

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 3 October 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor I.C.F. Swithenbank
(Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Armstrong, E.
Beynon, J.
Dunbar, C.
Dunn, E.

Gallacher, B.
Gibson, R.
Pattison, W.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

T. Kirsop
C. McEvoy
L. Pyle

S. Nicholson

Community Regeneration Manager
Executive Director of Children's Services
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
Co-ordinator
Scrutiny Co-ordinator

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors E. Cartie and J. Reid.

25. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Communities and Place OSC held on 25 July 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

26. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Pattison advised the Committee that she Chaired the VCS Liaison Group.

27. FORWARD PLAN

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the latest Forward Plan of key decisions (October 2018 to January 2019). (Forward Plan enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

28. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

The Committee were advised that the following report would be considered by the Cabinet on 9 October 2018. The Committee were asked to comment on the proposals contained in the report. Those comments would then be presented to the Cabinet by the Chairman.

28.1 Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Support Services Commission

This report would advise Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation process associated with the Council commitment to cease the VCS Support Services Commission from the end of March 2019. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

The Committee were concerned that at a time when there was a significant reliance on the voluntary sector by the most vulnerable people in the county, particularly with the imminent roll-out of universal credit, the level of financial assistance from the Council should be maintained as much as possible.

Members were also anxious to retain the expertise of those working in the voluntary sector which may be permanently lost if funding was withdrawn.

The Committee were advised that the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Arts and Leisure would support retaining £100,000 of infrastructure assistance to the VCS at the Cabinet meeting on 9 October 2018.

The Committee agreed to support a proposal to allocate £100,000 to the VCS Support Services Commission on the understanding that if this was agreed at Cabinet, the OSC would seek a report from the Portfolio Holder in six months to monitor the impact the reduction of funding has had on the voluntary sector.

RESOLVED that

- (a) Cabinet be advised that the Committee would support an allocation of £100,000 to the VCS Support Services Commission, and
- (b) in the event that Cabinet agrees an allocation of £100,000, a further report be presented to the Committee in six months outlining the implications of a budget reduction on the voluntary sector.

29. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS

29.1 Domestic Violence and Abuse in Northumberland

The purpose of this report was to provide an overview on the current partnership work programme to co-ordinate service provision to tackle the issues and harms caused by domestic violence and abuse in Northumberland. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The Committee were concerned that incidents of domestic violence had historically been under reported, and felt that this may be particularly the case in rural areas. Members were advised that there was a continuous programme of data collection from from all sectors dealing with domestic violence issues, which was being utilised to identify areas of need.

The Committee requested a further report in six months to ascertain a direction of travel with regard to this issue. The report should include a more detailed breakdown of the figures in Northumberland, particularly with regard to geographical areas. Members also requested more information on Operation Encompass, which was a Police and Education early intervention safeguarding partnership supporting children and young people exposed to domestic abuse.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the report be noted, and
- (b) a further update be presented to the Committee in six months.

30. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

31. INFORMATION REPORT - POLICY DIGEST

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised the Committee that the Policy Digest gave details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members. The report could be accessed through the service finder element of County Council's website at www.northumberland.gov.uk.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman _____

Date _____