

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Monday, 17 April 2023**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Eagle (Chair)

Councillor(s): R Beadle, D Burnett, B Clelland, W Dick,  
T Graham, M Hall, I Patterson, J Simpson and J Turner

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): S Green, D Bradford, C Buckley, D Duggan,  
J Green and K Wood

**CR100 MINUTES**

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

**CR101 ANNUAL REPORT - INFORMATION GOVERNANCE**

The Committee received a report to provide an overview of Information Governance arrangements within the Council. Due to the focus of the Committee's business during the pandemic it is 4 years since the Committee was last presented with a report.

In 2019 the Officer with long term responsibility for Information Governance left the organisation which led to an unsettled period with a temporary Data Protection Officer in post. Two internal audit reports were undertaken during 2019/20, one in respect of Information Governance and one regarding Data Protection. The outcome was satisfactory, however, due to the limited resources available at that time the recommendations were not fully implemented (there were no high priority recommendations).

In April 2020, Angela Simmons-Mather was appointed as Data Protection Officer for the Council and she undertook a review of the organisation's ability to meet data protection obligations and the management of Information Governance generally. There was weakness identified, particularly the lack of a dedicated team dealing with Information Governance matters.

A further audit of Information Governance took place and confirmed there were areas which needed improvement, finding there were significant weaknesses overall in Information Governance. To ensure priority could be given to the recommendations, resources were realigned to create the DPO Team in April 2021, dedicated to ensuring the Council is able to meet its Information Governance obligations.

The largest undertaking has been the creation of the Information Asset Register/

Record of Processing Activity. This was a high priority from the 2021 Internal Audit. It has been undertaken in two phases across every team in the Council. The project was started in May 2022 and is still to be completed. As it has involved every team in the Council this has led to approximately 126 IARs and 126 RoPAs being required. The team has reviewed and provided feedback on each. There are approximately 14 outstanding RoPAs before the project can be brought to an end.

A further recommendation of the internal audit was for the Information Rights Working Group to be convened. The group has been re-named the Corporate Data Protection Group and the first meeting took place on 1 February 2023. The attendees are representatives of each service across the Council. They will be tasked with a project at each meeting to make sure the Council is meeting its data protection obligations.

The team will next carry out a review of each team's retention period, the final recommendation of the internal audit to be undertaken. This will be a resource intensive piece of work as each team will need to consider each information asset they hold and how long they need to keep that information. It is intended that there will be an annual rolling programme of work to ensure documents, policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated.

The Committee was also informed of the procedure for Freedom of Information. The procedure has three stages.

When a request is submitted the procedure is to provide the information sought within the statutory working timescale of 20 working days, unless there is an exemption to the disclosure as set out in the Freedom of information Act 2000. The Council uses an electronic tracking system where requests are logged. The second stage requires the Council to have an internal review process so that if a requester is dissatisfied they have an avenue of complaint, which is separate from the corporate complaints procedure. The review stage involves the requester writing to request an independent review of the matter within 40 working days or receiving their initial response. The internal review will ordinarily be undertaken by the Strategic Director of Legal and Corporate Services with a formal response provided to the requester within 20 working days. The third stage gives the requester a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner if he/she is still dissatisfied following the internal review.

A number of data breaches which have been recorded have been basic human error, not using the blind copy function when sending an email, documents attached to the back of a letter not intended for the recipient and some missing forms containing financial information.

All staff are required to undertake annual data protection training which is provided by the Learning Hub.

It was queried whether FOI requests were in line with the rest of Tyne and Wear, it was noted this information was requested but we didn't get a good response from neighbouring authorities. We do have a Regional DPO's meeting and anecdotally it would seem we are not an outlier.

- RESOLVED - (i) that the information contained within the report be noted.  
(ii) that the Committee is satisfied that the Freedom of Information and data breach procedures are operating satisfactorily.

## **CR102 LOCALITY WORKING - UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS**

The Committee received a report and presentation on the currently locality working model being rolled out in the South area.

To support the activity a work programme has been developed that will:

- Align the Family Hub model to the broader locality model to support the “whole family/all age” approach and align the activity closely with VCS partners that will support / develop or commission the community development approach in support of the family hub network
- Implement a locality-based case management approach within the Early Help Service and develop a programme to embed the links with the Housing services and neighbourhood management teams/partners in localities
- Develop a locality based plan for the South with the aim that it has synergy with the Primary Care Network to tackle health inequalities
- Develop and co-design training with health teams that connects and upskills customer facing teams in localities
- Through the establishment of a data lab, incorporates specific learning activity and opportunities that pave the way for further development of the locality based approach across Gateshead Council
- Recognise the importance of schools and the contribution made to the locality approach and locality working models are mapped to schools to ensure a network of wrap around support for schools to support integrated early help and prevention services which is easy to access and seamless

The locality work which has been done to date builds on the findings of Public Service Reform, lessons learned from Community Hubs, partnership working within our Children’s Centres and Thrive in Beacon Lough East.

The initial roll-out of the locality team is in the South following the appointment of the Strategic Lead for that area.

A number of issues have been identified to work through and relationships with partners, the community and other stakeholders are being built up.

It was queried whether this can help other community centres who aren’t in the South. It was noted that support for community centres and the voluntary sector continues to be provided via [Connected Voice](#) and outside of the south there is support from the wider Neighbourhood Management team.

It was noted by members that it very important that we are working with the Police and PCSOs in particularly around ASB.

There was concern expressed with regards to the pressure on the voluntary sector to get funding as this is not always possible. It was noted that there is lottery funding available, but it is not always possible to apply due to capacity in the sector.

It was noted that Safer Streets funding and schemes that it has supported have been great in the south it was queried whether there would be an opportunity to bid for this funding in other areas.

It was noted that Safer Streets Scheme is a PCC Funded Project which ends in December 2023. It is understood the PCC are considering having future schemes across the force area which the Council would have to bid for.

It was noted that there is work going on and a mapping exercise is being undertaken of all the different pockets of youth work in the borough.

It was noted that we would all welcome a funded youth services which would make a difference to people's lives.

It was noted that it is important that this is an integral link in with the resourcing of youth services and whilst we are relying on the voluntary and community sector that is funding in the Youth Investment Fund.

The report sets out a timetable and milestones for the work programme to roll out. It was noted that this ambitious report was welcomed but that if we are going to de-centralise provision of services, political oversight is needed.

RESOLVED - That the comments of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

## **CR103      PROGRESS ON THE DIGITAL PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a presentation on the progress of the digital programme.

The Committee were advised that all services remain available on the telephone via the contact centre. The Committee were also advised that all online services are rigorously tested to ensure they work on as many devices as possible. However, digital is becoming the preferred contact method of choice for many of our residents.

Over the last three years 285 digital processes have been launched which have handled 713,000 cases in the last year. As part of the pandemic response the team helped vulnerable residents, were involved in the self-isolation payments and business grants

Over the last over the last 12 months Waste Recycling Centre booking were launched and 98% of booking have been made online. 85% of births are now registered online, 84% of Garden Waste subscriptions have been made online, 77% of fly tipping reports are made online. Online payments have increased from

£21.26m in 2019 / 20 to £28.17m in 2022/23.

A number of benefits have been gained from the changes in processes as follows:

- Map-based functionality for accurate reporting, reducing duplicate entries
- Convenient and easy to use for both staff and residents
- Many more full end-to-end services with residents, customer services and service delivery teams using the same system
- More accurate data on issue and location e.g. downloading photos
- No longer print and pass, crews using iPads to access jobs
- Jobs sent instantly to crews with reduced management intervention
- Audit trails and better management information
- Increased online payment options
- Residents can amend/cancel quicker e.g. bulky waste
- Waste permits and bookings are paperless and instant
- Evidence submitted electronically
- Resident kept up to date – reducing avoidable contact
- Urgent jobs prioritised
- More efficient processing
- Cost effective services
- Consistently high customer satisfaction ratings with lots of positive customer feedback

The following work will continue to be undertaken and further updates will be provided to Committee:

- There will be an updated [Local Digital Declaration](#)
- Work to continuously improve of existing digital services
- Digital work programme – Council, Group and Service plans
- Service Design and User research
- Data insights for improved business intelligence
- Roadmaps for services
- Review of contact and complaints

It was noted that it was thought that the work that is being undertaken is excellent, but it was queried whether it would be possible to have some PCs returned to the Civic Centre atrium. It was noted that this is something that has been discussed. It may not necessarily be stand alone PCs but i-pads or some other digital means.

It was queried whether it was possible for Councillors could access some of the data. It was noted that it could be provided on a ward based dashboard.

**RESOLVED** - That the comments of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

The Committee received a report on the progress in relation to Corporate Asset Management and the ongoing review of the Council's Assets.

In 2020 through a Council restructure a new Property and Assets service was created consolidating most property related functions and budgets to enable a co-ordinated and joined-up approach on the use of assets.

Following the restructure, Property and Assets service undertook a review of the Council's current arrangements for the management, repair and maintenance of its Property Portfolio and if such arrangements were the most appropriate in terms of safety, cost effectiveness and efficiency. The initial findings included the need to:

- Develop a single comprehensive list of key property data including its condition, compliance, measured drawings, insurance valuations etc.
- Bring together property budgets and lack of backlog maintenance information leading to lack of consistency of planned preventative maintenance programme. Maintenance prioritised by reaction.
- Change culture, property looked at as a service resource rather than a corporate resource.
- Ensure service business planning includes how the assets they use fit their strategy for transformation.
- Identify a clear resource for corporate asset management.

The Corporate Landlord approach taken by Gateshead is that the management and maintenance of assets are transferred from service areas into the corporate centre. The Corporate Landlord's function is to ensure all services are adequately accommodated and to maintain and manage the property asset covering:

- Strategic Asset Management
- Building Management
- Statutory Compliance
- Commissioning Repairs and Maintenance
- Estates Management (TNRP)
- Planned, preventative maintenance programme
- Capital Project Management and Delivery

The key aims of the service are:

- To ensure our buildings are safe and secure for the people who use them
- To allocate funding to project that will achieve the maximum positive impact
- To achieve an efficient balance between planned and reactive maintenance work
- Achieving maximum efficiencies in the way we procure building maintenance work

The Council has a duty to manage the risk and assess the impact of statutory regulations on its assets in relation to Asbestos, electrical Fixed wiring and Legionella, lifts and Fire Regulation compliance. The make sure the asset portfolio is compliant with statutory requirements, regular inspection and review of property is carried out and remedial works actioned.

The Corporate Asset Management Strategy and Plan expired in 2020 rather than refresh the previous plan, the Council is developing a new Strategic Asset Management Plan. This Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) will provide an overview of our land and property estate, together with our main priorities for managing and developing that estate over the next five years.

The plan will provide an overview of land and property estate, together with the Council's main priorities for managing and developing the estate over the next five years:

- To plan and manage property as a corporate resource for the benefit of the people of Gateshead
- To provide the right property, fit for purpose, in the right place, to meet current and future service needs
- To manage and maintain property effectively, efficiently and sustainably, together with optimising financial return and commercial opportunities from the rationalisation and disposal of land and buildings
- To use land and buildings to stimulate development and growth, together with supporting local business needs and encouraging new business to the area
- To promote joint working where it will provide benefit for service delivery and in securing efficiencies

Assets will continue to be reviewed on a continuous rolling programme. This ensures that only those assets that are needed are retained. The ultimate aims of Asset Challenge are to reduce costs, identify assets that should be retained for use and/or invested in, identify those that are surplus to requirements and can be disposed of.

The Council will develop a targeted disposal programme to support this SAMP, identified through asset rationalisation and the release of surplus assets.

It was queried whether there will now always be home working. It was noted that this will be in line with customers and customer needs, however, the balance of working in the Civic Centre and working from home is helping with retention of staff.

It was queried whether it was possible to re-purpose the atrium, as people think the building is empty it would be good to have some movement in there. Whilst it was understood that people are hybrid working the perception is that there is no-one working at the Civic and the building is closed.

It was requested that a further update be brought to the Committee in 6 months time.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) that the comments of the Committee on the progress of the Corporate Asset Strategy be noted.
  - (ii) that the comments of the Committee be noted.

## **CR105 ARENA AND CONFERENCE CENTRE UPDATE**

The Committee received a presentation on the proposals for Gateshead Quays. It was noted that the project is about getting the best deal for residents, growing the

economy, creating more and better jobs and attracting more people to live in the Borough.

The plans are for an

- International Grade, 12,500 capacity Arena
- Conference and Event Space with 17 conference suites
- 5,720 sqm state of the art Exhibition Space
- 2,520 sqm adaptable meeting space
- 344 beds in two hotels (Novotel and Ibis)
- New Linear Park

This equates to a £350m+ investment including substantial private sector investment. The Council has received £20m levelling up funding to support the scheme. Whilst it is a different market at the moment work is progressing. There is a 1000 space Multi Storey Car Park, there will be a new boulevard connecting the A184 Felling Bypass to the Quays, there will be green spaces and public spaces. There will be retail, bars, restaurants and extensive public realm.

The potential ongoing economic impact is transformational for both business and residents:

- Over 2000 jobs with operators who will engage positively to employ local people with Working Gateshead; and including construction jobs and jobs throughout the wider supply chain
- 770,000 attendees per annum, plus 1 million + additional visitors to the Quays – many for overnight stays
- Direct investment beyond the venue itself in local hospitality sector

Additionally there are lots of further opportunities along the river and proposals from the Metro Centre for further development of new neighbourhoods around the metro centre site.

Work is commencing on the Freightliner site and there is some interest in Chandless site and High Street South proposals are moving forward. The District Energy Centre will be hearing the Freightliner houses.

The National Trust are keen to be involved in the creation/development of a Riverside Park and the promotion of the rich history.

There is further potential for development of transport links which could come out of the devolution deal.

RESOLVED - That the information presented be noted.



**CR106      REVIEW OF COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING: FINAL REPORT**

The Committee received the final report following the Review of Community Wealthbuilding. It was noted that only one minor change has been made in relation to gender equalities/inequalities since the Interim report was presented at the previous Committee.

RESOLVED -            That the final report be presented to Cabinet for consideration.

**CR107      WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23 AND DEVELOPMENT OF WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023-24**

The Committee received the Work Programme for 2022/23 and details of the emerging themes for the 2023/24 Municipal Year. The emerging themes will be consulted upon with partners with a view to each Committee endorsing its respective work programme at its June meeting. Following this the work programmes will be taken to Council for agreement. It was requested that the workforce strategy update include details of the new ways of working.

RESOLVED   -            (i)    that the work programme for 2022/23 be noted.  
                                      (ii)    that the emerging themes for the 2023/24 work programme be noted

**Chair.....**