

**MINUTES** of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES** held at County Hall, Matlock on 2 December 2021

**PRESENT**

Councillor S Swann (in the Chair)

Councillors J Barron, M Foster, A Hayes, and D Muller

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Ashton, J Dixon, J Innes and D Murphy

Also in attendance: Councillor C Hart, Cabinet Member for Health & Communities

**16/21**      **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Resources held on 16 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**17/21**      **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**Question from D Ingham:**

Until March 2020 I was employed within the Councils HR Service - I worked for the Council for 32 years and left on VR when the service was restructured

The new selection process applied to Phase 1 of the HR Review and one that had been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (which stated that the new process to be applied was not expected to have an adverse impact on black, ethnic minority and disabled employees) in actual fact did so significantly. After the process no black and ethnic employees remained employed. It is highly feasible that no disabled employees remained either.

The new process applied deviated from the established use of application forms and normal selection process. In addition, unlike that for normal arrangements, Equal Opportunity Observers were not present throughout the whole process. At the point applicants were scored for the purpose of offering posts they were not present.

Given the presumed number of future establishment reviews within the Council, how can the presenter of the report be confident that if selection processes similar to this continue to be applied that there will not also be an adverse impact on black, ethnic minority and disabled employees.

## Response

I am a senior policy officer in the Council and as such have limited detailed knowledge of the HR review to which you are referring to. However, on enquiry, the appointment processes applied within the HR review were formally consulted on with impacted employees and joint trade unions, underpinned by transparent and fair selection criteria which was applied in line with Council policies.

All service/establishment reviews within the Council are subject to an equality impact assessment which is developed and monitored throughout and as a Council we ensure equality of opportunity throughout our recruitment and selection procedures, also being a disability confident employer. The Council recently approved a People Strategy which further strengthens our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion within each of our five people priorities, complimenting the work on our Equality Diversity & Inclusion strategy through the workforce workstream

**18/21      PRODUCTION OF 2022-23 REVENUE BUDGET** Paul Stone, Assistant Director of Finance attended the meeting to consult with members as part of the process towards production of the 2022-23 budget. Mr Stone gave a presentation to the committee to compliment the detailed report that had been circulated in advance of the meeting which provided members with an update of the Revenue Budget Forecast Outturn for 2021-22, a summary of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, and an update on Cost Pressure Bids received in respect of the 2022-23 Revenue Budget.

Members were given the opportunity to make comments or ask questions which centred around the forecast overspends on the winter maintenance budget, and the Childrens Services and Safeguarding portfolio. These were duly noted or answered by Mr Stone, and would be considered as part of the consultation process moving forward.

The Chairman, on behalf of the committee thanked Mr Stone for his most comprehensive and informative report.

**RESOLVED** to (1) note the Revenue Budget Forecast Outturn for 2021-22;

(2) note the key announcements in the Autumn Budget and SR 2021, relevant to local government;

(3) note the quantum of Revenue Budget pressure bids received, which cannot all be funded without significant additional budget reductions across all areas; and

(4) note the actions taken in respect of the shortlisting and agreement of Cost Pressure Bids to support the budget production process.

## **19/21      DRAFT EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY 2022-25**

Members had been provided with a detailed update report on the development of the Council's draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 and the proposed timetable for adoption by the Council, and were asked to consider and provide feedback on the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025.

Councillor Carol Hart, Cabinet Member for Health and Communities attended the meeting as this equality, diversity and inclusion came within her portfolio responsibilities, and outlined that the development of a strategy was a key area of work and there was a real appetite for the Council to become more ambitious and to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything it did. Councillor Carol Hart and Executive Director lead (Helen Jones) would work together to champion and drive forward the Council's approach.

Wes Downes, Policy Manager gave a presentation to the committee to compliment the report and the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting

Over recent months work had been taking place to develop the Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. A wide range of engagement had taken place with internal stakeholders which has involved reviewing the Council's approach and identifying the key challenges and opportunities for the Council and Derbyshire moving forward. The engagement had shown a real appetite for the Council to become more ambitious and to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything it does.

The draft Strategy recognised that the Council has worked hard on equality and diversity issues and that this work has resulted in significant changes to services, employment practices and approach. However, there was a recognition that more work needed to take place, particularly in the context of key demographic and economic challenges and wider societal events and issues.

The draft Strategy set out the Council's vision and values for equality, diversity and inclusion and five key priorities to direct activity over the forthcoming three-year period as follows:

- Create a diverse and confident workforce
- Ensure fair access to employment, skills and business support
- Engaged communities able to influence decisions
- Healthy and supported people

- Safe and inclusive places for everyone

To focus the Council's effort and resource each priority sets out a key aim and outcome and identified areas of focus. Each of the priorities in the Strategy would be supported by a detailed action plan which will be refreshed on annual basis. The action plans would have indicators to measure progress against the priorities. Implementation will be overseen by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board and reporting will align with the Council's business monitoring processes.

In terms of next steps:.

- the strategy would also be subject to a six week period of public consultation during December 2021- January 2022
- Further opportunities for colleagues to contribute to the development of the strategy, action planning and associated workstreams as they develop over the coming weeks
- The Strategy would be supported by an overarching Delivery Plan which is currently being developed by each of the workstreams and will also be informed by feedback from consultation
- Action plans would have indicators to help measure progress against priorities

Members made a number of comments and asked questions on the Strategy which were duly noted or answered by the officers and would be taken into account as part of the consultation process moving forward

The Chairman thanked Councillor Hart and Mr Downes for their update.

**RESOLVED** (1) to note the work that had taken place to develop the Council's draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 and the proposed timetable for adoption by the Council; and

(2) that officers note the feedback on the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 prior to the Public Consultation.