

**CORPORATE AND EXTERNAL ISSUES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 24th OCTOBER, 2022

Present – Councillors Silvester (Chairman), Heslop (Vice-Chairman), Brady, Connor, Cowen, Jiva, Mistry, S. Patel, Peel, Sanders (as deputy for Councillor Weatherby), Mrs. Thomas, Veevers, Walsh and Wright.

Also in Attendance

Councillor Mrs. Fairclough (as deputy for Councillor Cox)	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader
Councillor Dean	Executive Cabinet for Stronger Communities
Miss. S. Johnson	Chief Executive
Mr. P. Rimmer	Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Ms. H. Gorman	Borough Solicitor
Ms. D. Yates-Obe	CEO, Bolton CVS
Ms. L. McKechnie	Deputy CEO, Bolton CVS
Mr. P. Mason	Chair of Trustees, Bolton CVS
Ms. S. Ashton	Head of Finance, Bolton CVS
Mr. M. Kane	Corporate Manager – Performance and Partnerships
Mrs. V. Ridge	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cox, Rimmer and Weatherby.

Councillor Silvester in the Chair

14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd August, 2022 were submitted.

Further to minute 12 of the previous meeting, the Chairman referred to the costs associated with the setting up of a public meeting, on behalf of Chris Green MP, which amounted to £695.

A motion was then moved and seconded which stated that Committee resolves that where a Member of Parliament requests that the offices of Bolton Council are used to facilitate a public meeting, then the costs of that public meeting should be borne by the office of the Member of Parliament, not by the Council.

The motion was then put to the vote when the voting was as follows:-

For the Motion, 10 viz:-

Councillors Brady, Heslop, Jiva, Mistry, Peel, Sanders, Silvester, Mrs. Thomas, Veevers and Wright

Against the Motion, 0

Abstained, 4 viz:-

Councillors Connor, Cowen, S. Patel and Walsh.

Whereupon, the motion was declared carried.

Resolved – (i) That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

(ii) That the Chairman of the Corporate and External Issues Scrutiny Committee be requested to write to Chris Green MP to ask him if he will be willing to cover the associated costs for the public meeting in respect of De Havilland Way in line with the agreed motion.

15. THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/2023

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report which detailed the proposed work programme for 2022/2023.

Resolved – That the Work Programme for 2022/2023 be noted.

16. £150 ENERGY PAYMENT

Mr. P. Rimmer, Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services gave a presentation which provided an update on the current situation with regards to the support for energy bills.

Information was provided in relation to the following areas, viz:-

- The background to the scheme;
- The funding levels for Bolton;
- The eligibility criteria;
- The process for making the payments;
- The main scheme; and
- The discretionary scheme.

Following the presentation, a request was made that an item on Cost of Living Support be included on the Work Programme as a standing item.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted and that an item on Cost of Living Support be included on the Work Programme as a standing item.

17. BOLTON CVS - UPDATE

Ms. D. Yates-Obe, CEO Bolton CVS gave a presentation to members which provided an update in relation to the work being undertaken by Bolton CVS.

Information was provided in relation to the following areas, viz:-

- The process: independent, transparent and collaborative;
- The VCSE Co-Design Group;
- Current engagement and accessibility;
- Developing engagement and accessibility;

- The total grant investment by funder;
- Bolton's Fund was a stepping stone into other sources of funding; and
- The independent evaluation of the Bolton's Fund.

Following the presentation, members made the following observations/comments:-

- This was the most transparent methodology we have had and was welcomed;
- What was the leverage ratio for Bolton's Fund Stepping Stone for external funding;
- Concern was expressed regarding geographical or subject service gaps and the need for a mapping exercise to be undertaken for the whole of the Borough to identify the gaps;
- Reference was made to The Big Local model which was an umbrella organisation and was ward based and whether this type of model could be evolved across all wards to identify gaps;
- The ability to identify and advise on other grant funding streams;
- A request for further details to be provided on the independent evaluation of the Bolton's Fund; and
- The lack of support for organisations and the residents of Kearsley who did not have an umbrella model and a query was raised on the methodology used to produce the data for the ward of Kearsley.

Resolved – (i) That the presentation be noted.

(ii) That thanks be conveyed to the representatives from Bolton CVS for their presentation.

(iii) That the full independent evaluation report on the Bolton's Fund be shared with members of this Scrutiny Committee

18. HYBRID/AGILE WORKING

Miss. S. Johnson, Chief Executive, gave a presentation which outlined the current position with regards to the arrangements

for hybrid/agile working for council employees.

Information was provided in relation to the following, viz:-

- Background and a recap of the situation during Covid;
- The current position;
- The high level feedback from the Hybrid Working Staff Survey; and
- The next steps and proposals.

In terms of the next steps and proposals members were advised that a Hybrid Working Policy was currently being developed with the trade unions and key guidance which this would include was outlined as part of the presentation.

Following the presentation, members made the following comments/observations:-

- The ability to work in different buildings which might be closer to home;
- The rationalisation of accommodation/assets and the opportunity to bring in other private organisations where there was free space;
- The impact on sickness absence within the workforce and whether this had reduced as a result of people working from home; and
- The need to ensure that service levels were not affected due to staff working from home.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted and that the new Hybrid Policy, when approved, be considered by this Scrutiny Committee in the next municipal year.

19. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN REPORT

The Chief Executive submitted a report which informed members of the complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and also detailed the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report.

A copy of the annual report was detailed in Appendix 1 to the

report and it contained details of the number of complaints received and those determined from 1st April, 2021 to 31st March, 2022. Appendix 2 to the report contained a list of complaints and enquiries by service area made in 2021/2022 together with the decision reached, the reason for the decision, remedy and any service improvement recommendations. Appendix 3 to the report detailed remedies recommended by the LG&SCO and compliance with those remedies.

Following the presentation, members made the following comments/observations, viz:-

- Concern was expressed regarding the number of complaints associated with the Planning Department;
- With regard to financial remedies, how where these paid to the complainant and how were the amounts determined; and
- How we compared with other Greater Manchester Local Authorities.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that the information on financial remedies be circulated to members of this Scrutiny Committee.

20. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Mrs. H. Gorman, Borough Solicitor gave a presentation which provided details in relation to the complaints procedure.

Information was provided in relation to the following, viz:-

- The definition of a complaint;
- How to complain about Council Services – Corporate Complaints Policy;
- Stages 1 and 2 of the Corporate Complaints Policy;
- Matters which were excluded from the Corporate Complaints Policy; and
- The Complaints and Representation Procedure for Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

21. SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Further to minute 12 of the previous meeting, the Borough Solicitor advised members that in relation to the process of Ward Councillors being invited to all future public meetings, the following was already contained within the Council's Constitution:-

‘Involvement of Area Committees/Ward Councillors – whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue affecting a particular area all the members of the relevant Area Committee or Forum or (if only affecting a particular ward or wards) those members representing the ward or wards affected should, as a matter of course, be invited to attend the meeting. Similarly, whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultative exercise on a local issue, the Area Committee/Form or ward members should be notified at the outset of the exercise.’

In view of the above, it was proposed that further communication be undertaken with officers to remind them of the obligation to invite Ward Councillors to public meetings.

Resolved – That the position be noted and that the Chief Executive be requested to remind Directors/Assistant Directors of the need to invite Ward Councillors to public meetings and that this also be included within the Staff News.

22. MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Committee received the extracts of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- (a) The Executive Cabinet Member Leaders Portfolio held on 13th September, 2022;

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- (b) The Executive Cabinet Member Stronger Communities Portfolio held on 13th September, 2022.

Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00 p.m. and finished at 7.30 p.m.)

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NOTES