

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 17th July 2017

Present: Councillor Lythgoe (Chair)
Councillors L. Barnes, Bromley (in part), Janet Eaton, Johnson, Kempson, Kenyon (in part), McMahon, Morris, Robertson, Z. Ali (Co-opted member)

In Attendance: Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Clare Birtwistle, Legal Services Manager
Nichola Wright, Calico
Beth Gallagher, Calico
Carl Bell, The Whitaker
David Fuller, Ski Rossendale
Jenni Cook, Committee & Member Services Officer
Dawn Eckersley, Housing Manager

Also Present: Councillors A. Barnes, Haworth, Lamb, Oakes, Walmsley (in part)
2 members of the public
0 members of the press

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence; all members of the committee were present, save for Cllr Bromley who would be late due to work commitments.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Robertson and Kempson noted that they were members of the Development Control Committee with respect to Item 9 – Ski Rossendale Update.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the members of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

6.1 There was no update from the Chair.

7. CALICO UPDATE

7.1 Nichola Wright and Beth Gallagher from Calico gave a presentation to members which outlined the work undertaken for the East Lancashire Housing Initiative and gave an overview of the roles and responsibilities of Calico as follows:-

- Calico employed around 700 people with an annual group turnover of £42m with a £22m annual rent roll.
- 211 properties were within the East Lancashire Housing Initiative and a breakdown of the current status of properties was provided.
- A 'patch-based' approach was used with dedicated officers for each patch, depending on the issues within a particular area.
- Staff undertook customer service training using the Mary Gober method.
- Three customer case studies were outlined which detailed the work undertaken by Calico in terms of signposting and direct assistance.
- Community engagement was a key part of Calico's ethos.
- Calico would report back to the council with the key performance measures once finalised with officers.

7.2 Members and members of the public asked questions and discussed the update as follows:-

- Help was given to tenants with regards to arrears and anti-social behaviour. Calico had a good relationship with the DWP as a result of, amongst other things, Universal Credit rolling out in Burnley. This allowed relationships to be built with tenants and a preventative and early intervention approach was followed. Eviction was a last resort with a positive payment culture encouraged.
- Calico linked into support services, such as drug and alcohol support and, due to their links with other areas, were able to engage services outside of the East Lancashire area.
- In terms of assisting tenants in financial difficulty, the tenancy team would encourage a tenant to look at whether they were accessing all relevant benefits, their financial situation and financial resilience and on occasion speak with debtors.
- It was noted that the costs associated with renewing/refurbishing had already been accrued by Council.
- It was noted that the properties within hard to let areas tended to be smaller properties in low-demand areas with few 3-4 bed roomed properties available.
- The maintenance team's method of operation was outlined and this was provided by Ring Stones.
- Emergency services for homelessness were outlined and the Council's Housing Manager outlined 4 projects that were currently being undertaken.

- The Calico and Be-with-Us criteria were noted and the checks undertaken for prospective tenants were outlined and aimed to provide sustainable tenancies.

Resolved:

That the presentation was noted and Calico were thanked for their time.

8. THE WHITAKER UPDATE

8.1 Carl Bell updated members on the current and future projects at The Whitaker and provided information as follows:-

- 12-13 FTE staff were currently employed and 6 young people.
- There were around 15 volunteers and links with Friends of the Museum.
- Exhibits were changed regularly to keep customers interested.
- Successful activities had taken place:
 - Easter
 - National Trust work
 - 1940s weekend and other WW2 initiatives
 - Children’s activities
 - Rawtenstall Annual Fair (at which approximately 468 people were counted in Whitaker Park)
 - Harvest/Incredible Edible
 - Halloween
 - Marriages, christenings, wakes
 - Community group use
 - Film Festival – the Whitaker was currently the smallest member of the British Film Institute
- The Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) was outlined with phase 1 underway to convert the barn and stables. Consultation with the public would be undertaken.
- It was important to work with other service and leisure providers.

8.2 Members and members of the public asked questions and discussed the update as follows:-

- Work with multicultural groups was outlined with more engagement to take part using the film festival.
- Consultation would be undertaken around October/November.
- Links with East Lancashire Railway were discussed.
- Sustainability was complex for the Whitaker to provide and measure.
- The Whitaker was part of a wellbeing pilot with other museums such as the Eden Project and The Whitworth Gallery.
- In 2016 over 35000 visitors had attended.
- In terms of mailshots, an e-newsletter was available and around 1000 leaflets were printed at a time – costs were a consideration. The Whitaker were reminded of Whitworth Valley News.

Resolved:

That the presentation was noted.

9. SKI ROSSENDALE UPDATE

9.1 David Fuller updated members on Ski Rossendale and projects undertaken and planned, as follows:-

- The journey undertaken by the centre which opened in 1973 was outlined.
- Significant investment and re-investment was necessary.
- Income from November 2016 to May 2017 had increased by 11.4% with a 10% increase in June 2017 when compared to June 2016.
- The planning application going to the Development Control Committee the following night was noted and briefly outlined.
- Should the application be successful then there would be some impact on income, however the site would remain open during the works.
- Future plans included bringing skiing competitions back to Rossendale, however work would be needed to bring this up to an acceptable standard for Snow Sport England.
- Closer links with Rossendale Leisure Trust were being forged to form an integrated leisure offer for the valley.
- Ski Rossendale was a unique and iconic feature and a company in Aviemore had contacted them for advice and information.

9.2 Members and members of the public asked questions and discussed the update as follows:-

- The impact of Chill Factor was discussed and it was noted that customers would try the facility then generally return to Ski Rossendale.
- In 2016 30,000 visitors had been to Ski Rossendale; it was not possible to quantify which of those were from outside the area.
- There were 14 members of staff and 1 young volunteer. Volunteer work was something that Ski Rossendale were keen to encourage.
- Promotional activities were undertaken and there was liaison with schools, scouts, cubs and guides etc.
- Promotional signage was discussed.

Resolved:

That the presentation was noted.

10. EQUALITIES TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

10.1 Councillor Lythgoe introduced the report which outlined the work undertaken by the Equalities Task and Finish Group. The Group had asked People and Policy to update the Equalities Strategy; consultation would be looked at and the Cabinet would be asked to consider reviewing the format of the Neighbourhood Forums.

10.2 Members and members of the public asked questions and discussed the report as follows:-

- The report highlighted the scope for the Council to work further with minority groups.

- Councillor Lythgoe, Councillor Essex and Zieda Ali had been invited to Chorley's Equality Forum in August.

Resolved

1. That the report was noted.
2. That the Cabinet or the relevant portfolio holder provides a response to the report within 2 months.

11. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE 101 SERVICE TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

- 11.1 Councillor A. Barnes provided a response on behalf of the Cabinet with respect to the recommendations of the 101 Service Task and Finish Group. It was noted that funding had been acquired to provide the CCTV improvements and that the 101 service would be coming back to a future meeting to update members on issues raised in the original Task and Finish Group report.

Resolved

That the response was noted.

12. LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PERFORMANCE UPDATE

- 12.1 Clare Birtwistle provided members with an overview of the work undertaken by Legal Services, which was a support function to the other services of the Council and included:-

- Contracts, enforcement constitutional updates, procurement
- Freedom of Information requests
- Land charges – changes had recently taken place to the format of personal searches which would free up officer time
- Elections – canvass, election management – it was noted that the Elections Manager was leaving the Council and the job was out to advert with interviews scheduled for 4th August
- Work was ongoing with the business plan.

- 12.2 Members and members of the public asked questions and discussed the update as follows:-

- The Governance Working Group looked at constitution updates and comparison took place with other local authorities.
- Discussion took place on freedom of information and the publication of information.
- The Legal Service's Manager agreed to share a copy of the draft business plan with the Chair of O&S.

Resolved

That the update was noted.

13. THE FORWARD PLAN

13.1 It was noted that following the work of the Equalities Task and Finish Group the Equalities Strategy was now on the Forward Plan.

Resolved:

The Forward Plan was noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.45pm

Signed:_____

Date:_____