

**At a meeting of the SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE held in CITY HALL, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor D.E. Snowdon in the Chair

Councillors Butler, Doyle, Hartnack, Heron, N. MacKnight, Mann, Mullen and D. Snowdon

Also in attendance:-

Mr Jon Beaney, Senior Corporate Strategy Officer, Corporate Services Directorate  
Mr Chris Binding, Local Democracy Reporter  
Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Ms Liz St Louis, Assistant Director of Smart Cities

Mr Jon Ritchie, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Ms Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny, Mayoral and Members' Support Co-ordinator, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Mrs Christine Tilley, Community Governance Services Team Leader, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Committee taking place in City Hall and requested that they continue to wear face coverings to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hodson, D. MacKnight, O'Brien, P. Smith and Thornton.

**Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2021**

**Internal Communications**

Councillor Hartnack commented that the point he had raised regarding the Customer Services Network had not been recorded as he had meant it in that he had asked had any assessments been undertaken by the Council on staff working from home.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the above clarification.

## **Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

### **Reference from Cabinet – 16 November 2021 - Capital Programme Planning 2022/2023 to 2025/2026**

Councillor Doyle made an open declaration in relation to paragraph 1.4.3 of the report regarding Sunnyside Regeneration due to his employment and direct involvement with clients in the project.

### **Item 10 – Notice of Key Decisions**

Councillor Doyle made an open declaration on item number 210728/613 due to his employer being involved in the project.

### **Variation of Agenda**

The Chair suggested that items 6,7 and 8 on the agenda be considered prior to items 4 and 5 to allow those Officers to leave the meeting and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the agenda be varied as above accordingly.

### **City Plan “Sunderland 2019-2030” and Indicative Timeline Assurance Process**

The Executive Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (copy circulated) seeking the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee’s consideration of the details of the City Plan and Indicative Timeline assurance process and the proposed updating of the Plan and Timeline.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr Jon Beaney, Senior Corporate Strategy Officer, Corporate Services Directorate briefed the Committee on the report and the workshop held with the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on 30 November. He advised that the Committee’s considerations at the workshop had been used to refine the final content of the updated Indicative Timeline. A report was to be presented to the 11 January 2022 Cabinet meeting with a view to the proposed updated City Plan 2019-2030 and Indicative Timeline being adopted by Full Council at its meeting on 26 January 2022.

In response to Councillor Mullen, Mr Beaney advised that the Cabinet Secretary was lead Member for the Smart Agenda, however aspects would be covered in other portfolios.

Councillor Butler queried whether the Council was looking to stop printing agendas for Council Committee meetings and advised that he longer wished to receive a paper copy of any agendas.

Mr Jon Ritchie, Executive Director of Corporate Services advised that they were looking to ask Councillors to opt out of receiving a paper agenda, although it was recognised that some Members would wish to continue to receive a paper agenda for various personal reasons.

Councillor Mann commented that the City Plan workshop had been useful and that she was pleased to see new purpose-built premises for Sunningdale school and the replacement Hetton School to open on the timeline for 2023-24 and enquired whether they were on target.

Mr Beaney advised that they were on schedule and might even be ready in advance of their scheduled date.

Councillor Mann referred to the entry that the City would be carbon neutral by 2030 and suggested that activities be scheduled leading up to this date to progress it and provide evidence of what was taking place.

Mr Beaney advised that there was a detailed plan behind this but took on board the point Councillor Mann was making so that people could see and understand the difference they could make and that he would take this back and work with colleagues to show progress on the timeline leading up to 2030.

Full consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the details of the City Plan and Indicative Timeline assurance process and the proposed updating of the Plan and Timeline be noted, the comments detailed above be taken on board and further updates be provided to the Committee as and when appropriate.

### **Performance Management Update – Quarter 2 of 2021/22**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with the Corporate Performance Report for Quarter 2 of 2021/22.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms Liz St Louis, Assistant Director of Smart Cities, advised that the Council's Corporate Performance Management Framework was aligned to the Sunderland City Plan 2019 – 2030 and to the three key themes of the City Plan, Dynamic City, Healthy City and Vibrant City, as well as including the organisational health indicators. The report set out the progress made to the end of Quarter 2 of 2021/22.

Ms St Louis took the Committee through the summary for the three key themes of Dynamic Smart City, Healthy Smart City and Vibrant Smart City of the Sunderland City Plan, highlighting commitments, achievements and progress made for each key theme, as well as performance against each of the aspirations for each theme and against the additional Council indicators for good organisational health, productive and innovative working, strong financial management and a Council ready for the future.

The Chair invited Members to raise questions and comments on each of the key themes in turn.

In respect of the Dynamic Smart City Theme the following were raised.

Councillor Mullen commented that the Opposition Group rooms were totally inadequate for the size of the Groups at the new City Hall. The room his Group had

been provided with could accommodate a maximum of 3 people and his Group was made up of 19 Members.

Mr Ritchie said he would take this away and get a response.

Councillor Mullen asked whether the Council pursued sponsorship for Council events such as the Airshow and queried the information detailed in the report that net internal migration was declining as he stated this seemed at odds with the information he had been provided with from another area of the Council.

Ms St Louis confirmed that there was sponsorship around Council events and that she would ask colleagues to provide further information.

Mr Ritchie highlighted the detailed explanation clarifying the position regarding migration which was detailed in the last paragraph of page 70 of the agenda.

Councillor Doyle asked how the City Centre was defined when the number of people living there was talked about; what were the parameters being used.

Mr Ritchie stated that it was based on super output areas and that he would provide the information.

Councillor Doyle asked for further details in relation to the timescales associated with the 15 properties identified to have Category 1 hazards in the city.

Councillor Doyle referred to the 2,664 new city centre office jobs which had been created since April 2019, commenting that it was difficult to square this with the low take up of the Software Centre, which he felt was not going to be enough to keep it viable and he asked what the new capacity of the Software Centre would be.

Mr Ritchie advised that the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee agenda papers could be shared with Councillor Doyle and that significant work was going on to accommodate a new tenant at the Centre.

Councillor D. Snowdon, Chairman of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee advised that the new tenant was the DWP and that this information had been embargoed until the previous week. The Council was working with the business centres and he commented that the Washington Business Centre was doing quite well.

Members then raised questions on the Healthy Smart City theme.

Councillor Mann referred to the proportion of adults who were overweight which was getting worse and asked if communication to residents on the Everyone Active 12-week free initiative could be improved.

Councillor Mann commented that the report highlighted that only 97.5% of 2.5-year-old checks had been carried out in the timescale.

In respect of the above, Ms St Louis advised that she would provide information around healthy weight and acknowledged that communications could always be improved. With regards to 2.5-year-old checks, this was a very high level of visits which had been carried out and the target had been 95%, however the Executive

Director of Public Health and Integrated Commissioning would be able to provide further information on this.

Councillor D. Snowdon asked for clarification in terms of the graphs on page 72 of the agenda regarding the numbers of successful completions of adult alcohol users and also in the second graph on YDAP alcohol users, as to whether there was any reason for the dips in April, May and June 21.

Councillor N. MacKnight commented that there were 2-3 additional suicides in the city per year and asked how awareness could be provided within the city of mental health first aiders and how businesses could be encouraged to take this up.

Councillor Heron highlighted the poor bus links from the Coalfields to Sunderland and the problems people had looking for work/getting to work. She acknowledged that the bus companies were private businesses but asked whether there was something the City Council could do to encourage the bus companies to provide better/different services.

Ms St Louis advised that Mr Mark Jackson, Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation was doing a lot of work with the bus companies and suggested that he be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to brief Members.

Mr Ritchie also suggested that the report to Cabinet in November which detailed advanced bus schemes be circulated to Members by Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer.

Councillor Butler referred to the proportion of adults who were overweight or obese and pointed out that the figures were measured on body mass index. He commented that he felt that this was not accurate and that a better measure was needed. He also commented that the Council needed to be stricter on the number of takeaways opening in deprived areas.

Councillor Butler commented that 250m of cycleways was quite a small number and that they needed to be maintained better. He stated that it was important to get people interested and maintain that interest to spread the message to others. He was keen to promote park runs and the Couch to 5k programme and organise a parkrun.

Mr Ritchie suggested that Mr Mark Jackson, Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation bring back reports on bus services and cycleways to update the Committee.

Ms St Louis advised that there was an app for walks which was 'Active Sunderland'.

Councillor Mann commented that it was about getting the message out to people to do these things and showing them how they could do them.

In respect of the Vibrant Smart City Theme the following were raised.  
Councillor Hartnack commented that it was pleasing to note that 96% of people felt safe from crime in their local area.

Councillor Hartnack referred to anti-social elements of driving and the notice of motion passed at the full Council meeting to target this and the need for the Council to address the issues raised and move forward with this.

Councillors Butler, Mullen and Hartnack each raised issues as to how data was being recorded relating to road traffic accidents/incidents and commented that a system was needed which recorded the information correctly.

Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer advised that a report on the Safer Sunderland Partnership was scheduled for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and Members would have an opportunity to raise the issues at this time with Chief Officers and the Police.

The Chair stated that there would be an opportunity to ask about this at the next meeting and look at where things were with the Notice of Motion.

Full consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the information provided on corporate performance in the report and the comments made, be received and noted and responses be provided to the questions raised, as detailed above. In addition, an opportunity be provided for Members to raise issues regarding the recording of data as detailed above when considering the Safer Sunderland Partnership report.

## **Complaints and Feedback**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) providing the Committee with information regarding compliments, complaints and feedback received by the council.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

Ms Liz St Louis, Assistant Director of Smart Cities briefed the Committee on the report advising that it was the report for Quarter 2 of the financial year April 2021 to March 2022 and presented an overview across the full range of complaints and feedback received by the Council.

Ms St Louis referred the Committee to Part A, the Complaints and Compliments overview by type received which provided a departmental or company breakdown.

Ms St Louis referred Members to Part B which set out the procedures by which the Council and its companies operated.

Ms St Louis referred to Part C Appendix 1 highlighting the 235 compliments received by the Council during the quarter. Some examples of compliments received in Quarter 1 were detailed in the report which covered a range of services and expressed customers' appreciation.

Ms St Louis referred Members to Appendix 2 of the report which detailed that there were 6 complaints concluded by the Ombudsman for quarter 2.

Ms St Louis referred to Appendix 3 which covered the number of Stage One corporate complaints and showed comparative data for the previous two years. She pointed out that there had been 790 complaints received at Stage One during the quarter which was a 2% decrease on the same quarter last year and that they were broken down into Directorates with 641 being in respect of the Neighbourhoods Directorate. She pointed out that of the 641 complaints, 600 were in respect of Environmental Services.

In terms of Stage two complaints, 11 reviews had been undertaken during the course of the quarter and none of those were upheld in full, 5 were upheld in part and 6 were not upheld.

Ms St Louis referred to Appendix 4 which provided a summary of Adult Social Care complaints of which there were 27 received during the quarter. A breakdown was shown alongside the nature of the complaint. Out of the 27 complaints, 4 were upheld in full, 10 had some element upheld, 8 were not upheld, 2 were either not eligible, withdrawn, or classified as 'other' and 3 were ongoing with outcomes not yet known.

Ms St Louis stated that Appendix 5 provided a sample of stage 1 complaints received in quarter 2; the outcomes varied from not upheld, partially upheld and upheld.

Ms St Louis stated that Appendix 6 provided a summary of compliments and complaints for Sunderland Care and Support received in quarter 2. There had been 39 compliments received in quarter 2 and a summary was provided in the report. There were 23 complaints during the period and details of the those were provided in the report. Ms St Louis pointed out that over half, 52.2% of the complaints were not upheld, 26.1% were upheld in part, 17.4% were upheld in full and 4.3% remained in the process of being resolved.

Ms St Louis stated that Together for Children had received 121 compliments and 130 initial contacts in the last six months and by responding to contacts at the outset, they had helped 107 of their customers to receive satisfactory responses and resolutions informally with only 23 contacts progressing to a formal stage one complaint. They had received 4 children's social care stage 2 complaints of which 1 had progressed to a stage 3.

Councillor Butler queried why there were less complaints about Environmental Services in the Washington and Coalfields wards, asking whether residents there got a better service or whether they simply did not complain.

Ms St Louis advised that she would need Environmental Services colleagues to provide a response.

Councillor Mullen referred to the Environmental Services complaints in Barnes ward and asked what they related to and how were related to rat problems.

Councillor Mullen referred to the 34 parking complaints and asked how many related to resident complaints over the recently initiated CPMS Scheme where the Council had forgotten to tell residents about it and it had been badly handled.

Councillor N. MacKnight commented that he was pleased to see a robust process for dealing with complaints in Children's Services.

Councillor Mann asked why complaints in respect Environmental Services made up 94% of the complaints against the Neighbourhoods Directorate and why West Sunderland had the most complaints by Area Committee about Environmental Services. She added that this needed to be addressed as the situation was not improving.

Mr Ritchie advised that the above queries would all be raised with Mr Graham Scanlon who was the Assistant Director in charge of the service, however he pointed out that this needed to be viewed in context as in any quarter the Council would service approximately 1.6m containers and therefore the number of complaints represented only 0.03% of activity for the service area.

The Chair thanked Ms St Louis for her reports and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the information provided regarding compliments, complaints and feedback received by the Local Authority and that responses to the issues raised above be obtained and forwarded to the Members concerned.

#### **Reference from Cabinet – 7 December 2021 - Budget Planning Framework and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022/2023 – 2025/2026**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) seeking the views of the Committee on a report of the Executive Director of Corporate Services, considered by the Cabinet on 7 December 2021 which:

- Provided an update, since the Budget Planning Framework and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) report to Cabinet in October 2021, on the key factors influencing the development of the Council's financial plans into the medium term;
- Set out the updated headlines and context for the MTFP 2022/2023 to 2025/2026;
- Set out provisional budget savings proposals for 2022/2023 to assist in meeting the current budget gap, as a basis for budget consultation, prior to the receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/2023; and
- Set out the consultation / communication strategy for the budget 2022/2023.

Members' views were requested in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

Mr Jon Ritchie, Executive Director of Corporate Services briefed the Committee on the report highlighting paragraph 3.4 concerning Central Government Funding for Local Government, the Medium Term Financial Plan detailed at paragraph 3.5 and revised gap over the 4-year period 2022/2023 to 2025/2026, together with the Revenue Savings Proposals 2022/2023 at paragraph 3.8 and approach to addressing the overall funding gap.



In response to Councillor N. MacKnight, Mr Ritchie stated that there had been a vast array of funding schemes for COVID-19, some had been national schemes and some had been local schemes. With regards to the general COVID pressures and grant funding they were still reporting a £6m gap approximately.

Councillor Mullen raised issue with the Let's Talk Budget Consultation commenting that they were loaded to achieve a particular response and that there were other ways to achieve savings.

Mr Ritchie replied by saying that the questions had been run past the Communications Department but he would take on board Councillor Mullen's point in future and that he was happy to take feedback.

Councillor Mullen raised issues with the SLM Leisure Joint Venture and the safety of their Gyms and equipment and enquired whether, these kind of issues were considered as part of the contract and future funding.

Mr Ritchie asked that Councillor Mullen provide details of the particular safety issue and gym where the particular incident had occurred and stated that he would follow this up.

Councillor D. Snowdon referred to the cost pressures anticipated by TfC which the report stated were largely driven by external factors. He stated that the number of children was rising, that they had failed to deliver on budget and queried where the savings would come from.

Mr Ritchie stated that growth had been put in the budget and it was expected that TfC would start working towards this. They were looking at different proposals including service improvements which would give cost savings as well. They were parking the cost of the contract because of growing numbers and the level of care expected.

Councillor Mann queried section 3.8.9 in terms of more information on the Events Base Budget and an update on events that were to take place.

Mr Ritchie stated that he would ensure Councillor Mann was provided with this information.

Full consideration having been given to the report it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee acknowledged the information contained in the report and recognised the continuing budget pressures that the Council faces. The Committee also acknowledged that a number of funding uncertainties remained as well as the continued impact, on a number of budget areas, from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Committee was satisfied that it would continue to receive updates on the budget including the outcome from the budget consultation process.

Finally, the Committee wanted to thank Members and Officers for their continued efforts in developing a balanced budget in these difficult times.

## **Reference from Cabinet – 16 November 2021 - Capital Programme Planning 2022/2023 to 2025/2026**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) seeking the views of the Committee on a report of the Executive Director of Corporate Services (copy attached), considered by Cabinet on 16 November 2021 which detailed:

- an update on the level of capital resources and commitments for the forthcoming financial year within the current approved capital programme; and
- additional capital new start project proposals for inclusion in the Capital Programme 2022/2023 to 2025/2026 to be reported to Cabinet in February 2022.

Members' views were requested in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

Mr Jon Ritchie, Executive Director of Corporate Services briefed the Committee on the report and highlighted section 7 which detailed additional capital project proposals.

Councillor Mann referred to the refurbishment of community centres and commented that Pennywell Community Centre was never assessed.

Mr Ritchie advised that major works were included in the report and there was a general maintenance budget for other issues. It depended on the terms of the lease and it would need to be looked at to see what had been specifically negotiated for the Centre. He would be happy to let Councillor Mann know.

Councillor Heron commented that she was pleased to see the modernisation of Washington and Houghton libraries included in the proposed projects.

Full consideration having been given to the report it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee haD considered the capital resources and commitments as well as the additional project proposals and was satisfied with the report and had no further comments to make.

## **Work Programme 2021/22**

The Scrutiny, Mayoral and Member Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching, for Members' information, the thematic Scrutiny Committee work programmes for 2021/22 and providing an opportunity to review the Committee's own work programme for 2021/22.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

Mr Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer advised that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's next meeting had been brought forward to 5<sup>th</sup> January to consider a report on partnership arrangements to integrate Health and Care in Sunderland in readiness for the establishment of the Integrated Care System and to enable the Committee to feed in any comments to Cabinet at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January.

Mr Cummings also mentioned the need to postpone the next meeting of this Committee from 13<sup>th</sup> January to a date later in the month to avoid a clash with the Extraordinary meeting of the Council arranged to bestow the Freedom of the City on Sunderland Association Football Club 1973 FA Cup Winning Team Members. He advised that Members would be informed of the revised arrangements for the meeting in due course.

Full consideration having been given to the report it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the above information, the Scrutiny Committees' work programmes for 2021/22 and the variations to these work programmes be noted, together with the scrutiny budget position.

## **Notice of Key Decisions**

The Scrutiny, Mayoral and Member Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated), providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28-day period from 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2021.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

9. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

(Signed) D. E. SNOWDON,  
Chairman.