

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 4 September 2023

PRESENT: Councillor J Eagle (Chair)

Councillor(s): R Beadle, D Bradford, D Burnett, B Clelland, T Graham, J Green, S Green, M Hall, I Patterson, J Simpson, J Turner and J Wallace

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor(s):

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): C Buckley and D Duggan

CR7 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

CR8 SCOPING REPORT - LEISURE SERVICES REVIEW

The committee received a report on a review of the Leisure Services. The purpose of the report is to understand the reasoning behind the closure of some facilities and to identify lessons learned to ensure that the procurement process and any Community Asset Transfers benefit by learning from the Council experience.

A five-stage review has been proposed;

Stage 1

This stage will consider the scope of the report and propose how it will be undertaken detailing the evidence gathering topics and presenters.

Proposal

- 4 September 2023 - Scoping report to Scrutiny Committee presented by A Tickner.

Stage 2

Leisure Evidence may be gathered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee making visits as necessary or inviting persons and organisations to give evidence before it. Relevant Group or Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive will assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary. The evidence gathered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be written up by officers.

Proposal

- 16 October 2023 - To have 3 evidence gathering session as set out below:
 - Evidence of the previous Leisure Services Strategy and its implementation from 2015 to 2023 presented by Lindsay Murray and Michael Lamb.

- Deep dive into the Leisure Service Financial Performance presented by John Shiel/Jill Bradley
- Market context, benchmarking and impacts of COVID presented by Andrea Tickner and Michael Lamb.

Stage 3

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will then meet (as many times as is necessary) to analyse the information gathered and prepare its conclusions.

Proposal

- 27 November 2023 –Interim Report presented by A Tickner

Stage 4

Officers will then prepare a report on the issue based on the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Officers will submit this report to the next practicable meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to secure agreement that the report is a fair, accurate and complete reflection of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's conclusions.

Proposal

- 22 January 2024 - Final report to be considered by the Committee.

Stage 5

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will then present this report to the Cabinet. The Cabinet may take note of the report, approve all or some of the report's recommendations or refer the report to full Council or to an Advisory Group for further consultation.

Proposal

- Presented to Cabinet on 20th February 2024 by the Chair of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was proposed that an invitation was extended to other local authorities in the North East England who have successfully invested in their leisure services. This will help to understand how other local authorities have been successful and compare against where Gateshead has gone wrong, and if there is anything that can be done differently in the future. It was also suggested to invite those people who are interested in the asset transfer to understand their plans for the leisure services and show support as a council.

It was queried if further meetings could be held to accommodate meeting with other local authorities to ensure the same mistakes are not made in another service. It was advised this may delay the procurement process, but this will be looked at to see how further meetings can be incorporated.

RESOLVED: - (i) that the information contained within the report be noted.
(ii) that the committee agree the scope, process and timescale as set out in this report.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE - ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a report to provide an update on the Annual Health and Safety Performance Report.

The Committee were presented with the statistics for 2022- 23:

- There had been a rise in the total number of incidents reported; 21-22 reported 620 incidents whilst, 22-23 had 677 incidents reported.
- The number of accidents had decreased by 23 in the past year.
- Near misses and hazards had increased by 81.

Following from the statistics above, it was highlighted there are three categories which accounted for the highest number of reported incidents for 2022-23:

- Physical assaults (208 accidents and near misses)
- Threatening behaviour (76 near misses)
- Verbal abuse (58 near misses)

98% of physical assaults were reported within care settings and schools. 78% were classified as 'unintentional' due to employees supporting service users/ pupils with complex care needs. Services are developing a program to help reduce the number of assaults in these settings. In the next report the statistics will show schools data separately.

22- 23 reported one industrial disease case with a diagnosis of hand arm vibration. A watch is being procured to trial whilst using vibration tools to understand what is happening whilst using these tools.

The council's long-term plan is to create a safety culture which would expect an initial increase in near misses but fewer accidents.

Sickness: Sickness levels have fallen over the last 5 years however stress is still the main cause for sickness. Work related injuries have increased over the last few years with 12 incidents in the last year.

A discussion was noted to report sickness statistics with covid listed separately to understand how much sickness is not covid related. A further discussion was noted on stress being one of the main causes for sickness, why managers are not attending their training to help combat staff stress levels and if there was trend with departments. An investigation has been ongoing, and it has observed certain departments have a higher level of absence due to stress, and these services are being targeted for management training.

Councillors raised concerns if they are part of causing stress for officers. It was discussed if there was a process that could be implemented for officers to know if the councillors request was urgent or not.

Occupational Health: Occupation Health have recruited a physician to help support the team with the increased number of appointments.

It has been recognized there is a high rate of non-attendance over the past two years. This is currently under investigation within the Occupation Health team.

Enforcement Action: There were no prosecutions or enforcement notices issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

The council were issued with one fee for intervention (FFI) in July 2022. The building was deemed to be unfit for tenants as they were unaware of asbestos containing materials in the building. An investigation has been carried out to ensure incidents like this do not happen again.

Proactive Monitoring: Two audits were carried out in 22-23 for 'Corporate Warning Alert System (CWAS)' and Work at Height within Construction services.

In CWAS the following was identified;

- 20 Recommendations in total: 6 High Priority, 11 Medium and 3 Best Practise.

Key findings;

- Not all teams who have planned face to face meetings with members of the public have access to CWAS.
- Details of system administrators are not being kept suitably up to date.
- Several areas of clarification around responsibilities required within the user guide and procedure.
- A lack of consistency regarding how information is classified and displayed from feeder system.

Working at height audit the follow was identified:

- 23 Recommendations in total: 2 non-Compliant, 12 Partial Compliant and 18 compliant.

A meeting with Construction Services is scheduled to agree an action list with timescales.

Inspections: In the last reporting period, there have been 279 inspections carried out across construction sites, schools, and other council areas. Risk assessments, method statements and training records have been checked and verified.

All areas of services that were not compliant have been fed back to managers to implement corrective measures.

Health & Safety Training: The Health and Safety team have been working with Workforce Development on reviewing the suitability of existing e-learning modules available on Learning Hub and to also design and launch new ones. It has been advised a range of e-learning and classroom-based training is beneficial for employees.

Any employee who is not attending training is being reported back to the relevant Service Director.

Educational and Other Visits: In the academic year 2022/23 a total of 11,020 visits were recorded. 112 of these visits involved residential stays, 167 involved

adventurous activities. Overseas travel has recommenced.

Corporate procedures and Codes of Practice: In the period of 2022-23, 42 documents were produced or revised. All these documents are presented to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee as part of the consultation process. All documents are available on the intranet.

2023/24 Priorities:

- Setting a vision strategy
- Health and Safety Culture
- Data Metrics
- Implementation of a new incident reporting system.
- Health and Safety Campaigns
- Annual Health and Safety Performance Report (HS39)
- Occupational Health Software
- Policy/Procedure reviews.

RESOLVED: i) that the committee have agreed the actions taken are appropriate.

CR10 UPDATE ON VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESILIENCE

The volunteer sector has been performing well over the last few years including covid and the cost-of-living crisis. There are currently 888 registered charities in Gateshead with a possible 2,000 more community and grassroot groups.

In 2022/23 the council commissioned £7,108,881 to the volunteer sector with this rising for 2023/24 to a total of £7,414,208. Further investigation is needed into how much is being spent on micro and small organisations compared to medium and large organisations with further analysis to look at if this money is being spent locally, regionally, or nationally. It was discussed if as a council we can advise micro charities to work together to achieve a bigger goal, which would allow the council to help more charities. The committee were advised this is a process that is in place, but it is very hard to monitor as people prefer to raise awareness for their own cause especially if it's a personal cause.

Over the last six months more organisations are starting to struggle due to the cost-of-living crisis. Organisations are starting to become overstretched as there is fewer resources and fewer funding opportunities available with even fewer providing full cost recovery, leading to a negative impact on the sector and its employees.

The cost of running the voluntary sector is rising due to increased consumables to include energy prices, companies working in older buildings, staff costs becoming more expensive. Staff are on average paid 7% less than the private sector. Research emerging shows the voluntary sectors are just managing, as a large % of funding had been brought forward to support organisations through covid but by bringing funds forward in this way there's a shortage now.

There has been a 27% increase year on year rise for support from Citizen's Advice Bureau, and they are not alone in seeing increases of this scale.

. The number of volunteers currently working in Gateshead is unknown as they are not visible to the Council and there's no central registration process. However, in the period April 2022 to March 2023 there were:

- 326 volunteers recruited through the volunteer centre,
- 31 organisations supported through direct contact,
- 32 new organisations listed on Our Gateshead website,
- 76 VCSE members contributing to the Gateshead Volunteer Co-ordinators Network,
- 60 new volunteer's roles created on the OurGateshead website,
- 100% of the 326 volunteers recruited had additional needs (a priority group for the service)

However, it is becoming difficult to recruit volunteers due to the current cost of living crisis, as they cannot afford to give their time for free, the council help with as much as possible due to the cost of training, insurance, refreshments, travel etc.

RESOLVED: i) that a further presentation is brought to a future committee
 ii) that information about support through Connected Voice and their performance be circulated.

CR11 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee reviewed the work programme and noted there maybe some changes due to the leisure review. More information to follow.

RESOLVED: i) That the comments of the committee of amendments be noted.

Chair.....