

RESOURCES AND DELIVERING VALUE SCRUTINY BOARD

VIRTUAL MEETING

8 MARCH 2021

PUBLIC MINUTES

Present: Councillors: K Wild (Chairman), T Diccico (Vice Chairman), W Qais, M Gough, M Parker, M Allen, B Groom, J Fairburn and M Brain

Guests: Councillor I Courts, Leader of the Council

Councillor K Grinsell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health and Deputy Leader

Officers: Paul Johnson, Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
Sam Gilbert, Assistant Director (Finance and Property Services)
Sarah Barnes, Head of Business Intelligence & Improvement
Peter Carroll, Head of Strategic Land & Property
Martin Clayton, Head of Investment & Commercial Partnerships
Paul Rogers, Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

No questions or deputations were received.

4. PUBLIC MINUTES

The Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To agree the Minutes arising from the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board meeting held on 8 February 2021 as an accurate record.

5. THE COUNCIL PLAN PROGRESS 2020-2025: PROGRESS IN DELIVERING PLAN OUTCOMES AND PLAN REFRESH

The report outlined the progress Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council had made in delivering the present Council Plan priorities and objectives and to seek the Scrutiny Board's views about the plan for 2020- 2025. The report was introduced to by the Leader of the Council and Head of Business Intelligence and Improvement.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the Council Plan period applied from July 2020. The Council Plan addressed the Council's priorities, objectives and

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desired outcomes in respect of economic development and growth, health and well-being, environment and inclusivity.

The Council had produced the Solihull Economic Recovery Plan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which addressed the needs of the borough's residents, businesses and Solihull as a place and identified what actions were required of the Council to counter the economic and social impact of the pandemic. Detail within the plan addressed the role of town centres across the borough and the wider recovery programme moving forward.

Member's attention was drawn to Appendix C of the report, which provided a summary of progress made in achieving Council Plan key deliverables during 2020/21. Of all the reported delivery ratings, one was reported as red status. The Leader reported that substantial progress had been achieved across a number of the Council's priority areas, including the Kingshurst Town Centre Plan, the environmental programme (incorporating Wildlife Ways, Electric Vehicle Strategy, tree planting programme), the health and well-being agenda (currently dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic) and the on-going financial, funding and resource support made available by the Council to both people and places across the borough in response to Covid-19.

The Head of Business Intelligence and Improvement informed Members that the Council Plan, as approved on 7th July 2020, provided the Council with its direction and vision and purpose, and had identified priorities and deliverables across 9 key areas for the 2020/25 period, which were:

- Enhance Solihull's natural environment
- Improve Solihull's air quality
- Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions
- Enable communities to thrive
- Sustainable, quality provision for adults and children with complex needs
- Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities
- Revitalising our towns and local centres
- Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing
- UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2

The Council Plan had been updated and refreshed since July 2020 with regard to the desired deliverables in 2021/22. Appendix B to the report provided the 'Plan on a Page' and established whether objectives were still fit for purpose and that the outcomes sought were the right ones.

Members were advised that since July 2020 a clearer picture, both locally and nationally, had emerged in respect of the economic and public health implications arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Further waves of Covid-19 had been experienced nationally since July 2020 and a clearer picture in relation to the short and longer term impact on public service demand, for example regarding public/mental health and education services, had emerged during that period for areas such as;

- Borough- wide vaccination programme
- Economic impact (which was on-going and included the Government budget and spending review detail)

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- Brexit arrangements – further economic data was emerging and being worked through

Members were advised that there were no fundamental changes proposed for the Council Plan, but rather a strengthening of the direction of travel, such as for health inequalities, in order to better support delivery of the Plan milestones and desired outcomes.

An addition to the Council Plan of 'Employee Well-Being' was a new development arising from review by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), arising from the impact of Covid-19 on the Council workforce.

The Council Plan also provided detail for Council Plan 'enablers', such as the Digital Programme, Assets Management Strategy, the Employee Journey, Smarter Ways of Working and Finance Strategy. New enablers were scheduled to be incorporated into the Council Plan, which included:

- The Role of Communities and Council partners
- Connecting Communities
- Strong Partnerships and the Community Sector

The Head of Business Intelligence and Improvement informed Members that the refreshed Council Plan would be submitted to the Council meeting scheduled for 13 April 2021, prior to which would be opportunities for the further briefing of political groups and consultation with Trade Unions, Council employees and Council partner organisations to ensure that the Council Plan continued to meet the needs of the Borough.

Having received the presentation, Members of the Scrutiny Board asked a number of questions pertaining to the detail provided within the report, which in summary included the following:

Councillor Parker supported the refresh of the Council Plan and noted that with regard to addressing inequalities, it would be welcomed if long-term objectives also included the training and skills agenda, especially when taking into account future employment opportunities provided through HS2 and UKC. Furthermore, it would be advantageous for the skills and training agenda to be joined up with the reciprocal West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) strategies.

Councillor Groom expressed support for the Council Plan content and direction of travel and queried how, with regard to equalities and inclusion, would it be embedded further in the Council Plan and future Council budgets.

Councillor Qais queried what arrangements would be in place to understand inter-dependencies across the Council Plan and how would these be monitored.

In response, the Head of Business Intelligence and Improvement confirmed that addressing inclusion and tackling inequalities would be done so through the training and skills agenda in partnership with the WMCA, particularly with regard to delivering the inclusive growth agenda. Members were further advised that the Council was seeking to embed a 'golden thread' throughout the Council Plan to address

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inequalities, with the Council's Health and Well Being Board also developing a Health Inequalities Action Plan to include a public health inequalities monitoring tool. The monitoring of inter-dependencies across the Council Plan had been recognised as a significant and key activity, for which a monitoring mechanism was already in place. Members were informed that monitoring of Council Plan delivery was undertaken on a quarterly basis through CLT, which included a review of programme dependencies. A number of Council Plan activities were further devolved to appropriate Programme Boards, all of which monitored key deliverables within the Council Plan.

Councillor Gough noted that the structure of the Council Plan was sound and stated that the biggest issue the Council faced was the continuing, on-going demand for services. Councillor Gough queried whether there were any potential or actual risks / red flags raised in the delivery of the Council Plan objectives and sought further clarity as to what was meant by the references within the Council Plan to 'exclusion / left behind'.

Councillor Fairburn stated that she was disappointed to see the one red RAG rating relating to the Environment sector and queried whether the environmental objectives within the Council Plan should not be afforded the same priority as those designed to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Head of Business Intelligence and Improvement clarified that in respect of risk, the Council Plan was designed to be an ambitious plan and therefore a calculated balance was required to be struck around the level of risk inherent within the Council Plan itself. Risks were regularly monitored throughout the Council Plan as was progress (on a quarterly basis), both in terms of delivery and financial management. Some of the Council Plan objectives relating to the economic agenda were designed over the longer term and involved external funding, as did the High Needs Block Funding.

Councillor Diccio welcomed the Council Plan and questioned how would future performance of the Council Plan be reviewed and reported to the Scrutiny Board. Members were advised that each element of the Council Plan had an Assistant Director / Head of Service assigned to each deliverable, with progress being reported to the appropriate Programme Board, Assistant Directors Group and CLT. Through internal monitoring processes already in place, Officers were seeking to automate greater monitoring reporting via the Programme Management system. It was further confirmed that the Council Plan was reported annually to the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board for review, with the Council Plan priorities also regularly reported to each of the other Scrutiny Boards throughout the municipal year. A further review of the Council Plan was scheduled for 2022. Updates and amendments to the plan would be brought forward as they became apparent or were required. All Scrutiny Board Members would be provided the opportunity to review, monitor and challenge Council Plan performance going forward as part of the wider monitoring and review process already in place.

Councillor Allen queried whether affordable housing would form part of the Housing Framework going forward and was advised that it would, although the Council's Local Plan was really the means by which future housing provision was delivered.

Having considered the report, Members of the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

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- (i) To note the progress made in delivering the Council Plan in 2020/21; and,
- (ii) To recommend to the Leader of the Council that continuing development and emphasis is placed on the following areas within the Council Plan 2020-2025 going forward:
 - Health Inequalities and Inclusion;
 - The Digital Agenda (in its entirety); and,
 - Inclusive Growth and Infrastructure

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting was not open to the public during discussion of the following item because the report contains exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

7. ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY WITHIN THE BOROUGH

The Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board meeting
Closed at 8:11 p.m.