

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, 21 January 2019

PRESENT: Councillor John Eagle (Chair)
Councillor(s): W Dick, J Wallace, D Bradford, M Charlton,
J Green, S Green, M Hall and B Oliphant

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor(s): F Geddes, A Geddes

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): L Caffrey, T Graham, M Henry, N Weatherley
and K Wood

CR15 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2018 be approved as a correct record.

CR16 REVIEW ON INCREASING SUPPORT/CAPACITY TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR - EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION 2

This was the second evidence gathering session with regards to the Review on Helping to Increase Support / Capacity of the Voluntary Sector.

The Committee heard from Aidan Lawson on the work of the Brighton Ryton Local Environmental Group. Aidan explained that the group first got together on the back of another meeting which members of the group had been attending. The group's aim is to support Gateshead Council in improving the environment in Ryton. The group got charity registration in record time and have undertaken 3600 hours of work in the first year and 5300 in the second year. The group have carried out work in the cemetery and memorial gardens. The group got licences for some of their members and undertook training for grass strimming equipment. The license excludes from cutting within 12 inches of the headstones.

Aidan showed the Committee some examples of the work the group had undertaken. The work is undertaken at Heritage sites, memorial gardens and cemeteries as well as litter picks undertaken by the litter action groups.

The group undertakes their own fundraising and between January 2017 to December 2018 raised, £9650 from the Gateshead Fund, £15,00 from the Sir James Knott Trust, £1930, Land of Oak and Iron Grant, £2508 from donations, £8362 from fund raising activities, £5324 from supporting members and £950 from sponsors.

The organisation would like to carry out further work including, maintaining grass levels and hedging to a good standard, clean and paint railings of the old cemetery, level 'dipped' graves to ease grass cutting, clear pavement areas of composting

materials and weeds and maintain standards of cleanliness around the village, woods and walks.

The organisation hopes to form a group of residents with a genuine desire to work together to refurbish the park so that it is fully sustainable and returns to be appreciated and used by a significant proportion of the community.

The organisation also hopes to form a group of individual and sub-groups working together to provide a program of events to bring our community together.

The organisation also hopes to restore the Historic Drover's pond, to recover stones and rebuild Victoria monument, to prepare and publish various trails booklets, to revisit and complete Pinfold, to design and place info boards of Stella and Ryton trails, to remove tress threatening historic walls in conservation Area.

The organisation would like to establish with the Council and effective and efficient management process that delivers in a timely manner.

The organisation would like the Council to accept them as a free resource, they feel that in order to work together as a successful team there should be a recognition of each other's strengths, areas of responsibility should be co-ordinated and controlled and performance should be monitored and reported upon.

The organisation feel that the Council needed to take action to ensure that the organisation can retain the volunteers they have at present. The organisation would like to see improved processes and performance by the Council to create a better environment where people are prepared to volunteer. The organisation feel that there is on occasions blockages in the system which cause delays to work being carried out in a timely manner. It is understood that this could be because of following legislation requirements, however, it can be frustrating. The organisation feel that if possible a single point of contact within the council to facilitate work being able to be done in a timely manner. The organisation would like to introduce a process for working with the Council,

- BRLEG produces a plan of work
- The Council approves the plan and assigns a lead
- A timetable is agreed
- BRLEG proceed with the work
- Council approve the work.

BRLEG have 103 members, 57 of whom are active and are prepared to do anything to help to improve the environment in Ryton and surrounding areas.

The Committee heard from Ed Nichols from Dunston Family Church. Ed advised the Committee that Dunston Family Church is an all age, international, evangelical church. The Church were hiring rooms on a regular basis and then the church undertook an asset transfer of the facility from the Council. The Churches own members support a lot of the work in the community. The Church members love Dunston and Teams. They church have undertaken a lot of work and have provided

residential for the children and young people and have done a lot of work to improve the wellbeing of the community. Taking over the centre was a steep learning curve, the organisation had to learn about implementing the vision. The new centre began with a Board of Trustees, they have had to learn about Governance, Due diligence, health and safety, financial forecasting, developing capacity and resourcing the community café.

The Neighbourhood Management Team have been very good and helpful in getting this off the ground and the support of the local ward councillors was also invaluable. The organisation has received various amounts of funding and have had residents complete questionnaires on how they would like to see the centre developed.

The organisation has looked at 8 building blocks in making the organisation better and they are a bunch of newbies and have worked with Ian and the team to help with their learning.

The centre have replaced the Council's gymnastics programme and have trained their own staff and bought new gymnastics equipment.

The centre employs 6 people all who have been previously unemployed. They have enlisted lots of volunteers and get lots of help from volunteers. The relationships between the customers and staff is developing into friendships and this helps to identify the needs of local residents.

The books have been balanced for the last three years and the organisation has a modest annual surplus and a growing contingency fund. The organisation had to undertake some work to retain the library, this is staffed fully by volunteers and hosts a suite of computers, and is available for local residents to use for job searches, benefit claims etc. A meeting takes place with the manager of Gateshead Library Service on a regular basis.

The centre now delivers a range of activities in response to local needs, including the community café, a toddlers soft play and an ever growing gym membership.

The Ethos of the centre is that everyone who comes in is made to feel special and welcome, the staff are warm and courteous and helpful.

Toddler times is renowned in the area and has been commended for sessions and reasonable admission charges, the group encourages story-telling, music and movement and family time.

The sports hall / multi-purpose room hosts five-a-side football, ballroom dancing, Zumba, and more recently Canny K-9s. The centre hosts pirate, princess, unicorn and super hero parties and have holiday family fun days over half term.

The centre hosts NHS services, including regular all day blood banks and cardio rehab groups. They hold film buffets, tea dances, 3 course meal parties.

The centre is currently applying for funding to become a listening centre and feel that this would supplement the work of the Council and Health services. The intention is

to have 6 men and 6 women trained.

Whilst the centre is doing well, financial sustainability is a challenge as they are always looking to offer services at a lower cost or for free. The centre has a rebate on rates which is helpful, the council has in their power a discretionary rate of 20% which would be helpful if possible. It would also be helpful to be commissioned to provide services and the centre are looking at expanding their programme of meeting needs.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the needs of the groups are investigated and responded to where practical.
 - (ii) That the presentation be noted and the findings incorporated into the final report.

CR17 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS PROCEDURE 2017/18

A report was presented to Committee providing an analysis of complaints and compliments recorded by the Council and the Gateshead Housing Company in the year ended 31 March 2018.

Cabinet has referred the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the performance management process.

The complaints procedure has three steps, the first of which 'problem solving', relies on the quick resolution of complaints by employees and their managers and does not require the complaint to be recorded. At the second step the complaint is recorded, there is a formal investigation into the complaint and a written response is given by a Senior Manager. If the complainant is still unhappy they can request the Chief Executive (or Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company) to carry out an independent review of their complaint.

In the year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018:

- 258 complaints were recorded
- 466 compliments were recorded
- 27 complaints were the subject of an independent review by the Chief Executive of the Council and the Managing Director of the Gateshead Housing Company undertook 14 reviews.

The number of complaints recorded has reduced from 307 in 2016/17 to 258 in 2017/18, a decrease of 49.

466 compliments were recorded in 2017/18 compared to 754 in 2016/17, a decrease of 288.

The number of complainants requesting a review of their complaint by the Chief Executive has increase by 9 to 27 in 2017/18. The Managing Director of the Housing Company carried out 14 reviews in 2017/18 compared to 20 in 2016/17.

The proportion of complaints found to be fully justified decreased from 36.9% in

2016/17 to 36.6% in 2017/18. The proportion of complaints found to be partially justified increased from 15.6% in 2016/17 to 24.7% in 2017/18.

The Council's managers used the information gained through the monitoring of complaints to improve the provision of services.

The current computerised corporate complaints recording system had made it easy to record and track and respond to complaints. However, the system is now outdated and is to be replaced. A new corporate complaints system is currently being developed using the case management features of the Council's Digital Platform. .

During 2017/18, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigated 24 complaints. Of these 13 were closed after initial enquiries, 4 were not upheld and 7 were upheld partially or fully. A summary of the cases which were upheld have been presented to Cabinet. Each case has provided learning opportunities in terms of reviewing policy, maintenance of records, the operation of systems and the provision of guidance and training to staff. The Council maintains a good working relationship with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and all cases have now been settled to their satisfaction. .

From 1 April 2013, the Localism Act 2011 extended the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman to cover all social landlords, including Councils. The Housing Ombudsman is able to consider complaints in so far as they relate to the provision or management of housing. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman continues to investigate complaints about allocations and the lettings policy.

During 2017/18 the Council has been contacted by the Housing Ombudsman in respect of 4 cases. Of these, three cases had not exhausted the Housing Company's complaints procedure and one case, the Housing Ombudsman determined that there was service failure and ordered compensation of £200 to be paid for the complainant's distress and inconvenience.

RESOLVED - That the information contained within the report be endorsed.

CR18 ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

The Committee were updated on the performance of occupational health and safety matters for 2017/18.

Gateshead Council is committed to providing its employees with safe conditions of work as far as is reasonably practicable and has structured arrangements in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and others who may be affected by our activities. Our aim is to minimise the adverse impacts to individuals and the business from ill health and injury.

The annual report provides an overview of key performance statistics, including the number of lost working days and reportable accidents, along with information on key aspect of health and safety during the year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

All Council premises have had at least one FRA carried out. The FRA programme is an ongoing process with annual reviews and re-assessments. During the reporting

period the Council's Health & Safety Officers completed 71 (as opposed to 68 the previous year) fire risk assessments and reviews. This has met the target set out on the planned programme of fire risk assessments and reviews. Officers work regularly and closely with Tyne and Wear Fire and Risk Services (TWFRS) continues and has proven to be an effective way of dealing with issues which arise from their audits of Council premises and schools.

The occupational health unit is running at full capacity at the moment. The number of counsellors has been increased to work with employees. One third of employees who are seen are suffering with work related stress. Two thirds are relating to family and financial issues. Some of those who have been seen who are suicidal it is a stop gap until they can be seen through GP referrals as the waiting time can be up to 6 months via the GP.

If employees meet certain criteria they can be referred into Go Gateshead at Gateshead, Heworth and Blaydon Leisure centres. There have been 21 Domiciliary Care referrals since October mainly to Heworth.

There are a number of potentially high-risk areas which are managed, including Contractor Management, Asbestos Management, Educational Visits and Legionella Management. The management in these areas is working really well at present.

RIDDOR is if an employee is involved in a certain accident or incident this needs to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The HSE have not taken any prosecutions against the Council, have not issued an prohibition notices or improvements notices.

RESOLVED - That the Committee is satisfied that the actions taken are appropriate and effective in maintaining and improving the health and safety management system.

CR19 WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19 AND DEVELOPMENT OF WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2019-20

The Work programme was submitted to the Committee for information. The Committee were also asked if they had any additional views on the emerging themes for the 2019/20 work programme. The developing work programme will be taken to partners and stakeholders for further consultation prior to Cabinet and Council for final approval.

It was suggested that we look at, based on the themes within the Thrive Agenda, "How this Authority can help communities to help themselves.

RESOLVED - (i) that the work programme for 2018/19 be noted.
(ii) that the comments of the Committee on the development of the 2019/20 be noted.

Chair