



Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group

Minutes of a meeting of the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group held Virtually via Zoom on Wednesday 30 November 2022 at 5.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Dermot Bambridge
Councillor Jo Gilford
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor Ian McCord

Also Present:

Councillor Jonathan Nunn

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Karen Cooper
Councillor Andrew Grant

Officers:

Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
James Edmunds, Assistant Manager Democratic Services
Maisie McInnes, Democratic Services Officer

15. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 July were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

17. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Leader of the Council for attending the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

18. Leader of the Council

At the Chair's invitation, the Leader thanked members for the invite and expressed that he welcomed the scrutiny review and suggestion to work collaboratively together. He felt that the work that scrutiny did was invaluable and cabinet members should be invited to attend scrutiny meetings to further member involvement in shaping policy.

The Chair echoed the need for collaborative working and for cabinet to attend meetings and explained that the Deputy Leader was invited to the meeting on the homelessness strategy. The Chair asked the leader what the Council's approach to homelessness would be this winter, whether there was a sub-zero policy or an all-in policy. The Leader responded that a new policy would be a great idea for members to influence as they dealt with casework first hand in their compassionate role as councillors. He explained that the Hope centre in Northampton were working to support the homeless, and that a brief on winter arrangements would be put together and shared with the Chair.

The Chair shared that the People Overview and Scrutiny committee wanted a single meeting focused on SEND, but the director wanted a task and finish group which the Chair felt would be an encumbrance on the busy service area. The Leader explained it was scrutiny's role to review areas with service delivery issues, but there were plans for SEND extensions in 4 schools which would help ease the problem but there was still work to be done. The Chair stated that SEND would be discussed at the next meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting.

Members discussed the issue with houses in multiple occupancy (HMO) and licensing matters. The Leader explained that there was a Planning Policy HMO working group and previously Northampton Borough Council had come up with a 50m radius policy working with the University of Loughborough to ensure there were no HMOs established within 50m radius of another HMO.

Members discussed the notion of collaborative working and the need for strategic and high level thinking at overview and scrutiny committees. Members felt that scrutiny needed to be forward thinking and asked the leader where the council would be in the next 3/5 years. Members felt that work needed to be done as the four sovereign councils were still working as separate entities. The Leader referred to the corporate plan and the need for cost-saving efficiencies to continue for the unitary council which finance was looking into with suggestions from service areas and the need to evaluate the office space that WNC occupies and the worker types within the Council. The Leader explained there was a report on transformation coming to Cabinet that had more information on progress.

The Chair thanked the Leader for attending and engaging with members. The Leader left the meeting at this juncture.

19. **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes**

The Chair of People Overview and Scrutiny committee summarised their work programme and shared that the Assistant Director Housing was reviewing the governance arrangements with Northampton Partnership Homes and scrutiny wanted to feed into the review. There was also a letter from government on mould in properties and members needed to grasp the recommendations detailed in the letter. The committee also wanted the Deputy Leader to attend and explain what work was being done with housing.

The Chair of Place Overview and Scrutiny committee explained that a briefing on libraries was to be scheduled as well as work on leisure centres and sports activities

which could be a joint exercise with People Overview and Scrutiny committee. The Deputy Democratic Services Manager explained that joint working could take place between the two committees who would decide which aspects to investigate to share the work.

Finally, the Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee emphasised that the biggest agenda item the committee was facing was the annual budget which would be influenced by the government settlement and autumn statement.

20. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 19:15

Chair: _____

Date: _____