



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## **COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 at 2:00pm**

### **Present:**

Councillor Silvester (in the Chair)

Councillors Beasant, Nichols, Goodwin, Pettigrew, K Swinburn, Watson and Woodward.

### **Officers in attendance:**

- Helen Isaacs (Assistant Chief Executive)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law, Governance and Assets (Monitoring Officer))
- Carolina Borgstrom (Assistant Director Environment)
- Spencer Hunt (Assistant Director of Safer and Partnerships)
- Zoe Campbell (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Paul Caswell (Head of Youth Offending and Community Safety Services)
- Guy Lonsdale (Finance Group Manager)
- Paul Ellis (Head of Information, Governance and Complaints)
- Paul Thorpe (Head of Operations)
- Neil Clark (Regulatory Services Lead)
- Len Dean-King (CSSU Advanced Practitioner)

### **Also in attendance:**

- Councillor Ron Shepherd (Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities)
- Councillor Stewart Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)
- Councillor Patrick
- Councillor Rogers

## **SPC.63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence from this meeting

## **SPC.64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in respect of any item on the agenda for this meeting.

## **SPC.65 MINUTES**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

## **SPC.66 QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public for this meeting.

## **SPC.67 FORWARD PLAN**

The panel received the published forward plan and members were invited to identify any items for examination by this panel via the pre-decision call-in procedure.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

## **SPC.68 TRACKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY**

The panel received a report from the Director for Communities tracking the recommendations of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED – That the tracking report update be noted.

## **SPC.69 COVID-19: EMERGENCY DECISIONS**

The panel considered a report from the Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer providing an update on emergency decisions taken within the emergency governance framework in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **SPC.70 QUARTER THREE FINANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The panel considered a report from the Executive Director Environment, Economy and Resources providing key information regarding the Council's provisional financial outturn at quarter three of the 2020/21 financial year.

Mr Lonsdale explained the balanced position at quarter three and highlighted that the additional income received were support packages from central government because of COVID-19 to help mitigate against additional spend and lost income. He explained that the Council relied on the income from business rates and council tax and, going forward, economic recovery was key.

Members referred to residents who wanted to know why the additional income could not be spent on frontline services. Mr Lonsdale confirmed that some of the additional local government funding had conditions attached and was predominantly to deal with additional demand expenditure and loss of income. Members queried if there was any indication, as a result of the cut to local government funding over the past ten years, of how much funding had been lost and the impact on local services. Mr Lonsdale referred to the change in the local government funding model, but members were concerned there were essential services not being delivered and there was no compensation for residents for the loss of services.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

## **SPC.71 CALL IN – BEREAVEMENT SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES**

The panel considered a formal request from members to call-in a decision of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport following a review of the fees and charges in Bereavement Services.

Councillor Patrick felt the timing of the decision was morally wrong at a time when people had been suffering the tragic loss of loved ones during a pandemic. He noted that although deaths from COVID-19 were on the decline, there was the real threat for funeral poverty and it was the councils duty to ease the burden placed on the residents of North East Lincolnshire, particularly when the pandemic had seen a large rise in the number of applications for universal credit. He asked the panel to consider that the increase in charges be postponed until after the national pandemic crisis subsided and any increase in charges be gradual and linked to the rate of inflation at a time when the financial burdens were hitting people the hardest.

Councillor Rogers referred to the 2020 Director of Public Health annual report in which North East Lincolnshire had the 26<sup>th</sup> highest proportion of the population experiencing income deprivation, which equated to 30,000 people. COVID-19 had worsened amongst the lower income households and single parents. She highlighted to the panel that residents had struggled throughout the pandemic through no choice of their own. Councillor Rogers explained that the Citizens Advice Bureau felt that the fall out of the pandemic on the economy would roll on for the next two years and continue to impact on local residents. She was happy to second the call in and asked that the fees and charges were phased in so that residents were in a stronger financial position.

Councillor S Swinburn, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport agreed that it had been a tough year for everyone. The fees and charges were reviewed on an annual basis and he believed that, after no increase last year, it was the right time to increase the bereavement services fees and charges.

Ms Borgstrom explained that the review of the fees and charges made sure that the council kept up with the rise in cost of the services and to keep within the budget envelope. She confirmed that the increase was not to make profit just to recover costs. Maintenance had doubled, electricity prices had increased, and water charges were an additional cost. Ms Borgstrom highlighted that the alternative to the increase was to subsidise the service which would take from resources elsewhere. She confirmed that bench marking with other local authorities had taken place and even with the increase in fees and charges, North East Lincolnshire Council fees were still lower than others.

Some members understood why the increases were needed but felt residents were still struggling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and now was not the right time due to recent financial pressures.

A member noted that there had not been an increase for two years, our fees were below the levels of other local authorities and there would not be a right time.

One member felt there were other costs associated with bereavement services and there was an opportunity to lobby funeral directors to reduce their costs to lessen the financial burden on residents at a very difficult time.

Councillor Woodward proposed that the decision taken by the Portfolio Holder be released, Councillor K Swinburn seconded the proposal. The Panel voted 5 for and 5 against the proposal. The proposal was carried with the Chair's casting vote.

RESOLVED – That the decision made by the Portfolio for Environment and Transport be released for implementation.

## **SPC.72 PUBLIC SPACE CCTV STRATEGY**

The panel received a report and presentation which updated on the progress made against the Public Space CCTV Strategy and capital investment of £1m to upgrade the current CCTV provision.

Mr Caswell explained that the vision of the strategy was to ensure the council had a fit for purpose public space CCTV system which utilised modern technology, was compatible with future upgrades and enabled people to feel safe. The strategy was underpinned by six key aims and objectives and was managed via a strong and effective governance structure, which focused on strategy delivery, day to day operational delivery and the project to deliver the technical upgrade utilising the £1m investment.

Mr Thorpe set out progress around the capital investment, detailing timelines for procurement and installation. Mr Thorpe also detailed the

current performance measures supporting the strategy, which were also reported regularly to the Economy Scrutiny Panel.

The Caught-on Camera scheme which the enforcement team launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 was still early in the process. However, Mr Clark confirmed that the campaign was up and running and receiving a positive community response.

Mr Ellis assured the panel that all data protection compliance duties had been considered and were in place, which included Data Protection Impact Assessments and Privacy Notices. He also informed the panel that policy and guidance documents had been reviewed and updated and that the strategy met the corporate accessibility requirements.

Mr Hunt explained the governance and delivery arrangements that were in place to oversee the strategy and investment. These included: -

- Strategic Board - Providing strategic oversight and support and challenge to the project management group and the operational group.
- CCTV Project Management Group – Responsible for delivering the effective procurement and delivery of the capital investment.
- Operational Group – responsible for the day-to-day integrated partnership working to ensure that the CCTV system was utilised to its best effect to detect and deter crime and anti-social behaviour.

Members were reassured that cameras would be located in hot spots and that by intelligence and data, they would be located across the borough in prioritised areas to make residents feel safe.

Members queried what would happen to the existing cameras that were not being used. Mr Thorpe explained that an initial mapping exercise had been undertaken which identified existing locations and the status of all existing cameras. Mr Thorpe explained that the investment would upgrade cameras to the required standard and ensure they were located/relocated into areas identified as high priority based on intelligence provided by Humberside Police and wider partners.

The camera in Grant Thorold Park was reported as not working and had been repaired time and time again. A member asked for reassurance that it would be replaced as part of the new scheme. Mr Thorpe explained that the problem with the camera in the park was the transmission but he reassured members that if intelligence was saying that the camera was needed then it would be replaced.

Fly tipping was a constant issue for residents and members were keen to understand what resources there were to look at fly tipping in alleyways. Mr Hunt confirmed that rapid deployment cameras could be considered

in hot spot locations providing there was a clear line of sight for the camera to capture any evidence.

A member gave an example at rear of the art college, off Eleanor Street which had been an ongoing anti-social behaviour hotspot. Mr Caswell said he would take the concern to the operational meeting for consideration around deployment of a rapid deployment camera.

Members were concerned that there was no mention of Immingham in the presentation. Mr Thorpe confirmed that officers had mapped out the existing cameras and would consider Immingham as part of the final mapping exercise ahead of installation.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

### **SPC.73 LITTER STRATEGY**

The panel received a draft copy of the litter strategy for consideration ahead of decision by Cabinet. Ms Borgstrom explained that the strategy was produced to complement the waste strategy around reducing the amount of litter across the borough. The strategy looked at the causes of littering, litter bins across the borough, litter management, community support, enforcement, and education for the future.

Members were concerned about the recent increase in litter because of the nice weather and lockdown restrictions outside being eased. Ms Borgstrom agreed and referred to the large wheelie bins that were recently located on Cleethorpes seafront to cater for those people who ate on the go.

A member highlighted the issue of black rubbish bags being fly tipped on the streets, which were often opened by foxes and caused a mess. Ms Borgstrom explained that officers were at present restricted from delivering face to face education with residents in these fly tipping hotspots due to the COVID-19 restrictions. However, they were hoping that this would return soon. Members felt that enforcement would be a bigger deterrent and where the focus needed to be.

Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport, supported the litter strategy and he gave an example of enforcement where 35 people this week had been fined for littering on Cleethorpes seafront.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

### **SPC.74 DEPOT RATIONALISATION**

The panel received a briefing paper and presentation on the depot rationalisation programme following the decision to merge the Gilbey Road and Doughty Road depots into one single depot, making it energy efficient, creating service efficiencies and introducing wider benefits for

staff and the borough. Ms Borgstrom talked the panel through the final proposal for the new site, the timeline for the work to begin in October 2021 and the project governance.

Members welcomed the rationalisation and were keen to see the savings that would be made in the future as a result.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

## **SPC.75 SCRUTINY PANEL – REVIEW 2020/21 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

The panel received a report from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer (Assistant Chief Executive) summarising the panel's agreed 2020/21 work programme and the timetable of activities to undertake this work. The panel also considered any issues it may wish to retain in or add to its work programme for 2021/22.

Members suggested environmental crime be added to the work programme because they felt it would link into the implementation of the waste and litter strategies.

RESOLVED – That environmental crime be added to the work programme for 2021/22.

## **SPC.76 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

There were no questions for the portfolio holder at this meeting.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.48 p.m.