

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 JUNE 2024

PRESENT:

Councillors Norman (Chair), Ball, Checkland, Evans, Hill, Holland, Trent and Woodward

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Leung, Ray, Robertson, Ho and Yeates.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr Checkland declared an interest in Item 5 (Notes of the New Leisure Centre Task Group) as Chair of Lichfield Sports Club.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on the 3rd April 2024, were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

4 HEALTH MATTERS

The Chair confirmed Cllr Leung had asked any members to raise issues they wish to be discussed at the next meeting of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee with her.

5 NOTES FROM TASK GROUPS

On the notes from the Lichfield City Masterplan, Cllr Ball confirmed he had been trying to organise another meeting of the task group since the last one. Dates have been identified at the end of July / start of August.

On the notes from the New Leisure Centre task group, members flagged that the second meeting was called at very short notice and asked when the confidential figures involved will be made publicly available.

On the pedestrianisation notes, the Chair suggested there may be one more meeting of the task group to discuss the ETRO and any further discussion on this could come to O&S. Members asked about the further work on the alleyway referenced in the notes – it was clarified the cabinet member was aiming to 'brighten' the alleyway.

6 REVIEW OF TASK GROUPS

The Chair of the pedestrian task group stated he believed another meeting may be required before the task group could then be concluded.

The Chair of the Masterplan task group confirmed that he believed it may soon be time to conclude the task group, after 2 more meetings where the plan for the site could be seen and its viability agreed. He confirmed he had agreed on behalf of the task group, with the Leader and Chief Executive, that the work on the BRS should begin as soon as possible. He believed

the task group should discuss the bus station move at the next meeting. Members agreed that the task group should be suspended for the time being following two more meetings.

The Chair of the climate emergency task group agreed that the task group could be concluded now that the carbon dashboard was being implemented.

Members were supportive of setting up new task groups focusing on public transport and local health scrutiny task group to raise issues on these areas when concerns arise. It was noted that the task groups should have clear parameters so as not to duplicate work already done by the district council and county council.

It was agreed that the scoping of these task groups would be discussed between the Chair, Vice-Chair, and officers, before being presented to O&S committee to agree their formal establishment.

7 PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

Cllr Rob Strachan presented the report to the committee. He highlighted the improvements in Leisure Centre services and Disabled Facilities Grants now that they are being provided in-house by the district council. The incubator space in Frog Lane and improved communications with residents were also highlighted to members. He stated that the lack of certainty in local government finances due to single year settlements was the biggest obstacle currently being faced by the authority. Members queried the statement in the report that “no one (Cllrs and residents) liked” the local plan.

Question 1:

Members asked about regeneration projects for areas outside Lichfield City Centre.

The Cabinet member agreed ambitions for Burntwood should be better phrased within the report.

Members asked if there were any staff responses regarding changes to performance management.

It was confirmed a staff satisfaction survey and staff reviews (OKRs) take place every 6 months across the organisation to better improve belonging and wellbeing in the authority.

Question 2:

Members suggested the review of LDCs website should be included within the report.

It was agreed that this would be added. It was confirmed the robots referenced in the report are currently employed in the administrative tasks behind the scenes in planning applications, taking details and putting them into planning case management systems. It was also confirmed oversight, checks and balances were all in place for this.

Question 3:

Members asked about the language describing every week as tough and exhausting.

It was stated the culture of the organisation is now very different, and staff are ruthlessly aimed at targeting the issues that matter most to residents. The language is recognition of the work pressures often faced by staff, though it was hoped this was balanced by the work done as part of the belonging and wellbeing work. It was agreed that the language would be reviewed.

Reducing the reliance on agency staff was flagged by the committee as something to support.

Members stated that the Leaders Board remains opaque and asked where these discussions were reported to.

It was confirmed one public meeting of the leaders board had taken place since the local elections last May (2023). The Cabinet member agreed to feed this back to the Leader, with a view to agreeing an appropriate mechanism for providing a briefing.

Question 4:

Members recommended a more robust response regarding bid-based funding schemes.
The Cabinet member supported this view.

Members believed the paper reflected that the council was working towards a more positive way of working.

RESOLVED: Members provided comments and feedback on the draft Productivity Plan the 'Lichfield District Council Productivity Plan 2024' in advance of it being considered by Cabinet in July 2024.

8 INVOLVING RESIDENTS IN SCRUTINY

It was noted that members of the public had been involved on the panel of the Climate Emergency task group and as witnesses at the pedestrianisation task group. The O&S committee toolkit outlines that members of the public can get involved in scrutiny in 3 distinct ways:

- Observers,
- Representations to committee,
- Participants,

Members observed that there would be much work to do given the low number of public attendees at meetings.

Members asked if Scrutiny was being given an adequate profile by the Communications team and how the work of the committee could be better promoted on the council's website. Members noted the free newspaper as an alternative for members of the public who do not access news about the committees' activities on Lichfield Live.

Members noted the establishment of a new parish council network.

9 O&S WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

Members suggested the Community Safety Partnership should be a committee item rather than a briefing paper.

Members suggested an item on the progress of the declared Climate Emergency once the dashboard is introduced.

Members suggested an item at the end of the municipal year to review the work of Youth Council.

(The Meeting closed at 7.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN