

# Minutes

## Corporate Policy Development Committee 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023



### Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
M Ault	No	S Rajeev (Vice-Chairman)	Apologies
J Bond	Yes	M Staines	No
G Courtauld (Chairman)	Yes	B Taylor	Yes
J Edwards	Yes	P Thorogood	Apologies
M Fincken	Yes	E Williams	Apologies
J Hayes	Apologies	T Williams	Yes (from 7.25pm)
L Jefferis	Yes		

### 1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** There were no Interests declared.

For the clarification of newly appointed Committee Members, E Wisbey, Legal and Governance Manager, advised that Members were only required to declare an Interest if it related to a business item on the Agenda for the meeting.

### 2 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** There were no Minutes for signing as this marked the first formal meeting of the Corporate Policy Development Committee (the Committee) following the Elections on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

### 3 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** There were no statements made, or questions asked.

### 4 **DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023/24**

**INFORMATION:** The report provided Members with an outline of the anticipated future Work Programme of the Committee. The Draft Work Programme (the Work Programme) had been assembled based on the topic suggestions made by Members during the informal meeting of the Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023, and further comments had been invited from Members following the meeting.

During the informal meeting, a topic suggestion that had received widespread support from both Members and Officers alike was the 'Corporate Strategy 2024/28' (the Strategy). It was recognised that a review of the Strategy would be of benefit to the organisation given the impact of the document on policy development across the

Council's services.

Members were advised that the Work Programme was intended to be a living document, with updates added accordingly and in agreement with the Chairman of the Committee throughout the Civic Year.

Members were then asked to make any comments or suggested amendments in respect of the topics and Work Programme, which would be finalised following the meeting and presented to Cabinet at a later date.

The following comments were made:-

- It was suggested that the topics be grouped into three key areas alongside scrutiny of the Corporate Strategy. For example, the suggestion of 'Climate Change Policies' could be linked in with '...Recycling Targets,' 'Colne Valley...' and '...Public Transport' to form one overarching area. The topics of 'Anti-social behaviour...', 'Bullying in Schools' and 'Engagement with younger generations...' could then form a second overarching topic area. Finally, the topic of '...Levelling Up' could also be linked in with rural localities, and 'Communication...' could then form a separate topic area.
- The possibility of conducting scrutiny through the medium of Task and Finish Groups or "Sub-Groups" was raised. In response, Members were advised that once Cabinet had approved the Work Programme and the topic suggestions had been confirmed, the Committee would then be able to decide how best to approach its policy reviews. A potential caveat was the time and resource implications of undertaking Task and Finish Groups alongside the main 'scrutiny' review topic: any such approaches would need to be manageable within the stipulated review timescales.
- The Chairman agreed that with the approach of 'grouping' the topic suggestions together to make them more manageable but added that some would perhaps be better addressed as 'standalone' topics.
- The Corporate Strategy 2023/24 would be the first topic for review by the Committee, given the widespread support it had received during the informal meeting.
- E Wisbey, Legal and Governance Manager, advised Members that in terms of its development, the Corporate Strategy 2023/24 was in its infancy. The Work Programme of the Committee was based on the anticipated timeframe for the emergence of the Corporate Strategy as this would allow the Committee to oversee the development of the Strategy through to its eventual implementation.
- Although the timetable of meetings for the year had already been agreed, additional meetings of the Committee could be arranged if Members felt it was necessary to do so. Any such arrangements would need to be undertaken in conjunction with the Chairman and the Lead Officers for the reviews.
- In response to Members' expression of interest to take direct action regarding Climate Change, Members were reminded that the purpose of the Committee was not to 'fix' the issue of Climate Change but to examine the Council's policies in this regard. For example, in reviewing the Council's Climate Change Strategy, the Committee would be required to review the effectiveness of the policy, not seek to implement new measures as a result of the policy.

- Members were advised that “Street Cleaning” as a topic would be a valid not be a valid addition to the Work Programme as it sat outside the ‘policy’ remit of the Committee. However, Members were advised that Street Cleaning alone would sit outside the Terms of Reference for the Committee unless it was from a policy perspective.
- For Members’ clarification, it was explained that the Committee was required to explore the Council’s existing policies, looking at what it does or does not currently have in place, the effectiveness of those policies and where they were found to be ineffective, what evidence there was in support which could help inform the eventual recommendations to Cabinet. In submitting any topics for potential inclusion within the Work Programme, Members should explain why scrutiny of a particular issue would help to support future policy development in that area.
- The majority of the Council’s policies were within the jurisdiction of the Cabinet. The purpose of ‘scrutiny committee’ was to provide a ‘critical friend’ to the Cabinet and make recommendations accordingly.
- Governance Officers would support Members should they wish to undertake their own research outside of the agreed meeting dates which could then be fed into the Committee’s review.
- The Committee’s role in comparison with that of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee (CSC) was queried. In response, the Legal and Governance Manager advised that although there was a degree of overlap between the two Committees, the remit of the CSC was that of the traditional ‘Overview and Scrutiny’ Committee, which included ‘Call In’ powers and reviewing the performance of the organisation (e.g. during the budget setting process). The primary role of the Corporate Policy Development Committee was to explore the Council’s existing and emerging ‘policy’ proposals.
- The current ‘Scrutiny’ Committee arrangements were new to the organisation and would be a learning process.

In response to the comments raised by Members, the following actions were agreed:

- In respect of the Corporate Strategy 2023/24, Governance Officers agreed to review the timetable of meetings to see if any additional meeting dates would be required and liaise with Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager, who had been identified as the Lead Officer.
- Members collectively agreed that the Committee’s first ‘review’ topic should be the Corporate Strategy 2023/24 (this was subject to the approval of Cabinet). The remaining ‘review’ topics would then be grouped into four ‘themes,’ as follows (in no particular order):
  - ‘Colne Valley as part of the District,’ the ‘Council’s progress on Levelling Up’ and ‘Public Transport;’
  - ‘Communication between the Council and Residents’ and ‘Engagement with the Younger Generation in the Civic World and Elections;’
  - ‘Anti-Social Behaviour across the District’ and ‘Bullying in Schools,’ and;
  - ‘Climate Change Policies and Recycling.’

It was agreed that ‘Tourism’ as a topic would be discontinued.

Governance Officers agreed to amend the Draft Work Programme in order to reflect the changes as listed within the Minutes. A further column would also be added to the Work Programme to show the Committee's preferred approach for review delivery (e.g. by way of Task and Finish Group) which the Cabinet could then consider.

- Governance Officers agreed to start circulating invitations to the Lead Officers as identified (e.g. Tracey Headford).

**DECISION:** That Members:-

- 1) Agreed the Topic Suggestions and Draft Work Programme, subject to the amendments discussed during the meeting; and
- 2) Agreed to delegate authority to the Chairman of the Committee to finalise the topic suggestions and Draft Work Programme following the discussions of the Committee during the meeting.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To provide an outline of the proposed Work Programme of the Committee for 2023/24 before its finalisation by the Chairman and subsequent presentation to Cabinet for consideration.

## 5 **DECISION PLANNER – 1<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2023 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

**INFORMATION:** Members considered the Decision Planner for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

**DECISION:** That the Decision Planner for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023 was noted.

## 6 **CABINET RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY REVIEWS**

**INFORMATION:** Members were informed that the Cabinet had provided formal responses to the Scrutiny Reviews into 'Litter Management Across the Braintree District' and 'Markets and Associated Events' at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023. A link to the Minutes of the meeting had been included as part of the Agenda for Members' information.

**DECISION:** That the Cabinet responses for the Scrutiny Reviews into 'Litter Management Across the Braintree District' and 'Markets and Associated Events' were noted.

## 7 **LGIU SCRUTINY TRAINING**

**INFORMATION:** Members were advised that the following training sessions has been arranged in agreement with the LGIU:-

- Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 7.00pm - Introduction to Scrutiny
- Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 7.00pm - Questioning Skills

Members of the Committee were requested to make a note of the dates. The Scrutiny Officer would e-mail all 'Scrutiny' Members with further details regarding the training sessions over the upcoming weeks.

**DECISION:** The proposed LGIU Scrutiny training dates were noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.00pm.

Councillor G Courtauld  
(Chairman)