

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 25 June 2018

PRESENT: Councillor John Eagle (Chair)
Councillor(s): W Dick, J Wallace, L Caffrey, M Charlton,
J Green, S Green, M Hall, B Oliphant and N Weatherley

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): D Bradford, D Duggan and M Henry

CR1 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- (i) The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 16 April 2018 were approved as a correct record.

CR2 CONSTITUTION

The Committee received the report outlining the constitution of the Corporate Resources OSC and the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair approved by Council for the 2018/19 municipal year.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

CR3 ROLE AND REMIT

The Committee received the report that sets out the remit and terms of reference of the Committee as previously agreed by the Cabinet and the Council.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted its remit and terms of reference.

CR4 THE IMPACT OF THE GATESHEAD FUND 2017 - 2018 - A CASE STUDY

The Committee received the report to seek the Committee's view on the impact on the Gateshead Fund during 2017/18 looking at how it has helped to support, develop and build capacity in the voluntary and community sector and thereby help strengthen Gateshead's local communities.

The Committee were provided with an overview of the Gateshead Fund which was established in 2011. Further details of the Gateshead Fund 2017/18 allocation and administration was also provided with examples of the various local organisations that have benefitted. A copy of the Community Foundation's 'The Gateshead Fund –

Impact Report 2018' was also provided for information in addition to a summary of how the Gateshead Fund links with Gateshead's 'Thrive Agenda'.

It was noted that the report was useful however it was said that some community groups struggle to access funds due to a lack of experience and knowledge about the rules and criteria to meet when applying. It was highlighted that this information is made available to applicants and that staff are available to answer any queries.

It was asked what work is done to prevent community groups going into 'meltdown' once their funding has finished. It was noted that as part of the application process organisations need to demonstrate their long term financial plans and this progress is monitored. It was further noted that organisations are not allowed to have more than 3 grants within a 6-year period.

It was asked whether there is a policing system to monitor whether organisations are spending their funds appropriately and within the terms and conditions of the Gateshead Fund. It was advised that instances of misspending do not happen often and are usually highlighted via a whistle-blower which will be investigated. It was noted that when terms and conditions are not met it is usually because of naivety as opposed to fraud.

A discussion took place around the adverse effects of adversity on communities. It was also highlighted that schools are to be made the heart of the anti-poverty agenda with discussions ongoing.

RESOLVED:

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

CR5 THE COUNCIL PLAN - YEAR END ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY 2017/18

The Committee received a report forming part of the Council's performance management framework providing an overview of progress for the priorities appropriate to the remit of Corporate Resources OSC.

From the report the following were highlighted as areas of focus over the next 6 months:

- Plans are currently being put into place for our sixth Gateshead Volunteers' Month which takes place in June. Over the years this has seen hundreds of people take up volunteering opportunities, attend events and get involved with scores of local organisations.
- Undertake the employee survey and the 'You and Your Local Area' residents survey this summer.
- Employee briefings are taking place on the implications of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Complete the implementation of a digital platform to support the delivery of the digital strategy, including the following websites and digital services;

- A new version of www.gateshead.gov.uk on 17th May
- An appointment booking system for the Registrars Service by July 2018
- Online forms for social care requests that aim to reduce call level volumes for Adult Social Care Direct
- Online forms to support Landlord licensing
- New websites for JSNA, Beacon Living, Proto and Gateshead Goes Local, and Business Gateshead
- Improvements to the intranet
- Performance dashboards for Fly tipping, Clip and Climb bookings, online payments, Registrars
- Supporting the review of individual services to transform how services can be delivered digitally to deliver savings and efficiencies, income generation and contribute to an improved customer experience

It was also acknowledged that high levels of sickness absence are a serious issue and therefore work needs to be done to address this problem. It was noted from the report that sickness management training has been delivered to approximately 400 managers to provide them with the appropriate skills, confidence and knowledge to manage attendance.

The Committee were then presented with a video showcasing the new digital platform available for the public to report fly tipping. It was noted that it is intended that this system be expanded in the future to allow residents to report other things such as potholes and dog fouling.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted and agreed the report and appendix.

CR6 REVIEW OF ABSENCE IN THE COUNCIL - MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the report to update on the actions taken since the last monitoring report which was considered on 26 June 2017 and to consider options moving forward.

From the report a summary of sickness absence causes was provided in addition to days lost. This information showed that Care Wellbeing and Learning had the highest number of days lost due to sickness with the Office of the Chief Executive having the lowest.

Further sickness statistics and analysis was provided, it was noted that since the last report HR Advice have continued the roll-out of mandatory sickness absence management training for all managers in the Council. It was further noted that as part of the Council's achievement of the North East Better Health at Work Award all employees were invited to take part in a Health Needs Assessment survey.

From the report it was also said that in October 2017 the Council signed the Time to Change pledge, a campaign to improve attitudes and behaviour towards people suffering with mental health problems. The report also advised that the Council has been working closely with UNISON to tackle work related stress.

It was asked why approximately 20% of managers had not yet attended the mandatory sickness training; it was noted that Service Directors are made aware of which managers have outstanding training so this can be chased up. It was also highlighted that there will soon be an e-learning tool for this training to make it more accessible.

It was asked whether the high levels of sickness in Care, Wellbeing and Learning were because of a depleting workforce being overstretched. It was advised that the high sickness within the service is being acknowledged and that Caroline O'Neill is considering solutions. It was then asked whether agency staff sickness is monitored; it was advised that it is not.

It was asked whether flu jabs are being made available to staff who need them. It was stated that staff identified as being a high risk are provided with a voucher to get a flu jab externally.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive a further update at a future meeting.

CR7 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the report detailing the Work Programme for the municipal year 2018/19.

The Committee were advised that the provisional work programme was endorsed at the meeting held on April 2018 and Councillors have agreed that further reports will be brought to future meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the provisional work programme.

Chair.....