

## **GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITIES & PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Monday, 8 March 2021**

**PRESENT:** Councillor(s): T Graham, Anderson, D Burnett, B Clelland, S Dickie, K Dodds, A Geddes, F Geddes, M Hood, H Kelly, P Maughan, Reay, J Turnbull, R Waugh, A Wheeler and K McClurey

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s): S Hawkins

#### **CPL78 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

RESOLVED:

- (i) The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 7 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **CPL79 COVID 19 UPDATE**

The Committee received a report and presentation providing an overview of how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted Gateshead; the Committee also received subsequent updates on the impact on crime, disorder and community safety.

The Committee received an update on support for business, employers and the self-employed. It was highlighted in the report that a business support hub and helpline had been established to support businesses; it was also noted that 1-2-1 advice had been provided to over 2,250 businesses.

It was reported that during the first lockdown, nearly £40 million had been provided to 3,600 businesses in grants. The Committee were also advised that during the second and third lockdowns over £19.3 million had been paid to businesses that were forced to close.

The Committee noted that additional support for business had been provided via local enhancements of government funding which supported tenants of Gateshead Estates and the Council's Business Centres. It was further noted that Council services were contributing on a weekly basis to regional business and economic intelligence reports sent to government.

From the presentation, the Committee were also provided with an overview of the impact on employment due to the pandemic. It was highlighted that there had been a 67% increase in Gateshead's Universal Credit claimant count from March to August 2020.

It was noted that a self-service employment and skills information hub had been established in April 2020 with telephone employment advice and guidance being

provided to residents from May 2020. The Committee were advised that employment support had been universal but proportionate to the need of residents, it was also highlighted that officers had worked flexibly to respond to service demands with a focus on finding the right job for residents, not just any job.

The Committee received an update on private sector housing and business compliance/enforcement. From the update it was noted that a business compliance team was set up at the beginning of the pandemic made up of officers across environmental health, trading standards, enforcement and private sector housing. It was also noted that the team have been supported more recently by 13 redeployed Covid Support Officers.

It was highlighted that the team have followed up on over 2800 complaints and requests for advice from the public and business; it was also noted that the team have been working closely with Northumbria Police. From the presentation, the Committee were advised that 22 prohibition notices, 9 fixed penalty notices and 12 voluntary closures had been issued.

It was reported that compliance across Gateshead was generally good. Officers also advised that working across services the teams can provide the right mixture of advice, support and regulation. It was noted that support to private tenants is continuing but that workloads had increased in all areas, particularly with regard to the response to anti-social behaviour.

The Committee were also advised that enforcement complaints have increased, particularly those for fly-tipping and planning. It was reported that planning applications for householder applications have more than doubled during the pandemic as residents seek to improve their homes and create more space. The Committee received a report on crime, disorder and community safety. From the report it was noted that there had been a significant reduction in the number of crimes reported in Gateshead throughout 2020/21 when compared to the same period last year.

It was noted that there had been slight increases reported in certain crime types such as violence against the person, robbery and theft of pedal cycles. The Committee were advised that the fluctuations in crime and ASB within Gateshead follow a similar pattern to neighbouring Northumbria Police areas. It was reported that there had been an increase in reports of ASB with Covid-related ASB contributing to the rise.

From the report, the Committee were advised that there continues to be a robust enforcement approach to dealing with breaches of Covid regulations. Appended to the report was a crime performance table for the Committee's information.

It was asked whether the night-time economy had contributed to the rise in certain crimes and whether CCTV within Gateshead was sufficient. Officers advised that those individuals and groups travelling from Newcastle City Centre back in to Gateshead have contributed to the rise; the Committee were advised that there could never be enough CCTV but that this is not the 'silver-bullet' for crime prevention.

The Committee asked whether information on crime and crime-type could be broken down to ward level. Officers advised that this was possible and that information could be presented at ward-level at future meetings.

The Committee noted concern about the increase in motor vehicle ASB across Gateshead; officers advised that whilst this time of behaviour rates low in terms of criminality, the impact on residents is high. The Committee were advised that a long term approach is being taken to tackle the issue working with partners and petrol stations.

On the matter of business support, the Committee asked whether new social enterprises who had been set up specifically to support residents during the pandemic were entitled to any financial assistance. It was noted that start up funding is generally not available for this type of business but that the Council could provide advice and support in alternative ways.

The Committee asked whether employment support was being offered to older people who have lost their employment due to the pandemic. It was highlighted that due to the increase in Universal Credit claims had increased across all age groups – it was noted that the Council do provide support to residents of all ages; the Committee were also advised that a new jobcentre is to open at the Metrocentre to provide extra capacity.

It was asked whether officers could attend to provide employment support to residents visiting the Felling Food Network; officers advised that this was possible.

The Committee expressed its thanks to officers and their respective teams for all of their hard work during a very difficult period for the Council and it's partners.

RESOLVED:

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

## **CPL80 NEW PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

The Committee received a report and presentation setting out the proposed approach to performance management and improvement following engagement.

It was reported that the Council's current performance framework has been in place for several years and has evolved over time. It was noted that there is a need to develop a new framework that better reflects the priorities of the Council whilst demonstrating delivery against Thrive priorities.

From the presentation, the Committee were provided with an overview of guiding principles for the framework; it was highlighted that this is to be shaped by elected members enabling them to scrutinise performance. It was also reported that the framework is to be owned by all services and led by senior officers.

From the report it was noted that the new framework needed to respond to the

impacts of Covid-19 and the future role and shape of the Council. An update on engagement was also provided which noted that members had been engaged via OSC, portfolio and Corporate Advisory Groups. It was further reported that officers had been engaged via Corporate Management Team, officer workshops, focus groups and via trade unions.

The Committee were advised that further engagement on the framework is to take place with partners via the Health & Wellbeing Board, Health & Care Systems Board and voluntary sector organisations. It was highlighted that the framework will be structured around the six policy objectives of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

From the presentation, the Committee were provided with an overview of the various policy objectives and analysis. The Committee noted their support to the development of the new framework.

RESOLVED:

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

**CPL81 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the Work Programme report setting out the current work programme for the year 2020/21 and the current position/next steps in the development of the work programme for the year 2021/22.

RESOLVED:

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

**Chair.....**