFIELD DISTRICT 2050 STRATEGY CONSULTATION RESULTS

Cllr Doug Pullen (Leader of the Council) and Kerry Dove (Chief Operating Officer) presented the report to the committee. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the themes involved with the strategy would overlap and cover more than one of the individual groups outlined. It was highlighted that this is not just a Lichfield District Council strategy but a wider one that residents would hopefully feel able to buy into. There was much work still to do with this, but this would be a process of ongoing engagement and communication with residents.

Members asked how confident officers and cabinet were of maintaining this engagement going forward. The Leader praised the work done so far but confirmed significant effort would be required not just to maintain this engagement but ensure it is appropriately balanced across Lichfield City, Burntwood and the Rural Areas.

It was confirmed that this report had sought additional responses, to better reflect the demographics of the district. The inherent difficulties of getting a representative sample from any self-selecting survey were highlighted.

Members noted that the report did not look at tourism and asked if this could be revisited as an additional metric.

Members asked if information relating to incomes could be included in the section on prosperous communities. Members questioned how the council intended to "create more green space" within the district.

Members asked how LDC would ensure that this strategy is kept broad to account for the needs of all residents, rather than specific influential individuals. The Leader noted that the council has limited ability in certain policy areas whilst it can enact very specific plans and actions in others.

Members agreed that the living nature of this document means bringing this back to O&S would be recommended but asked if this can include tracked changes.

RESOLVED: The committee:

Reviewed the results from the public consultation on the draft Lichfield District 2050 Strategy and how the feedback has been used to inform the Strategy.

The committee provided further feedback on the draft Strategy.

The committee provided feedback on the draft Year 1 Delivery Plan.

72 PADEL TENNIS REVIEW

The Chair said that he was grateful to Councillor Ray asking for this to be on the agenda showing that members can influence the agenda.

The Chief Executive (Simon Fletcher) introduced Michael Hampson; Director with MicroSports.

Members asked about the long-term strategy and investment within sports facilities in the district. The Leader highlighted that at its core the strategy was aimed to get residents more active more often, and this had guided decisions such as the development of the new leisure centre. Mr Hampson stated that it was important to support both traditional sports whilst also diversifying and offering new forms of recreation to residents too.

Members asked when O&S will be able to review financial projections relating to this. The Chief Executive confirmed he would share those projections after the meeting. Members asked about the mention of installation of Padel Tennis on the forward plan for next month.

Members asked for sources behind the figures included in the report to be provided.

The Leader highlighted the difficulty in getting residents to be invested in completing a council survey whilst gaining a representative response. The survey itself was intended to generate a discussion about what kind of sports residents would like to see in the district. It was confirmed that whilst research into the growth of different sports was conducted beforehand, this did not include a feasibility study.

Mr Hampson noted that roughly 38% of residents in the district are inactive and any diversification of sports that may improve levels of participation would be beneficial. On the closure of Padel Tennis courts elsewhere in the UK, Mr Hampson highlighted that there are very often several barriers to usage of these courts, whereas the ones in Lichfield District will be much easier for residents to utilise.

RESOLVED: The committee were updated about the progress of installation of the Padel Tennis courts in Beacon Park and posed questions to Cabinet and officers on the financial projections and decision process involved.

73 WORK PROGRAMME

Members recommended it would be beneficial to look at the Burntwood Blueprint budget and the Heritage proposal budget, noting that LDC is putting seed money into these and O&S task groups on those areas could be very valuable.

74 SECURING AN ANCHOR FOOD & BEVERAGE TENANT FOR THE CINEMA COMPLEX

The Leader, Chief Executive and Anthony Thomas (Assistant Director Finance and Procurement) presented the report to the committee. The Leader highlighted this as an opportunity to invest as an anchor tenant and the positive impact that this can then have on the surrounding vicinity and neighbouring units. He outlined the benefit of having an anchor tenant and the reasoning behind this from a business perspective.

RESOLVED: The Committee agreed to suspend standing orders on the time limit of meetings for 15 minutes.

Members asked about recommendation 1.2(b) and where the “budgetary savings” would be acquired in that scenario. The Leader noted that there were options available, that would ultimately be required if the council opted not allocate the money from capital receipts as set out in 1.2(a).

Mr Thomas confirmed that the council has insisted on ensuring that the agreement is a market compliant deal. The Chief Executive added that the partner organisation in the LLP was chosen as they help the council to make informed decisions through their experience and their knowledge of the market.

Mr Thomas confirmed that the money involved would be through internal borrowing, which was lower cost, can be repaid without penalty in the event of any windfall income, and presents less risk to residents.

[The Committee moved into exclusion of press and public]

75 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: “That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

76 SECURING AN ANCHOR FOOD & BEVERAGE TENANT FOR THE CINEMA COMPLEX (PART CONFIDENTIAL)

[Item subject to exclusion of press and public as outlined above]

(The Meeting closed at 9.15 pm)
CHAIR