

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Monday, 5 December 2022

PRESENT: Councillor B Clelland (Chair)

Councillor(s): T Graham, A Geddes, D Burnett, F Geddes,
H Kelly, V Anderson, P Maughan, A Wintcher, S Gallagher,
P Burns and D Welsh

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): H Weatherley, J Reay, J Turnbull, K Dodds,
R Waugh and S Dickie

CPL45 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

- (i) The minutes of the last meeting held on 7 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

**CPL46 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK – SIX
MONTH UPDATE**

The Committee received a report providing an update on the Council's PMIF in relation to the delivery of Council priorities relevant to the role and remit of the OSC for the period April 2021 to September 2022.

A summary of the PMIF aims and objectives was provided, attention was also drawn to cross-cutting key emerging areas, these were:

- Budget pressures continue to provide a significant challenge. There is an increased level of uncertainty around the government financial settlement however, it is not anticipated the settlement will address the gap in Council budgets and future demand pressures.
- Continuing demand pressures being faced by services, particularly across social care.
- The continued impact of Brexit and the increasing outcomes from the current conflict in Ukraine impacting on costs facing local people as well as in the delivery of council services. The continuing legacy impact of Covid 19 on performance.
- Widening inequalities, income and the longer term anticipated impact for the future on issues such as health. Latest data shows an increase of over 2 percentage point increase in those people who are considered vulnerable.
- Staffing pressures across the Council including recruitment and retention, and sickness, continues to present challenges in delivering services.
- Steady progress in key areas such as climate change strategy and engagement.

- Continuing increase in the access of digital and online services.
- Levels of support being provided to local people and businesses such as through various grants e.g., DWP Household Support Fund which was aimed to prevent people from going cold or hungry.

From the report, the Committee noted the areas of excellence and achievement that had been made; this included the establishment of 75 'Warm Spaces' in Gateshead in addition to the recruitment of a Strategic Locality Lead, Coordinator and Connector for Locality Working.

An overview of challenges in delivering the aims of the PMIF was provided; these included the rising costs of doing business (with demand for certain key sectors or business workspace out-stripping supply) and the cost-of-living crisis having a significant impact on resident's ability to sustain tenancies.

The Committee were advised that several actions are being undertaken to overcome the challenges reported, these were:

- Energy roadshows that have delivered in partnership between the council, CAG and others support to approximately 200 residents over several weeks.
- Ongoing work to develop a fuel poverty action plan for Gateshead.
- Commissioning activity to accelerate business formation rates and improve business reliance and growth through UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Implementation of the Economic Development Strategy and the establishment of a Business Support Hub to help business impacted by cost of doing business.
- Delivery of specialised employment support for care-experienced young people to help them navigate the world of work and achieve sustainable economic security.
- Working with national, regional, and local employment related services providers, training providers and specialist support organisations to connect and align employment and skills support.

The Committee also received a presentation providing an update on Zero Carbon Gateshead. From the presentation it was noted that the Council has already made major progress in reducing carbon emissions for its own activities (a 55% drop since 2010, 2.5% of Gateshead's total carbon footprint).

It was reported that in November 2022 the Climate Change Strategy for Gateshead was adopted; the Committee noted that the themes for the Strategy are transport, economy, energy, food, woodland/nature and resilience. It was highlighted that the Strategy would require a joint effort between the Council, businesses and the community.

From the presentation, it was explained that Gateshead had been awarded 'silver' accreditation against the Investors in the Environment Framework and that two subsequent audits had shown more improvements. It was further noted that Gateshead Council had received an IIE award in November 2022 for greatest carbon reduction.

It was noted that a public-facing action plan had been developed to summarise what

the Council will do to make its own operations carbon neutral. It was further noted that resident participation was key in delivering the aims of the Strategy; it was stated that 86% of respondents from the Council's climate change survey had noted concern about the impact of climate change. The Committee were also provided with information in relation to ward action plans and the climate action plan for schools and colleges.

The Committee queried whether the Council had a specific policy in relation to the use of concrete given its environmental impact. The Committee were advised that the revised Local Plan would be exploring this matter (amongst others) to identify its viability; it was also noted that there are industry-wide considerations being made on the use of concrete.

The Committee discussed the impact of electric vehicles (EV) and the inconsistency of available EV charging points across Gateshead and the country, particularly in rural areas. A comment was made that unless this infrastructure is improved the appeal of electric vehicles will not increase. Officers advised that as part of the Transport Northeast Active Travel Strategy the availability of EV charging points is being considered. The Committee were also advised that the Council's fleet of vehicles, including waste and recycling wagons were being changed to electric on a transitional basis as this is most cost effective. The Committee requested a further update on the Council's vehicle transition arrangements for the 2023/24 work programme.

A discussion took place on the impact of eating meat; it was argued that increasing the availability of plant-based meals across the Council's schools would be beneficial to the environment. It was agreed that this feedback would be passed over to the Families OSC for consideration on its work programme.

The Committee asked whether the ward action plans would be published and shared across wards. Officers advised that they would be shared to ensure that best-practise is shared.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the 6-month report and the appendices.
- (ii) The Committee recommended the performance report to Cabinet for consideration in January 2023.

CPL47 COMMUNITY SAFETY PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing an overview of the key activities that had been coordinated and delivered by the Gateshead Community Safety Board between April – September 2022 to address priorities outlined in the Partnership Plan.

Attention was drawn to the strategic themes that had been agreed by the Community Safety Board for delivery across 2020-23, these are:

- Violence, Exploitation and Abuse

- Thriving Neighbourhoods and Communities
- Community Cohesion and Resilience

An overview of crime performance was presented; the Committee noted that all crime had seen an overall increase of 7% during the reporting period. Additionally, it explained that partnership work across the system is ongoing and that working relationships are strong; this involved participation from partners such as the Violence Reduction Unit and Northumbria Police.

The Committee questioned how community safety projects and schemes are funded; it was noted that funding streams for this area of work are complex which is why partnership working across the system is so important. The Committee were advised that there is a reliance on external funding and grants from organisations such as the PCC and Home Office.

A question was asked regarding off-road motorcycles; the Committee agreed that they continue to be a dangerous nuisance to neighbourhoods across Gateshead. It was explained that ASB related to off-road motorcycles is a difficult issue to tackle, not only in Gateshead but across the country. The Committee were advised that Northumbria Police are heavily reliant on instances being reported with descriptions of vehicles and drivers being given.

The Committee were advised that the under-reporting of crime is an issue across Gateshead. It was noted that where 'hot-spots' are identified via reports from the public, services can target interventions and diversionary work to those areas, this includes youth outreach services.

Appended to the report was the Gateshead Community Safety Board Partnership Plan 2020-23 for information.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee agreed to receive a further update in six months.
- (ii) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

CPL48 PROTECTION OF GREEN ASSETS

The Committee received a report providing an update on the current voluntary and other initiatives and arrangements to help protect green assets across the borough. The Committee also received an update on future plans and challenges in protecting Gateshead's green spaces and assets.

From the report the Committee were advised that Gateshead covers 55 square miles and is the largest of the five Tyne and Wear authorities with two-thirds of the borough being rural. Attention was drawn to the appendices of the report which detailed the several schemes and plans across Gateshead.

A discussion took place on the reliance of volunteers to maintain green spaces in Gateshead; it was noted that the Council relies heavily on volunteers and community groups and will provide support to such groups as much as possible. It was highlighted that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the Street Scene service had

supported around 35 environmental voluntary groups with approximately 400 active members.

It was explained that any Councillor or member of the public can access information on volunteering via the Council's website. The Committee were also advised that an update report on the management of allotments would be scheduled in the 2023/24 work programme.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

CPL49 SECTION 106

The Committee received a report providing information about the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Agreements and how they are used in the planning process.

From the report, the Committee were advised that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill includes the suggestion of a new Infrastructure Levy to replace Community Infrastructure Levy; Section 106 will be retained.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the report.

CPL50 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the annual work programme report for 2022/23.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the information in the report and endorsed the provisional work programme.
- (ii) The Committee noted that further reports would be brought to the meeting to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.