

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Virtual Meeting held on Thursday, 24th September, 2020 at 7.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor Andrew Harding in the Chair;

Councillors Jim Blagden, Dale Grounds,  
David Walters and Lee Waters.

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors Phil Rostance and  
Caroline Wilkinson.

**Officers Present:** Lynn Cain, Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

### **OS.6 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **OS.7 Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 July 2020,  
be received and approved as a correct record.

### **OS.8 Scrutiny Workplan Management**

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services introduced the report and outlined the purpose of the meeting which included receiving updates on the work being undertaken by Scrutiny Panels A and B, as well as the recently established COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel.

Workplan management was also a key responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in the Council's Constitution and Members were also being asked to agree the particular terms of reference for the two new reviews added to the Scrutiny Workplan for 2020/2021, namely, 'Accessibility in Ashfield' and 'Recycling and Collection Rates in Ashfield'.

#### **COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel**

Following recommendations from Cabinet, the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel was established and formalised at the Council meeting held on 9 July 2020; set up to review the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to take an active role in the Council's recovery plans.

The Panel had so far met on two occasions and were operating in accordance with a work programme approved at the first meeting. The Panel meeting dates had been scheduled to ensure they aligned with scheduled Cabinet meeting dates, thus enabling swift action on any Panel recommendations as required.

At the second meeting of the Panel, Members welcomed attendance from all members of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) with the focus of the meeting being centred around local recovery themes. The meeting took a question and answer format as questions from the public were put to the relevant CLT Director, alongside questions from Panel Members.

The October 2020 meeting of the Panel was intending to focus on the main theme of small business support in Ashfield particularly during the recovery stages of the pandemic. Various business representatives across a variety of sectors had been invited and again, questions would be encouraged from local communities through the Council's social media platforms.

The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel's Vice Chairman, Councillor Jim Blagden, took the opportunity to congratulate the Council's employees for showing great resolve and unstinting commitment to the residents of Ashfield during the lockdown by delivering a full range of services under very difficult circumstances.

Members were also keen to pursue the erection of a permanent memorial to celebrate and honour all the key workers and volunteers within Ashfield who had shown great bravery and commitment to others during the pandemic. A formal letter of thanks was also due to be sent from the Council to all local foodbanks and community groups for their unwavering support towards the more vulnerable groups within Ashfield during this time.

The questions asked at the second Panel meeting had also revealed some concerns surrounding the following:

- the long term viability of small local businesses;
- the gap in funding affecting churches and charities following the lockdown;
- the increase in Council tenant rent arrears and its impact on homelessness issues;
- the real prospect of a second wave of coronavirus and its impact on local communities within Ashfield.

It was felt that all the above issues would be sufficiently addressed by the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel as it worked through its agreed programme over the next 10 months. A suggestion was made that the Panel would be well placed to consider Covid-19 safety measures at polling stations in readiness for the elections in May 2021 but it was accepted that this work was already being undertaken by the Election Team and the Polling Places Review Group. It was agreed that an update to the Panel in relation to this issues, would still be welcomed at some point in early 2021.

#### Scrutiny Panel A

Scrutiny Panel A were due to hold its first formal meeting of the municipal year in September 2020 and would be commencing a new 'Veterans and Service Personnel' Workplan topic. This review was originally set to take place as a separate Scrutiny Commission as announced at Council during June 2019, but due to several unforeseen circumstances over the past year, work on the commission had been delayed.

The previous, ongoing review in relation to 'Bus Provision', as commenced by Scrutiny Panel A in early 2020, was being held in abeyance pending approval of new legislation and initiatives regarding public transport following the Covid-19 outbreak.

### Scrutiny Panel B

Scrutiny Panel B had been undertaking a review of the Council's Community Protection Service since January 2020 and was continuing.

### 'Accessibility in Ashfield' Review – Terms of Reference

Panel Members were reminded that this item had been suggested by Councillor Dale Grounds who wished to investigate the possibility of increasing the inclusiveness of the Council's parks for all special needs and disability groups, both for children and adults.

Recent plans for upgrades to three of the Council's park play areas did not show any proposals to provide full wheelchair access or install suitable disabled access play equipment. Nottingham City Council had recently included the installation of some sensory equipment within a children's play area in Bilborough and this type of equipment would be beneficial to so many children/adults dealing with special needs and disabilities within the Ashfield area.

Members concurred that any Council should be prioritising inclusive access to all its parks and open spaces for both children and adults. It was acknowledged that Ashfield was already doing excellent work to accommodate all groups within its communities, but it was still felt that more could be done. It was agreed that a site visit to an inclusive park would be extremely beneficial to Members as part of the review process and to enlist the views of local community groups and ambassadors working with special needs and disability groups in the area.

### 'Recycling and Collection Rates in Ashfield' Review – Terms of Reference

The inclusion of this review on the Scrutiny Workplan had been suggested by Councillor Phil Rostance in response to the recent Covid-19 lockdown and not as a result of any previous poor results or lack of recycling/collection initiatives from the Council.

Ashfield District Council had always been at the forefront of initiatives to encourage increases in recycling rates including the 'Ashfield Spring Clean', 'Bag It' and 'Spring into Summer' campaigns. Also, the Council had fought hard to decrease incidences of fly tipping within the District with tough penalties being enforced on identification of offenders.

The review had been suggested due to the reduction in recycling and collection rates over the previous six months (and lockdown period) including the impact of recycling centres being closed across Nottinghamshire.

It was acknowledged that data from the recent recycling campaigns during 2020 would be important to the review and required analysis to see if the Council had effectively mitigated against the recent difficulties caused by the pandemic.

It was agreed that Members could usefully work with the Environment Team to analyse the results and gain some understanding as to the impact on the Council's recycling/collection rates during the outbreak and to examine any possible solutions for improvement over the coming year.

RESOLVED that

- a) the updates in relation to the work of Scrutiny Panels A and B and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel, be received and noted;
- b) the terms of reference for the 'Accessibility in Ashfield' review be as follows:

#### Review Objectives

The objectives of the review will be to:

- Ensure that all parks and open spaces in Ashfield are accessible with appropriate adaptations and equipment;
- Potentially expand this objective to include the District's Town Centres (with consideration to the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund) and the Council's buildings (Urban Road, Brook Street etc)
- Ensure that all Council consultation exercises regarding parks and open spaces are fully inclusive.

#### Methodology

The review will utilise the following methodology:

- Reviewing Council policies and strategies relating to accessibility;
- Exploring the Section 106 allocation process;
- Gaining a full understanding of what facilities are already in place;
- A site visit to view a best practice example of an accessible and inclusive environment.

#### Key Involvement

Members will seek involvement from the following over the course of the review:

- Community Groups;
- Planning;
- Community Engagement;
- Place and Wellbeing;
- Portfolio Holder for Streets, Parks, and Town Centres.

- c) the terms of reference for the 'Recycling and Collection Rates in Ashfield' review be as follows:

#### Review Objectives

The objectives of the review will be to:

- Ensure the Council is doing everything possible to improve recycling and collection rates in the District;
- Establish the impact of bespoke events such as the Big Ashfield Spring Clean, Bag It, and Skip into Summer schemes have had following implementation.

#### Methodology

The review will utilise the following methodology:

- Reviewing current performance and performance targets regarding recycling and collection;
- Consider the impact of the pandemic on the recycling and collection rates of 2020;
- Review the impact of the Council's bespoke schemes on recycling and collection rates.

#### Key Involvement

Members will seek involvement from the following over the course of the review:

- Environmental Services;
- Portfolio Holder for Streets, Parks, and Town Centres;
- Waste and Recycling Service Partners.

The meeting closed at 7.43 pm

Chairman.