

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING

Monday, 9 December 2019

PRESENT: Councillor(s): T Graham (Chair)

Councillors(s) V Anderson, D Burnett, B Clelland, S Dickie, Diston, A Geddes, F Geddes, S Hawkins, H Kelly, P Maughan, Reay, J Turnbull, R Waugh, A Wheeler, M Brain, J Adams and J McElroy

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): N Weatherley, K Dodds and M Hood

CPL56 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

- (i) The minutes of the last meeting held on 28 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

CPL57 MANAGING VACANT SPACES ACROSS GATESHEAD

The Committee received a report and presentation providing an overview of how vacant spaces are actively managed across the borough of Gateshead.

From the presentation it was noted that there are a variety of powers available to the Council with regards to resolving issues with spaces not managed in line with legal and statutory requirements. The presentation also provided the Committee with some case studies to provide additional context.

It was asked whether there is a limit to the number of times an application can be refused by the Council's planning department. It was advised that there is a limit and legislation available to the Council to prevent developers continually submitting planning applications for sites that are not appropriate.

An additional question was asked regarding the costs to the Council in managing vacant spaces, including those that are privately owned. The Committee were advised that there is currently one empty property officer; it was also noted that the team who manage vacant properties and sites have adapted their ways of working to ensure processes are more efficient and proactive. It was further advised that there is a cross-council approach to managing vacant spaces to make the best use of current staffing and resource.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the presentation and report.

CPL58 TACKLING HOMELESSNESS IN GATESHEAD

The Committee received a report and presentation providing an update on tackling homelessness in Gateshead. The presentation provided the Committee with an overview of the following:

- Describing the extent of homelessness in Gateshead as is understood
- Causes and reasons for becoming homeless
- Work being done to prevent homelessness
- The extent of support available and support services that The Gateshead Housing Company provide
- Successes and impacts
- Ongoing challenges and opportunities

The Committee were also advised that there is a base opposite Warwick Court in Gateshead providing a safe place for those who are homeless to stay. It was further advised that despite the facility not being advertised, demand for use is high.

A discussion took place on residents who make use of Felling Food Bank, a Committee Member requested a further discussion with officers outside of the meeting to see if they could provide support.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report and presentation.

CPL59 HATE CRIME AND COMMUNITY TENSIONS

The Committee received a report providing an update in relation to work taking place in Gateshead around Hate Crime and Community Tensions.

From the report it was noted that Gateshead Council has a strong approach to tackling hate crime within Gateshead and have a proactive response to dealing with community-related tensions.

The Committee were then provided with a summary of performance and progress to date from the report. It was highlighted that there are over 100 Hate Crime Champions across Gateshead acting as the first point of contact for their organisation's employees and customers. It was also noted that a Victim Support Task and Finish Group had recently developed a Hate Crime Victim Action Group for Gateshead.

An overview of future activities was provided from the report in addition to a breakdown of recorded hate crime in Gateshead (April to September 2019)

It was asked what guidance is available to members of the public to advise on what is best to do if they witness a hate crime. It was advised that training takes place regularly across Gateshead at various community groups and organisations. It was further stated that members of the public are encouraged to be 'Upstanders not Bystanders' with regards to Hate Crime but that the primary focus is not to put themselves at risk.

An additional question was asked as to whether the community training encouraged intergenerational engagement. The presenting officer advised the member that they would be happy to discuss that matter in more detail outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

CPL60 HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The Committee received a presentation on the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Health and Wellbeing Board has recognised that the current strategy which was written in 2013 needs to be refreshed.

It was reported that there was a need to update the strategy due to several new challenges, for example austerity and welfare reform and continuing inequalities. A significant proportion of Gateshead residents are in need or are vulnerable and it was reported that once a child is born into deprivation a number of other inequalities follow, the Health and Wellbeing Board recognise the need to more directly influence the wider determinants of health.

Five pledges have been developed to help guide decision making:

- Put people and families at the heart of everything we do
- Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance
- Support our communities to support themselves and each other
- Invest in our economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation and growth across the borough
- Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead

The aim is to:

- Give every child the best start in life, with a focus on the first 3 years of a child's life
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create the conditions for fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention

An action plan is being developed and further engagement is underway, it is anticipated that the strategy will be finalised in December and approval sought from the Health and Wellbeing Board with a launch in Spring 2020.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Committee's views on the proposed strategy be noted.

CPL61 MAKING GATESHEAD A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES – SIX MONTH ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY 2019/2020

The Committee received a report and presentation providing a six-month assessment of performance and delivery for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 in relation to the Council's Thrive agenda.

From the report it was noted that the six-month assessment of performance for 2019-20 focussed on the achievements, actions and areas for improvement during the reporting period.

A summary of the strategic indicators linked to Thrive was provided from the report, these included:

- Putting people and families at the heart of everything we do
- Tackling inequality so people have a fair chance
- Supporting communities to support themselves and each other
- Investing in our economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation and growth throughout the borough
- Working together and fighting for a better future for Gateshead

The Committee noted for each indicator the most recent performance and the targeted performance for 2020. It was stated that some indicator targets for 2020 have not been set as the figures for each cannot be anticipated; these included the number of households being accepted as homeless and the total number of reported crimes in Gateshead.

Appended to the report was an update on actions from the previous report brought to Committee for information.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee considered that the activities undertaken during April 2019 – September 2019 supported the delivery of the Thrive agenda.
- (ii) The Committee noted that Cabinet will consider a composite performance report at their meeting in January 2020.

CPL62 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the report setting out the provisional work programme for the municipal year 2019/20.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the Work Programme.
- (ii) The Committee agreed that the Work Programme be brought back to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues, which the Committee may be asked to consider.