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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 30 JANUARY 2024

(7.15 pm - 10.15 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Stuart Neaverson (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor John Braithwaite,
Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Anthony Fairclough,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Stephen Mercer,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Martin Whelton,
Councillor James Williscroft, Councillor Victoria Wilson,
Councillor Nick McLean and Councillor Laxmi Attawar

Dan Jones (Executive Director, Environment, Civic Pride & Climate), Asad Mushtaq (Executive Director of Finance & Digital) and Lucy Owen (Executive Director of Housing & Sustainable Development)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies received from Cllr Marsie Skeete (with Cllr Laxmi Attawar as sub)

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

Panel Members confirmed that these were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

Members discussed the process around naming proposers and seconders when requested. It was agreed that when one of a proposer or seconder requests to be named, that *both* proposer and seconder should be named going forward.

4 ACTIONS LOG (Agenda Item 4)

The Panel noted the two new appendices - Idverde performance report and Waste & recycling Q3 report.

In response to questions, the Assistant Director of Public Space provided further information:

- Score 0-7 Based on street cleansing, follows Grades a, b, c, d and d-
(alphabetic integers into numerical)

- Fix my street information is inputted into the Council CRM which then feeds into the service providers system (tri part system). Further work is needed on map pinning and accuracy.
- How many failed reports? 18-24% (can include duplicate entries from multiple reporters). Action: John Bosley to take question away for a data analysis update.
- Public footpaths not included – Action: JB to check

5 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING (ROUND 2) (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance & Corporate Services to introduce the report. Second round of proposals follow on from the first round of budget scrutiny and includes information on the government provisional settlement and the proposals agreed at Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member added that although the new Government funding was announced today, we are far from receiving the funding that we need. We stand to receive £20m less this year than we did in 2010 (Received £93m in 2010. The coming year will see us receive £75m).

With some adjustments, we have been able to identify growth bids to further invest in our vital local services (these are outlined in Cabinet papers). Confident this budget is robust, reasonable, and sustainable.

The Chair invited the Executive Director of Finance & Digital to comment on the budget plans and MTFS for 2024/25.

There are continued pressures around social care, and temporary accommodation. This is the fifth year of receiving a one-off settlement which makes strategic planning difficult.

The Chair invited questions from the Panel about the latest Cabinet paper, draft savings, growth proposals. The Executive Directors and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services replied with further information.

- Proposing to spend £9m over the next four years on footpaths, potholes, etc
- Major investment in street cleansing, including improving customer service and reviewing fix my street.
- Eliminated the proposed saving on grass verges – Between October and now receiving figures for the government settlement, work was undertaken to review our assumptions and contributions to contingencies. Because of this we have been able to identify 2.3m to bring forward as growth. As such, it was decided that saving could be deleted.
- Growth in parking and transport - Increased charges are in line with inflation.
- Engagement report – work is still being done to analyse responses. A full paper will be published with the Budget papers.

- Capital programme – The Cabinet Member suggested that if Members wish to identify projects they want more detail about, or to scrutinise as individual agenda items, that can be arranged. Extensive detail on every item in the capital programme isn't possible or time efficient.
- Planning staff – Previously heavily reliant on agency staff, now making staff permanent.
- Council Tax – It is regrettable that we need to increase Council Tax but we would not be able to deliver local services if we do not.
- Housing Needs Team – Temporary Accommodation Officers visit accommodation to check it is suitable and appropriate. This is vital work particularly because the need for TA has increased.
- No mention in the budget of toilet provision. Action: Lucy Owen to check the allocation amount in the civic pride reserves to restrengthen the Community Toilet Scheme.

There were no recommendations to send to the Commission.

6 BUDGET/BUSINESS PLAN - LATEST CABINET PAPERS (Agenda Item 6)

Taken with Item 5.

7 CLARION HOUSING - REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE STANDARDS (Agenda Item 7)

Clarion representatives updated the Panel on the work currently underway to address the ongoing issues. Members were informed about the role of the Repairs Liaison, LCDM, and Asset Investment Teams.

The Chair invited the public speakers to share their experiences.

Dawn - Damp and mould has not been treated properly in 1 ½ years, many other residents have damp and mould issues also. 7 properties have been left vacant in Armfield Crescent for a long time, these could benefit those on the waiting list.

Tony (Chairs of Sadlers Close RA) – Task and finish group, Quarterly meetings dropped off. Communal works not completed. United Living – planned major works – poor service and communication, jobs not signed off.

Marek Witko responded to the speakers.

- Clarion committed to visiting Sadlers Close to look at the outstanding works needed. United Living can also be discussed at this visit.
- Task and Finish group can be picked up again.
- Empties will be looked at - some are leasehold, residents have gone into a care home.
- Damp and mould should not be blamed on lifestyle. Properties should be adequate for the family living in it.

Clr Dan Johnston conducted a survey in the second half of 2023 by leafleting major estates. Comments included cleaners clocking off early, caretakers not reporting repairs, and the quality of repairs and communication from Clarion. Clarion responded that with regards to clocking off, there are investigations into a new system for clocking off which will be location based.

In response to Panel member questions, the Clarion representatives provided further information:

- Equans @ 85% (similar to 21/22) –Majority of jobs are completed first time. We are ahead of the 76% in 21/22 and the RLO's have had a huge impact on customer support and satisfaction. Localz will improve satisfaction further.
- Ravensbury Court – lessons learned around smooth hand overs from out of hours team to morning team.
- 13k repairs raised, 10k completed? Some repairs consolidated into one visit to minimise appointments (communal repairs etc).
- LCDM – we have invested significantly in upskilled trade operatives to be proactive as we can.
- We audit a percentage of work but we are reliant on customer feedback.

The Panel RESOLVED to recommend that Clarion:

1. Clarion introduce a 7-days a week repairs service.
2. Look at contact options
3. Clarion have a greater presence on site one day a week

All votes in favour.

Clarion replied there is a huge cost attached to operatives working on Saturday and Sunday, but they will investigate the cost and practicalities.

8 CLARION HOUSING: ESTATE REGENERATION (Agenda Item 8)

Brian Ham, Project Director, provided an update on the estate regeneration.

In response to Panel Member questions:

Building regulations have meant that building in phases 2 and 3 will need to be redesigned. This will require new planning applications and consultations. However, we are looking at shuffling around the phasing to accelerate build.

There are currently two outstanding CPO cases.

We are conducting a survey at High Path for lessons learned. Dialogue with residents has mainly focused on layout, landscape, and maintenance. Brian Ham will speak

with regeneration colleagues about post redirections and gas supply queries (Clarion as account holder issues).

Social rents at Eastfields equated to property value - Will the rents go up?
Can't project figures, this can only be done when properties are finished.

Brian to follow up with regeneration colleagues with regards to weekend dates for the Eastfield regeneration drop ins.

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

The work programme was agreed.

SGN requested to attend.
Thames Water to be invited.