

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 8 January 2020

Present:

Members: Councillor R Brown (Chair)

Councillor M Ali (Substitute for Councillor N Akhtar)
Councillor A Andrews
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor J McNicholas)
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor R Singh
Councillor D Skinner (Substitute for Councillor G Ridley)

Other Members Present:- Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities
Councillor G Duggins (Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership)

Employees (by Directorate):

Place: S Bennett, A Hunt, G Holmes

People: J Mann, R Nawaz, S Newing

Apologies: Councillors N Akhtar, G Ridley and A S Khan

Public Business

42. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December, 2019 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 34 relating to “Coventry Community Safety Plan” the Committee noted that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities had accepted Recommendations 2b) and 2c), but had not accepted the Committee’s Recommendation 2a) relating to the request that the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee (or their nominee) be included in the membership of the Coventry Police and Crime Board.

RESOLVED that clarification be sought from the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities regarding his reasons for not accepting Recommendation 2a) as detailed above, reiterating the Committee's reasons for the request.

44. Friargate Development Progress Update

The Committee considered a Briefing Note which provided an update on progress with the Friargate business district development scheme.

In January 2018, Cabinet and Council approved the receipt of £51.2m of grant funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to support the delivery of the first phase of development within the Friargate business district masterplan area. Cabinet and Council also approved the creation of a joint venture (JV) company between the City Council and Friargate LLP to oversee and accelerate the delivery of buildings within the Friargate development. The JV was legally established in February 2019 as "Friargate JV Project Limited" and the Council is now the joint freeholder of the majority of the land within the Friargate area.

Since the JV company was established, significant progress has been made in taking forward the necessary design development stages and legal agreements to deliver the next two buildings within the first phase of development (a hotel and a commercial office building). The delivery of high quality hotel developments in the city has been a long held ambition for the Council and is a key priority for the Council due to the expected influx of visitors during City of Culture 2021 and Commonwealth Games 2022, the role they play in boosting the city's image and inward investment potential, the need to provide suitable accommodation to service the city's growing economy and the lack of 'upmarket' hotels currently operating within the city centre.

On the 27th August 2019, Cabinet approved the necessary terms and expenditure to bring forward a high quality, boutique "Hotel Indigo" that will set a new standard for hotel accommodation in the city. The 100 room hotel will also provide a restaurant and bar open to the public, gym facilities for guests and will create over 40 new jobs in the city. The hotel scheme received planning permission on the 19th December 2019 and work is due to start on site in early 2020 with a completion date of the first quarter 2021.

The Friargate business district will include a range of Grade A commercial office buildings which will provide the platform for significant inward investment into the city, the creation of thousands of new jobs and the realisation of millions of pounds of additional business rates for the Council. "Two Friargate" (which has the benefit of a full reserved matters planning consent) will deliver 184,000 sqft of office space (135,000 sqft lettable space) that will set a new benchmark for commercial office space in the city and will be able to compete with the best the wider region has to offer. The building will be one storey taller than the "One Friargate" Council offices and include 12 storeys of commercial office space and a ground floor suitable for a high quality restaurant, café or retail use. It will be targeting a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) "Excellent" rating, signifying a very high level of sustainability credentials, and a 1:8 workspace

density, which will maximise the rental income the Council will receive from lettings in the building.

The Council is currently undertaking due diligence on the programme, costs and lettability of this building in conjunction with our commercial advisors, Cushman and Wakefield, and the Friargate JV. It is anticipated that a report to Members will be brought forward during 2020 setting out officer recommendations for next steps.

Given the location next to Coventry station (one of the fastest growing stations in terms of passenger numbers in the UK) and the wider housing demand within the region, the delivery of new homes will play a key part in the Friargate story and the masterplan identifies the sites for hundreds of new homes. The Council is engaging with potential funding partners to discuss opportunities to accelerate the delivery of these homes through the utilisation of relevant funding streams these partners may be able to make available. Updates and recommendations will be provided to Members through the usual governance routes as this work progresses.

The Friargate JV may look to update and refresh the current masterplan (which was granted outline planning consent in 2011) to reflect the delivery of the Coventry station masterplan, the early delivery of the hotel within the scheme and to ensure that the masterplan is as up to date as possible.

The Committee asked questions and received answers to a number of issues including:-

- An understanding of the overall plan and how progress is measured
- An understanding of the environmental credentials of Friargate 2
- The contextual element of the development
- The proposed refresh of the Masterplan and how elements of that masterplan have changed since its conception to reflect changing financial circumstances and current markets
- The identification of any potential risks, particularly in relation to the hotel
- The residential element of the masterplan

RESOLVED that the update provided in the Briefing Note be noted and that a further progress report be received by the Committee in the next municipal year.

45. **Proposed Equality Objectives 2020-2022**

The Committee considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which, in line with the Council's statutory duty, proposed a set of five new equality objectives, which were recently the subject of a consultation exercise. The Committee noted that the report would also be considered by the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities at his meeting on 30 January, 2020.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council, as a listed public authority, to publish equality objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty. The existing set of 15 equality objectives were set in 2016 for a period of four years and will therefore expire at the end of March

2020. Progress against these objectives are reported annually to the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities.

The report detailed the following factors that have influenced the review of the Council's equality objectives:-

- The need to create a more concise, focused, measurable set of equality objectives through which the Council can demonstrate improved outcomes for protected groups
- The Council's One Coventry programme provides an opportunity to refresh the equality objectives in a way that would align them to the One Coventry Plan vision, priorities and values

The report also provided details of the questions that were considered as part of the development of the proposed new equality objectives, together with some of the sources of evidence that were used as part of the research into identifying appropriate equality objectives.

The following 5 equality objectives for 2020-22 are proposed:-

Equality Objective 1

Create a foundation to drive improved access to services through better use of equalities data

This objective relates to improving the Council's' understanding about its customers and using this intelligence to help shape the way in which we can deliver the best services for those groups of customers in most need

Equality Objective 2:

Develop and deliver in partnership a whole-city approach to 'Building a Coventry that works for all'

This objective relates to establishing city-wide commitment to action as well as bringing together community, voluntary and public sector leaders to listen and mobilise on things of shared interest.

Equality Objective 3:

Increase the diversity of our workforce at all levels so that we are more representative of the communities we serve and better able to meet their diverse needs

The Council is committed to improving the recruitment and progression at all grades of people from under-represented groups to better reflect the diversity of the city.

Equality Objective 4:

Increase the number of 18-24 year olds getting into employment

Data is showing us that this group of young people experience more unemployment than other age groups in the city.

Equality Objective 5:

Increase the number of disabled residents taking part in sporting and cultural activities in the city

Disabled residents are less likely to both take part in and attend sporting and cultural events in the city; this equality objective will try and improve this and work with sporting and cultural providers to improve accessibility at events

These 5 proposed objectives have been subject to a process of rigorous scrutiny by both Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Strategic Management Board (SMB), during which time the following issues were considered for each objective:

- The current position
- What success would look like
- What the scope/limit of our influence is to achieve the objectives
- Any risks to delivery

The report indicated that the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, as corporate lead for equalities, will receive regular progress reports against each objective. An annual report of progress will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities.

The Committee asked questions and sought answers and assurances in relation to a number of issues, including:-

- Clarification in relation to work being undertaken in relation to each objective
- How benchmarking and measuring of objectives will be undertaken
- What consideration has been given to evaluation and encompassing this information into future reports
- Information regarding the diversity of the City
- How the objectives will be reflected in the Council Plan
- Equality Impact assessments and the ability of officers to undertake these
- Examples of work being undertaken with the West Midlands Combined Authority
- Accountability by elected members

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities be recommended :-

- 1) To consider the evaluation process over a period of time and includes reference to this in future reports**
- 2) To include specific reference to accountability by elected members in future reports**
- 3) To consider introducing mandatory training for undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments for all relevant officers.**
- 4) To refer regular progress reports on work in this regard to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

46. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2019/2020

The Committee received and noted their Work Programme for 2019/20 and provided guidance in relation to preparations for the meetings to be held on 5 and 19 February, 2020.

47. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.10pm)