

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****11th February 2014**

23. **Present:** Councillors Phil Birkinshaw, Gill Carr, Tim Shepherd (vice Cave), John Clarke, Robin Franklin, Joe Hayward, Brian Mathers, Kath Mitchell, Margaret Morgan, Ralph Sixsmith, Harry Spence, Peter Starling Sarah Jane Tattershall, John Wilson along with co-opted members John Winter, Joan Whitaker and Pauline Gould. Apologies were received from the statutory co-opted member, Tony Haigh.

24. **Election of Chair for the meeting**

The Committee was informed that the Chair of the Committee had been unavoidably called away at short notice and was unable to attend. Members were asked, therefore, to appoint a chair for today's meeting.

IT WAS AGREED That Councillor Joe Hayward be appointed to chair the meeting.

25. **Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest**

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest.

26. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 11th February, 2014 were approved as a true and accurate record.

27. **Corporate Plan performance report**

The Cabinet Spokesperson for Corporate Services, Councillor Alan Gardiner and the Assistant Chief Executive (Human Resources, Performance & Partnerships), Julia Bell, were welcomed to the meeting to discuss and explain the significance of the performance information contained in the 'Sustainable Future Council' part of the Corporate Plan Performance Report for quarter 2 of 2013/14.

The Chair began the discussion by raising the issue of sickness levels. He pointed out that a significant amount of change had already taken place within the Council during recent years, with more to come as a result of the budget reductions that still have to be made. These changes could be a very stressful experience for those who had been affected or who were worried that they might be affected by them. He asked if there was any information about what had been the impact of organisational and service reductions on sickness levels. He also asked what incentives the Council had in place to help keep employees fit for work, especially in terms of their mental health.

Members were told that there had been some instances of stress related illness among employees. The Committee was told that the Council was keen to do all that it could to help those suffering from stress related illness and prevent others from

becoming ill. A robust stress management policy had been put in place, and as part of this managers were asked to carry out risk assessments to try and find out who was most vulnerable, so that appropriate support could be provided to them. A new 'Intervention and Wellbeing' post had been created to help managers support those staff who were suffering from stress. Care was taken to ensure employees on long term sick were correctly treated when staff were placed at 'at risk' as a result of a reorganisation.

Following on from this, the meeting also heard that a relatively low number of staff had received Performance and Development Reviews (P&DR). This low take up, it was explained, had been largely caused by technical problems with the online systems that had been used. These had now been overcome and the aim was for 100% of staff to receive P&DR's.

In response to information about work experience opportunities with the Council, it was explained that schools are actively involved in the process and there are chances to combine apprenticeships with study at, for example, Barnsley College.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee welcomed the progress on P&DR's and the action taken to protect staff from the impact of stress on their health and wellbeing.

IT WAS AGREED

That the Committee note the performance information contained in the Corporate Plan Performance Report and return to this at a later date.

28. Changing health service provision in the borough

The Committee then looked at the potential changes to health service in the borough being developed by the South & West Yorkshire NHS Trust (SWYFT). The trust, it was explained, was responsible for providing all the general nursing and care services, along with mental health services, across West and South Yorkshire. Members were reminded that the trust had undertaken an extensive consultation exercise on this and their 'vision' had been explained in overall terms at an 'All Members Information Brief' or seminar, held in November of last year.

The Barnsley District Director for the South & West Yorkshire NHS Trust, Sean Rayner, was welcomed to the meeting in order to explain the trust's plans and what the future shape of services in the borough might be.

He began by setting out the difficult financial position that the trust will face over next few years and especially the need to make about £12m of cost savings.

The consultation exercise had been carried out in order to help determine how the trust ought to change the way in which it works to help make these savings. He explained that the following key principles emerged from the consultation exercise:

- There is a strong belief that services should be 'person centred' - designed around the needs of individuals and should focus on helping them to achieve their potential, rather than their impairment or disability;

- More use should be made of technology to help people access services on-line, for instance by making greater use of 'telehealth'
- There needs to be greater integration between the different agencies to provide more joined up services centred around the individual.
- Ideally, services should be provided as soon as they are needed by people, with the minimum of delays.
- There should be a choice of services available
- There needs to be more support to carers.

Mr Rayner stated that these principles would be adopted and would form the basis for how the trust's services are remodelled. Some progress, he stated, had already been made towards this. For example, Moorland court was previously a day centre for long term mental health service users which has now been transformed into a 'recovery college'. He also pointed out that the trust was co-operating with other bodies, including the council, to 'co-produce services' - which would both better meet the needs of users and be more cost effective. Intermediate Care Services are being reviewed along with treatment services both following hospital discharge and services to prevent unnecessary hospital admission.

Mr Rayner went on to explain that following on from the consultation exercise, detailed plans for remodelling the way in which the trust works were now being drawn-up. The Committee was informed that specific proposals for change will have emerged by March. Mr Rayner made it clear that the trust was trying to minimise the impact of any changes on front line services by reviewing how it can carry out its back office, administrative, functions more efficiently. The aim is that the impact on front line services will be minimised

Members of the Committee acknowledged that the proposed changes would be very significant and that it would be important to keep them under review; and especially to assess the potential impact on Barnsley's communities. Members also noted that the Safeguarding Our Communities Task & Finish Group was currently investigating how effective the safeguarding arrangements are for people being cared for in their own homes. The Group would be keen to find out how far any changes would contribute to this and would, it was made clear, seek to discuss them with SWYFT. My Rayner welcomed this.

IT WAS AGREED

That Sean Rayner be thanked for setting the current position on the SWYFT reorganisation and that the South & West Yorkshire NHS trust be invited to the next meeting in order to explain and discuss the detailed re-organisation proposals that would affect the borough.

29. Impact of welfare reform on vulnerable people

The Committee received an oral report from the Equalities Manager, Julian Horsler, on the: 'My Barnsley Too' conference, held on the 3rd December 2013. This conference had looked at the impact of welfare reform on vulnerable groups and in particular disabled people. Members were reminded that the Committee had considered the impact of welfare reform at its meeting in December. It had learned

that these reforms were expected to have a disproportionate impact on disabled people, especially in terms of reductions to their incomes as a result of benefit changes.

Mr Horsler explained that a number of key points emerged from the conference. These focused on what the different agencies ought to do, but also on what disabled people need to do for themselves. In particular, that:

- The different agencies should listen to and work with disabled people to help them cope with the pace of change. Better advice services would be required in order to help disabled people to understand the welfare reform services and what they would mean to them;
- More needs to be done to help disabled people develop the skills and abilities that would enable them to gain employment;
- Many disabled people feel that they are suffering from a 'double stigma', both in terms of being disabled and being seen as dependent on welfare or as 'scroungers'. More needs to be done to challenge this stereotype;
- Disabled people require a stronger 'voice' and in order to do this they need to work more closely together.

The Committee welcomed the update on the conference. During their discussion, members discussed employment prospects for disabled people and in particular whether both the private and public sectors are doing enough to support them so that they can both gain and remain in employment. Although it is difficult to be clear on this, there was, it was explained, some anecdotal evidence that smaller organisations tended to be more supportive than larger ones.

Members felt that the conference had been an important event which raised some very significant issues about the impact of welfare reform on disabled people. The Committee made it clear that it would like to consider the final report on the conference and to then monitor what impact welfare reform has on disabled people. This was seen as a potential issue for the Committee to look at as part of its 2014/15 work programme.

IT WAS AGREED

(a) that the Committee receive and consider the final report of the: 'My Barnsley Too' conference at a future meeting; and

(b) that further consideration be given to including an investigation into the impact of welfare reform on vulnerable groups, and especially the impact on disabled people in the Committee's 2014/15 work programme.

30. Growing the Economy Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered a report setting out the findings and recommendations of the Growing the Economy Task and Finish Group into whether our approach to regenerating the town centre has been successful. A member of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Peter Starling, began by explaining that the group had learned that:

(a) Much has been done to enhance the appeal of the town centre to visitors, such as the new Barnsley Pals square and the Experience Barnsley museum;

(b) Vacancy levels in town centre commercial properties were low and occupancy rates have recently increased - although there remain some places where retail property is not in high demand;

(c) The Council has successfully used incentives to attract businesses into the properties which it owns in the town centre. It has also supported local town centre businesses by providing incentives such as 'My Barnsley' and special offer voucher schemes. These have helped to maintain and improve the numbers visiting the area.

The Task and Finish Group, he stated, felt that:

(i) The market remains a very significant part of the town centre and represents a unique attraction that people from within and outside the borough visit;

(ii) Although 'special markets' and other events in the town centre do help to bring people into the town centre who might not otherwise visit, they can adversely affect the business of long term traders. A balance needs to be struck to make sure that everyone benefits;

(iii) It is important that we make early progress on redeveloping the Market. If necessary, a strategy which focuses on its redevelopment - with other initiatives following on - should be adopted in order to make sure that there is no stagnation or loss of traders or reduction in the number of visitors.

(iv) It is important to properly 'market' or promote the Market so as to highlight the wide range of goods and products it can supply. In particular, members welcomed the opportunity for market traders to use on-line promotional activity in partnership with Council.

(v) Further improvements should be made to the signage in the town centre. There have been significant improvements in recent years, but more could be done.

(vi) It is important that the Market continues to attract both young and older people. But in order to do this, the Market 'offer' needs to be enhanced so that it is attractive to a wide range of visitors.

(vi) Car parking capacity in the town centre should be maintained to help make sure that it continues to be attractive to both new and existing visitors.

(vii) The Town Centre needs a wider range of attractions, such as cinemas and restaurants, in order to attract families who then could become regular visitors.

Councillor Starling thanked everyone who had participated in the investigation.

The Committee discussed the Task and Finish Group's findings and recommendations at length. There was a general consensus that progress should

be made on improving the Market over the next few years and that early action would help to end any sense of uncertainty about what was going to happen. There was a discussion about what impact car parking charges had on the number of visitors to the town centre. Although it was noted that some free places at the weekend were probably used by staff working in town centre businesses, the free places undoubtedly helped to attract visitors.

IT WAS AGREED That the Committee endorse the findings of the Task and Finish Group and the Chair be invited to report these to the Council's Cabinet.