

Minutes

Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee

17th November 2021 at 7.15pm



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Baugh	Yes	Mrs J Pell	Yes
G Courtauld (Vice-Chairman)	Apologies	Mrs J Sandum	Apologies
A Hensman	Yes	P Thorogood	Apologies
Mrs M Cunningham (Chairman)	Yes	Mrs L Walters	Yes
T McArdle	Yes		

14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

15 **MINUTES**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee held on 13th October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

16 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

17 **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES – DRAFT ‘SCRUTINY’ REPORT**

INFORMATION: Members first gave consideration to the information which had been provided by Emma Goodings, Head of Planning and Economic Growth in response to the questions raised previously by the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Cunningham and Councillor Mrs Sandum in respect of enforcement procedures within the Planning and Landscape Services teams. In keeping with the Terms of Reference for the Committee, Members were reminded to consider the information provided from the perspective of the Council’s partnership arrangements for enforcement and the effectiveness of this.

Before giving consideration to the draft report, Members were reminded to bear in mind the Terms of Reference and the information collected from the evidence gathering sessions over the course of the Scrutiny Review in order to ensure that any recommendations brought forward were meaningful and evidence-based.

Members were then invited to suggest any ideas they had in respect of potential recommendations for inclusion within the draft report. The following points were made:

- The Member Reference Group (MRG) referred to within the report was tasked with examining planning enforcement at the Council. Although the Chairman had had sight of the report of the MRG, it was stressed that this work was separate from that of the Committee's. Furthermore, the report was still in a draft format and as such, it would not be appropriate for Members to discuss the contents of the report in the public domain. Members were then reminded that the Committee was tasked with examining partnership working on enforcement at the Council, as opposed to one specific area of enforcement such as planning.
- The Authority's 'Powers' in respect of planning enforcement were discretionary and there to be utilised when it was appropriate to do so (e.g. in response to unauthorised development). It would be difficult for Members to make a substantial recommendation to work with a specific charity or partner on an enforcement related issue, particularly around planning; however, Members were advised that a potential recommendation that they could consider was to request that other, more relevant services at the Council explored the benefits of sharing information with their 'enforcement' partners further.
- A possible recommendation regarded the Council's website and whether it included information to be able to signpost and allow potential partners, both internal and external, to work with the Authority or across multiple services more effectively. In regard to cross-department working, Members could also recommend that relevant Services assign a group of Authorised Officers with knowledge across teams who could assist multiple teams during enforcement proceedings.
- Another potential recommendation was to request Services who used enforcement on a regular basis to review their webpages on the Council's website in order to ensure the information was robust and able to signpost residents and other Partners accordingly, should they have any queries. In addition to this, it was also acknowledged that members of the public were one of the Organisation's key partners; as such, allowing the public quick and easy access to necessary information was of high importance.
- A potential question to raise with the relevant officers was around how different Services within the organisation could work more effectively with their partners on enforcement matters, and the impact that an increase in resources would have in regard to partnership working.
- In regard to the Revenue and Benefits service, it was suggested that there be a Members' Evening whereby all Members were given the opportunity to attend and learn more about Council Tax procedures and what support there was available for residents who perhaps experienced difficulties with paying bills. A session such as this would increase Members' knowledge of the service and thus allow them to advise or signpost residents within their Wards more effectively.
- In respect of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), a barrier that had been identified in relation to enforcement was a lack of resources amongst some of the smaller housing associations to attend local meetings and thus address issues such as antisocial behaviour. In light of this issue, a possible recommendation was to encourage local housing associations to attend such meetings by emphasising the benefits of their participation in the CSP. Other Partners within the CSP such as Social Services could also be encouraged to attend meetings on a regular basis

once again, as they had previously reduced their level of participation in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Another potential recommendation revolved around the use of technology, where appropriate, to help facilitate more sustainable partnership working (e.g. through hybrid or virtual meeting platforms) by increasing the accessibility of meetings, particularly in light of the pandemic.
- In order allow the organisation to more effectively measure the success of its partnership working in regard to enforcement activity, a potential recommendation was to request Services across the Council who undertook enforcement procedures to start to record performance indicators (KPIs) against their enforcement activity (where this was not already recorded, and on the understanding that enforcement activity tended to be reactive to issues as they emerged).

The following action was agreed:

- Governance Officers agreed to explore whether the key performance indicators (KPIs) recorded in the Organisation's Quarterly Performance reports related to any enforcement activities and then report back to the Committee.

DECISION: Members noted the information provided by Emma Goodings, Head of Planning and Economic Growth in response to the queries raised by the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Cunningham and Councillor Mrs Sandum.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 7.52pm.

Councillor Mary Cunningham
(Chairman)