OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Councillors Felicity Wilson (Deputy Chair) in the Chair; Gemma Dinsdale, Jeffrey Hailes, Linda Jones-Bulman, Sam Meteer, Sam Pollen and Andy Pratt

Officers: Julie Betteridge (Director of Growth and Inclusive Communities), James Young (Scrutiny Officer), Rose Blaney (Electoral Services Officer), Janice Carroll (Community Services Manager) and Amanda Starr (Strategic Housing and Social Inclusion Manager)

Also Present: Les Finley (Housing Renewals Team Leader), Paul Cowings (Empty Homes Officer), Jan Boniface (Waste Management Officer) & Heather Holmes (Customer Services Team Leader)

OSC 20/79 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Kane.

OSC 20/80 Declarations of Interests in Agenda Items:

There were no declarations of interests made.

OSC 20/81 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019

The Scrutiny Officer noted that he was still waiting on a response from the IT Department regarding Councillor Meteer’s emails, but would make sure the issue was resolved before the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) meeting.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

OSC 20/82 Executive Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Officer informed members that the Executive noted that OSC were interested in receiving future Nuclear Position Statements, however, the Executive believed that it would be best for those to be fully scrutinised by the Strategic Nuclear Energy Board (SNEB) to avoid duplication of work.
Following a discussion, OSC decided that they would like to have future Nuclear Position Statements brought to OSC, so that comments could be made and then fed back to SNEB.

The Scrutiny Officer also informed members that the Executive decided to defer the Voluntary Living Wage report until the next Executive meeting, following a meeting which is taking place between Sellafield Ltd., the Scrutiny Officer and Councillor David Moore (as the portfolio holder for Nuclear and Corporate Services). Councillor Pollen, the Chair of the Voluntary Living Wage task and finish group, noted that he was not happy with the Executive’s decision to defer the report, noting that it was a discussion that was needed. Councillor Pollen also asked for an invitation to the meeting with Sellafield. The Chair then asked for a full report from the meeting, not including any sensitive information, to come back to OSC.

The committee then went through the Executive Forward Plan with the Scrutiny Officer noting that should any member wish for an item to come to OSC, they should inform the Scrutiny Officer. The Chair formally asked the Scrutiny Officer to keep an eye on the Climate Action Plan ahead of the next meeting in April. It was also noted that the Local Plan Preferred Options was still on schedule with no delay having been indicated.

**RESOLVED** – That,

a) The Executive Forward Plan was noted.
b) Future Nuclear Position Statements be brought to OSC for discussion and to have comments fed back to SNEB
c) The Scrutiny Officer will inform Councillor Pollen regarding his invitation to the meeting with Sellafield.
d) The Scrutiny Officer would bring the Climate Action Plan to the April OSC meeting.

**OSC 20/83 Update from Cumbria Health Scrutiny Committee**

No update available as the Cumbria Health Scrutiny Representative had sent their apologies.

**RESOLVED** – That for future meetings, all representatives provide a written report. This is to ensure that, even if the representative is unable to make the OSC meeting, members will be provided with some form of an update that they could then comment on.
OSC 20/84  Update from the Single Table Trade Union Group (STTUG) representative

Councillor Pollen gave OSC an in-depth overview of the latest STTUG meeting he attended in January. Some of the topics discussed were agile working, health and safety and supporting employees. Councillor Pollen also noted that questions are welcome by email at any time and not just at OSC meetings.

Councillor Dinsdale asked Councillor Pollen a question regarding young representatives and declared an interest as she works for Sellafield.

RESOLVED – That,

a) Councillor Pollen will submit a written report to the next OSC meeting as per the resolution in Agenda Item 5.
b) Councillor Dinsdale will send Councillor Pollen an email with her specific question so that he can respond with the relevant information.

OSC 20/85  Housing

The Housing updates came as part of the following two presentations.

OSC 20/86  Disabled Facilities Grants 2018/19 Presentation

The Strategic Housing and Inclusion Manager gave a detailed presentation on the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) 2018/2019 which informed OSC; on where the Council are in terms of giving out the Grants, what the Grants fund, the issues that the team have faced, the solutions that have been found and where the Housing team would like to be in the future.

The discussion which took place throughout the presentation provided further clarification for members on the financial aspects of the grants and the lack of impact that those aspects would have on the budget as well as the people of the Borough. There were also two proposals put forward to OSC for discussion regarding support for the further development of the grant. Which included the assurance being given by the Strategic Housing and Inclusion Manager that a fee charge of five per cent would come from the Government and not impact negatively on the most vulnerable members of the Borough.
RESOLVED: – That,

a) OSC will support the proposal to raise the officer’s discretionary limit from an additional £5,000 to £10,000 where costs are over the statutory £30,000 limit for an adaptation.
b) OSC will support the proposal to include a means test for children’s cases that exceed £30,000.
c) OSC will support the proposal to include a management charge of five percent for all DFG cases.
d) Future proposals will come in report format as well as a presentation to provide further information and clarity.

OSC 20/87 Empty Homes Presentation

The Empty Homes Office gave OSC a presentation as an overview of the work that the Officer does regarding privately owned empty homes, the processes they are bound by and the work that has already been completed to bring the homes back into use. This is a continuous operation with numerous empty homes being brought forward every three to six months, which would need a cash rich recourse to bring back into use, this makes it hard to deal with and leaves Copeland with over 1,000 empty homes.

It was also noted that since the Officer was put into place in September 2018 there have been 213 empty homes brought into use, there were only 33 having been brought back into use before the Empty Homes Officer was put into place. Also noted was the possibility of a introducing a creative solution by creating a housing co-operative for young professionals to help decrease the large quantity of empty homes. Questions were asked regarding; owner engagement and the enforced sales procedure that could be implemented once the procurement procedure has been completed.

RESOLVED: – That,

a) OSC will support the work of the Empty Homes Officer
b) OSC will support the exploration into the use of the enforced sales procedure for the worst empty homes cases through a possible pilot project.

[A five minute comfort break was taken]
**OSC 20/88  Recycling Update**

The Chair took the decision to defer this presentation until the next meeting in April due to time constraints and wishing to give the officers the sufficient amount of time to deliver a succinct presentation.

However, the officers were able to give the OSC a quick overview of the progress the waste team has made over the last year including the previous work with OSC, their current work with schools (36 schools were contacted, with nine schools having been visited to date, talking to pupils aged five to ten) as well as the visits and work with ‘Edna the Recyclephant’. The Waste Officer also highlighted the impact of litter and how to recycle properly. Members proceeded to ask the officers a few questions regarding waste collections from schools, alternative recycling routes, and further training for crews. However, the majority of questions were left until the next meeting in April when the full presentation is to be given.

**OSC 20/89  Millom Hub Verbal Update**

The Chair took the decision to defer this update until the next meeting in April due to time constraints and wishing to give the officers the sufficient amount of time to deliver a succinct presentation.

**OSC 20/90  Task and Finish Group Updates**

The Scrutiny Officer gave OSC a brief overview of the current Task and Finish groups and activities that had taken place, including the appointment of Councillor Jones-Bulman as the Chair of the Older People Task and Finish group. An emphasis was made on overall poor member attendance which needs to be improved.

**RESOLVED** – That the Chair of the Recycling Task & Finish Group would chase councillors to collect questions for the Recycling Review.

**OSC 20/91  Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Officer gave members an update of the changes that have been made to the work programme since it was added to the agenda. The Officer reminded members of the process to add a topic to future agendas.

The Chair, as a last minute note before moving onto the last agenda item and closing the meeting, gave a message of thanks to the Director of Growth and Inclusive Communities who was attending their last OSC meeting.
Date and Time of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday 6th April 2020 at 2pm in the Bainbridge Room, Copeland Centre.

The Meeting closed at 4.32 pm

Chair