

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES** held at County Hall, Matlock on 15 September 2016.

**P R E S E N T**

Councillor K Gillott (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs E Atkins, Mrs M Booth, Mrs C Cox, S A Spencer and D Williams.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs C A Hart and R L Hosker.

**19/16** **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**20/16** **DISCUSSION WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNITIES, MIKE ASHWORTH** Mr

Ashworth, Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities attended the meeting to discuss the department's development and challenges.

The department was wide reaching and now also included County Council services for Regeneration, Economic Development, Trading Standards, Heritage and Libraries and Derbyshire Sport. Good links were already being established between the services and the Service Plan would highlight this. Finance and HR functions would be merged from the added responsibility areas. The department budget was now £83m, with full and part time staffing of 1,700. The required budget cuts would impact on staffing and there were 14 service reviews currently progressing with targeted cuts. Obligatory expenditure included £12m for concessionary fares and £30m for landfill tax and waste.

Although the range of responsibilities was vast, Mr Ashworth stated that he received excellent support from his Service Directors and a regular Senior Managers Forum was held.

Ways of maximising capital income was being pursued. There were also a number of projects that had been or were near to completion including Buxton Museum, the new waste plant at Sinfin, the Seymour Link at Markham and cycling schemes. The growth of business, including the 'Derbyshire Offer' was essential and programme management of projects would benefit from staff being deployed where necessary.

Mr Ashworth outlined the possible effect on the County Council should Chesterfield join the Sheffield City Region. He also detailed the challenges

ahead including the delivery of the service with diminishing resources and the need to work smarter.

**21/16      UNIVERSAL CREDITS** Lois Race and Carmel Keddy, Derbyshire Welfare Rights Service attended to provide a briefing on Universal Credit (UC) in Derbyshire.

The briefing outlined the policy intentions behind Universal Credit, which benefits would change, what Universal Credit was and the timescale for its introduction.

Universal Credit was being 'rolled out' in 3 stages. It was available in all Jobcentres but usually for limited 'gateway' claims, and all claims in Derbyshire were made online. Stage 2 the 'full service' has been tested in parts of London but will be opened to the rest of the country v between May 2016 and summer 2018. Stage 3 beginning in July 2019 was the managed migration of DWP to Full Service UC.

The Welfare Rights team has been monitoring the development of UC locally and nationally. The team has contributed to national debate via the 'Rightsnet' website and through the National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers. Leaflets have been produced to assist with claiming and were available in print and on the County Council's website. A UC Conference has been held in Chesterfield to inform professionals and charities. Seminars were being arranged to inform health and care professionals. Derbyshire Library staff have received training.

The team has monitored its UC case work and raised a number of various concerns with DWP. Concerns for the future included the eventual inclusion of self-employed claimants, the sanctions scheme being applied to many who were working, the lack of information on claims for free school meals, prescription, dental and optical charges. The Full Service of UC would be entirely online and there were still many people who were 'digitally excluded'.

A number of case studies were highlighted in the briefing.

Members were encouraged to engage Derbyshire MP's by sending the Briefing on UC in Derbyshire and also sending it to housing associations and charities to inform them.

**22/16      THRIVING COMMUNITIES** Sarah Eaton and Becky Lomas provided an update on the Thriving Communities project.

The prototype has been developed in the local community, the nominated areas were Cotmanhay, where the project was being progressed faster. Gamesley, Danesmoor, Shirebrook and Newhall. The strategic priorities included better outcomes for communities for less resources,

understanding individual issues, co-designing solutions with affected people and challenging the systems in place. Strategic Directors were allocated the lead for specific areas to help guide the ideal forward and this has had a positive impact.

Councillor Spencer stated that Baroness Williams had undertaken work focussing on the whole family and required services. He had access to this information and was happy to share it with officers.

The project was being progressed faster in Cotmanhay and prototyping was allowing staff to challenge policy clashes to realise outcomes. The live prototype would run for 12 weeks with 6 local families. The Strategic Director was kept informed of the outcomes. Corporate Management Team and Managers would be kept informed of developments.

#### **23/16      FLOOD RISK WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

Councillor Booth provided an update on progress made on the Flood Risk Management Strategy. Collaborative work continued with all stakeholders and a Flood Response Policy was being developed.

Following corporate training more staff were more confident to deal with 'consent' inquiries and the need for enquiries on low level risk applications has been streamlined.

Some projects aimed to reduce flood risk have been successfully completed and it was felt that press releases should be issued to inform the public.

**24/16      REVIEW OF TOURISM IN DERBYSHIRE – UPDATE** It was reported that the review was coming to its conclusion. Dr Sarah Rawlinson and Mr Tim Heap from the University of Derby were thanked for their critical expert guidance and challenge they provided throughout the course of work with the review.