

RESOURCES AND DELIVERING VALUE SCRUTINY BOARD

1st MARCH 2022

PUBLIC MINUTES

- Present Councillors: M Parker (Chairman), S Davis, M McCarthy, J Tildesley, P Thomas, D Pinwell, A Rebeiro, B Groom and M Allen
- Guests: Councillor I Courts: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for the Economy
- Councillor K Grinsell: Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Tourism and Sport
- Officers Paul Johnson: Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
Samantha Gilbert: Assistant Director, Finance & Property Services
Jenny Wood: Director for Adult Care & Support
Mary Morrissey: Director of Economy & Infrastructure
Tim Browne: Interim Director for Children's Services and Skills
Sarah Barnes: Head of Business Intelligence & Improvement
Tom Francis: Lead Programme Manager, Business Intelligence & Improvement
Peter Carroll: Head of Strategic Land & Property
Paul Rogers: Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Holl-Allen MBE, for whom Councillor D Pinwell was substituting.

Apologies for absence were received from Nick Page (Chief Executive), due to other Council business.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Pinwell declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Board Director for Visit Knowle in relation to Agenda Item 5 '*The Council Plan 2020-25 – Progress in Delivering Outcomes and Plan Refresh*' (Appendix D, 'Detailed Summary of Delivery of Council Plan Deliverables', point 18 '*recovery plans in place for each town and local centre and short-term actions delivered, including public realm improvements*').

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

No questions or deputations were received.

4. MINUTES

Councillor Tildesley noted that both he and Councillor Mrs Holl-Allen MBE were present at the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board meeting held on 1 February 2022.

The Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

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- (i) Subject to the above correction, to agree the Minutes arising from the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board meeting held on 1 February 2022 as an accurate record.

5. THE COUNCIL PLAN 2020-25: PROGRESS IN DELIVERING OUTCOMES AND PLAN REFRESH

The report before the Scrutiny Board outlined the progress made in delivering the Solihull Council Plan 2021/22 and sought the Scrutiny Board's views for the content of the 2022/23 plan update.

The Lead Programme Manager presented the 'look back' element of the report and informed Members that the report addressed the Council Plan period 2021/22 and provided Council Plan highlights, notable areas of progress made, delivery outcomes and financial ratings.

Members were invited to ask questions at this point in the meeting, which in summary included the following matters:

In respect of in-house foster care and related staff recruitment, the Board sought further detail concerning the work taking place to develop a fostering marketing campaign, as well as work on-going for the retention and support of existing foster carers.

The Head of Business Intelligence & Improvement advised that work was on-going in this area of the recruitment campaign and was initially targeting existing Council staff and partners as part of the first phase of the campaign, with the second phase taking an external, outward looking perspective. It was reported that the months of January, May and September were considered good windows for recruitment. Members were advised that consideration of the national safeguarding enquiry also had to be recognised and factored into the Council's recruitment activity accordingly.

Councillor Tildesley noted that it was a worrying scenario regarding the difficulties the Council was evidently experiencing in meeting the Council Plan target of recruiting 6 foster care households. The Interim Director for Children's Services and Skills advised the Scrutiny Board that the market for foster carers was very competitive and had been further impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic since 2019, which has led to the Council's strategy of initially seeking to identify and recruit foster carers internally as rapidly as possible. Councillor Grinsell added that the Council was working with partners to ensure that Solihull was supportive of foster carers, citing as an example discussions held with NHS UHB whereby they had offered to review their policies to help support foster carers, for example, to ensure continued employment opportunities.

Councillor Rebeiro noted that in June 2021 some Members of the Council had been alerted to the difficulties associated with foster carer recruitment and that there had been some suggestion of increasing the size of the foster care team capacity in order to implement a targeted foster carer recruitment campaign via social media.

The Interim Director for Children's Services and Skills advised Members that context was required in relation to current national events being experienced by the Council pertaining to an Improvement Notice and related on-going inspections within Children's Services. However, Children's Services were currently reviewing targets

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for foster care recruitment to establish what would be realistically achievable in the current climate.

Members questioned whether there were any associated costs or budget implications in relation to the procurement exercise for the delivery of 50+ rapid Electric Vehicle Charging Points in 2022/23. The Director of Economy & Infrastructure advised Members that a detailed report was scheduled for a future Cabinet Portfolio Decision session and that the relevant detail would be provided for Members outside of the Scrutiny Board meeting.

Council Pinwell referenced point 9 in the *Detailed Summary of Delivery of Council Plan Deliverables* document, pertaining to 'have increased people's ability to shape their local places through the thriving communities programme'. Councillor Pinwell noted that communities had the potential to contribute across areas of the Council Plan, including fostering support via a thriving community network. It was further noted that although Locality Groups worked well there was certainly scope for greater community involvement and Members questioned how encouraging greater community involvement via Locality Groups would be addressed.

The Director of Economy & Infrastructure advised the Scrutiny Board that the Locality Groups were also comprised of representatives from the NHS, Police, Solihull Community Housing and a range of Council services. The requirement to review Locality Groups agenda setting and group composition was raised as a possible avenue for further exploration to encourage and support greater community involvement through the Locality Groups. It was recognised that further work was required in some areas and that some Locality Groups were to be refreshed in 2022.

The Scrutiny Board referenced the Council Plan objective 13 '*further targeted support for young people to help them to move into or maintain employment or education.....*', and questioned what was being done to bring the objective back on track from its current Amber status and what opportunities were being made available for young people. The Head of Business Intelligence & Improvement advised the Scrutiny Board that supporting data could be supplied to Members outside of the meeting.

The Chairman referenced action point 20 '*Implementation of the electric vehicle action plan, including installation of the first tranche of rapid chargers at Council owned sites.....*' and questioned what was the progress for rapid charging point implementation. The Chairman further noted that there would be a significant uptake of electric vehicles in the next decade and questioned how could local government provide the private sector with the necessary leadership to encourage local partnerships to deliver the aims of the Council Plan in respect of provision of necessary electric vehicle infrastructure.

The Director of Economy & Infrastructure advised Members that the Council Plan was regularly reviewed and monitored. The Council Plan proposed a roll-out of electric vehicle (ev) infrastructure, which was further supported by national aspirations. A private sector partner was being sought to work with in delivering the Council Plan ev objectives. The Council was also lobbying via the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to ensure that it was taking a regionally compatible approach to ev infrastructure delivery and was maximising funding to support infrastructure delivery.

The Head of Business Intelligence & Improvement informed Members that the Council Plan Update 2022/23 would be reported to Council on 5th April 2022. The Council Plan was published annually via the Council website. It was not proposed to

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re-write the Council Plan, which had been refreshed in June 2020, as the themes detailed within the Council Plan were deemed to be fit for purpose and the key objectives detailed within it continued to reflect the Council's key priorities with some minor amendments. The balance within the Council Plan was deemed to be good and therefore the current iteration was an update/refresh only.

The refreshed Council Plan text reflected the current opportunities and threats the Council was facing and told the Council's story of activity over the forthcoming year.

Councillor Tildesley noted how significant events had taken place since the last Council Plan iteration, such as the political situation in Ukraine and the possibility of significant numbers of refugees being received in the United Kingdom, including children, mothers and the elderly, the implications of which should consequently be reflected within the current Council Plan refresh addressing the next twelve months.

Councillor Courts noted that the Council would fulfil its duty in collaboration with Government and regionally in respect of supporting any displaced Ukrainian citizens located within the borough.

The Head of Business Intelligence & Improvement noted that the Council Plan report was written within the past three weeks and that it would be possible to insert some wording to address the Scrutiny Board's comments with regard to the current situation in Ukraine.

The Director of Economy & Infrastructure informed the Scrutiny Board that the Council was currently supporting Syrian and Afghan refugees in hotels located within the borough, plus 1,700 citizens from Hong Kong. The Council was in the process of establishing a webpage to support Ukrainian refugees.

Having considered the 'Council Plan Refresh 2020-25: Progress in Delivering Outcomes and Plan Refresh' report, the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board:

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the review of progress in delivering the Council Plan in 2021/22;
- (ii) To note that the Council Plan 2020-25 Plan Refresh and objectives would continue to be cascaded across all of the Council's Scrutiny Boards for further review and scrutiny in the 2022/23 municipal year; and,
- (iii) To recommend that the Council Plan 2020-25 Refresh incorporates some narrative addressing the current situation in Ukraine as raised and discussed by Members of the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

7. TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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The Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board meeting
Closed at 7:21 p.m.