

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 24 January 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor R Brown (Chair)

Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor A Andrews
Councillor D Gannon
Councillor R Lancaster (substitute for Councillor
J McNicholas)
Councillor G Ridley
Councillor R Singh

Employees (by Directorate):

Place S Bennett, B Hastie, G Holmes, A Walster

People D Ashmore, D O'Shaughnessy

Others Present N Slinn, Salvation Army

Apologies Councillors L Bigham, J Clifford, G Duggins, J McNicholas
M Mutton and C Thomas

Public Business

52. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

53. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 December, 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

54. Homelessness

The Committee considered a Briefing Note and presentation that outlined the current position on homelessness in Coventry and which highlighted the reasons why people find themselves without a home. Nathan Slinn, a representative of the Salvation Army, who currently hold the contract to provide supported accommodation and floating support, attended the meeting. In addition, the Chair, Councillor Brown, invited contributions from a number of members of the public who had either experienced homelessness or who worked with homelessness organisations.

The presentation covered the following issues:-

- Trends of those presenting as homeless; a breakdown of the reasons for homelessness; and comparison with West Midlands and County neighbours
- Changes to legislation and early intervention work
- Work currently underway with partner organisations including:-
 - Building new homes
 - Reducing temporary accommodation spend
 - Improving current temporary accommodation
 - Future plans to increase housing supply in Coventry
 - Support for victims of domestic violence
- Current trends and levels of empty homes since 2010

The Committee questioned officers, representatives and members of the public on a number of issues, including:-

- Rates of homelessness across the West Midlands and how those rates are measured
- The Council's powers in relation to Empty Homes
- Innovative ways of building new homes, such as modular homes
- Selective Licensing and anticipated implementation dates
- How homelessness is managed by Directorates across the Council
- Implications of the new Homelessness Reduction Act and grant funding associated with the new legislation
- The difference between rough sleepers and street beggars
- How rough sleepers are counted, the accuracy of those figures and the lack of day time facilities for rough sleepers
- Liaison between homelessness organisations and providers
- How drug and alcohol addiction impacts on cases of homelessness
- Innovative ways of funding new housing schemes to increase the amount of social and affordable housing

The Committee requested further information in relation to the following:-

- The anticipated effect of the introduction of Universal Credit on Homelessness figures
- Modular Housing schemes
- The average costs per person of temporary accommodation
- A breakdown of the figures in relation to the categories of empty homes and the number likely to be brought back into use in the next year

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair, Councillor Brown thanked all of the participants for their contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

- (1) Note the Briefing Note and presentation and welcome the contributions made by officers, the Salvation Army and members of the public**
- (2) Request that the report on Selective Licensing be considered by Scrutiny prior to its consideration by Cabinet**
- (3) Recommend that the Cabinet Member for Community Development:-**
 - a) In order to ensure a cohesive and holistic approach to homelessness and to enable information to be shared, considers the establishment of a Homelessness Forum, involving all appropriate stakeholders, including funding providers, to be chaired by an Independent Person**
 - b) Continues to consider innovative methods of funding new housing developments to ensure an increase in the number of new affordable and social housing being built**
 - c) Considers lobbying the Government to ensure that the funding provided as part of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 continues beyond the initial two years.**

55. West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Feedback

The Chair, Councillor R Brown, provided an update on recent meetings attended.

56. Scrutiny Management

In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee noted that the Chair, Councillor R Brown had attended the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Regeneration meeting on 14 December, 2017 for the item relating to "Coventry City Centre Business Improvement District (BID) and had agreed that the decision was urgent and that call-in should not apply. The reason for urgency was in order to meet the timetable detailed in the report, the Notice of Ballot in relation to the BID proposal needed to be issued on 18 December, 2017.

57. Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted that all outstanding issues were included in the Committee's Work Programme.

58. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2017/2018

The Committee noted their Work Programme for the current municipal year.

The Chair, Councillor Brown, asked all Chairs of Scrutiny Boards to consider if there were any outstanding issues from their Work Programmes that needed to be

considered during the current Municipal Year that could be considered by Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.

59. **Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.00 pm)