

COUNCIL MEETING – 17 OCTOBER 2017

REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

03 July 2017

Present: Councillors Graves (Chairman), Allebone, Aslam, Maguire and Simmons.

Also present: Mrs B Gamble, (Director), Mr N Robinson, (Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager), Mrs V Jessop (Principal Housing Manager) and Mr S Whiteley (Electoral Services Team Leader).

(Councillors Griffiths and Emerson attended as observers)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Gough and Patel.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that there were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2017 be confirmed and signed.

4. SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

The annexed circulated report of the Managing Director was received to provide members with an explanation of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol.

The chairman welcomed Mrs Jessop, Principal Housing Manager, to present the report. Mrs Jessop provided some background on the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), and explained that it had been adopted four years previously and was a humanitarian obligation rather than a statutory duty of the local authority.

Members queried whether the threshold for activation of the SWEP could be lowered and also requested more detail around the roles of the external organisations involved.

Mrs Jessop explained that the threshold could be lowered, but that it would need to be a Council decision. She also confirmed to members that the council's approach to the SWEP was consistent with other local authorities, both locally and nationally.

Mrs Jessop explained that there was a voluntary agreement in place between other organisations and the council, particularly the Salvation Army and the Daylight Centre, who provided support for homeless and rough sleeping residents of the borough in the evening and during the day respectively. Mrs Jessop also confirmed to members that the council works closely with other organisations, including Wellingborough Homes and the police, to monitor homelessness in the borough, and that both local and national helpline numbers are active and promoted.

Members queried whether in the event of an extremely severe winter whether there would be resources, capacity and budget to provide the necessary support. Mrs

Gamble, Director, confirmed that there would be budget available in the event of an extreme winter, but that it could impact on other budgets if an increase was required.

Members thanked Mrs Jessop and her team for the work undertaken around the SWEP.

RESOLVED that the report on the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol be noted.

5. PRESENTATION BY REVENUE AND BENEFITS

The annexed circulated report of the Managing Director was received to introduce members to the presentation by Revenue and Benefits.

The chairman welcomed Mr N Robinson, Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager. Mr Robinson provided members with some detail in respect of the process of revenue collection, highlighting the council's strong performance of in-year collection rates of over 98% and 99% respectively for council tax and business rate collection.

Mr Robinson went on to outline the legal steps taken by the council to recover unpaid local taxation, including the use of enforcement officers and liability orders from the courts. Mr Robinson explained the council's best practice approach to revenue collection, including self-service options for taxpayers and the use of discretionary reminders in addition to the legislative requirements. Mr Robinson concluded his presentation by highlighting the organisation of payment plans and flexible arrangements for taxpayers, which required significant office resources.

Members discussed the high collection rates for the council, and queried whether there was any way to benchmark the collection rates against other local authorities. Mr Robinson confirmed that statistics are published nationally, so there will be a direct comparison available with other local authorities in future.

Mr Robinson explained to members that, due to demographic restrictions and reducing the resources within the team after the zero-based-budgeting exercise it was unlikely that Borough Council of Wellingborough would appear at the top of the rankings, but that it should still be expected that the council would appear in the top quartile for collection rates.

Members expressed their thanks to Mr Robinson and his team for their hard work and high rates of revenue collection across the borough.

RESOLVED that the presentation by Revenue and Benefits be noted.

6. PERFORMANCE: COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – 1 OCTOBER 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017

The annexed circulated report of the Director was received to inform members of the council's performance, including Wellingborough Norse, during the second half of 2016-17 in handling customer feedback, including complaints which have been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

Members discussed the impact of complaints regarding Wellingborough Norse against the overall number of complaints received, and considered whether the number of complaints would reduce if the performance indicators were amended.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2017/18

The annexed circulated report of the Director was received to seek guidance from the committee as to what broad areas of policy it wished to consider during 2017-18, and the work of which partner organisations it would like to review.

Members considered the proposed work programme and agreed that it would be beneficial to continue to invite a mix of council and external partners.

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2017-18 be agreed and a request be made to the senior management team for the circulation to all members of the Health and Wellbeing Forum minutes.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.