

# ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 SEPTEMBER 2016

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors P Agoro, M Bateman, A Bond, S Chapple, S Cole, B Everitt and A Hetherington. Councillors Mrs Macpherson and Mordue attended also.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors S Jenkins, A Cole and B Foster.

## 1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June, 2016, be approved as a correct record.

## 2. COMMUNITIES TEAM REVIEW

As part of the Commercial AVDC Programme a review of the Communities Team had been undertaken. AVDC was currently facing severe financial restrictions and was looking to mitigate a reduction in funding of approximately £5million by 2020/21, through a combination of income generation and efficiencies.

The current Communities Team was part of the Community Fulfilment Sector and was currently made up from various sub teams including Community Safety, Community Engagement, Grants and Project Support and the Communities Delivery team. These four teams currently varied considerably in the roles that they performed and the services they offered to the community, which was a mix of services with a various statutory elements, but with the majority being non-statutory.

The Committee received a report that highlighted the potential changes that could be made to the services delivered by the Communities Team following the Commercial Review which had commenced in January 2016. While a number of the community services that were delivered would remain because of the impact and value they deliver, it was believed that some services could be removed or delivered differently. If all of the current recommendations were accepted then savings of approximately £250,000 could be achieved along with a reduction in the level of staff resources (equating to a 36% annual reduction), whilst maintaining key statutory and policy priorities.

Staff, trade unions and employee representatives had been consulted on the proposals. The roles that were undertaken within the team were not process driven and the community benefit produced was exceptionally difficult to quantify or monetise, although this should not be underestimated or ignored. Over the past few years many of the team had adopted a more commercial approach, with an emphasis placed on income generation to help cover the costs, but despite this it was a “loss” making team, in financial terms, to AVDC.

The review had investigated all of the teams’ undertakings and made recommendations on what was believed should be continued and also what should be stopped, changed or moved internally. Alongside the review of the Communities team, the overarching view of Community Fulfilment had also been taken into consideration and recommendations linked to this were also included. One of the main aims when this sector was first formed was for it to become the strategic arm of the Council linking many of the existing services together to help ensure that AVDC was operating at its most efficient. The Communities Review was therefore the first step towards this and

what had become clear was that some of the report's recommendations would impact on the wider sector, in particular upon the existing Strategic Housing team.

The Grant Funding Programme contained within the Communities team had only recently been reviewed and considered by both the Finance and Services Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in July 2016. The programme had been reduced over the past 6 years from £619,672 to just under £400,000 for 2016/17 and the way in which grants were prioritised had also been amended.

At the beginning of 2016/17 the total annual budget for the Communities team was £1,766,600, £698,182 of which related to staff salaries and which included posts listed as project funding (ASB Officer and Community Safety Officer), but excluding the Community Chest Grants Officer and the Active Vale Co-ordinator (due to the fact that their salaries were covered in full by external funding).

Excluding the Sector Lead and the Corporate Director, the current Communities Structure was made up of the equivalent of 18 staff members, many of whom worked part time hours. This team also attracted external funding to help subsidise 3 posts (the Anti-social Behaviour Co-ordinator, the Community Safety Officer and the Active Vale Co-ordinator).

The Committee was provided with information detailing the specifics of the proposed changes as follows:-

- Creating a new AVDC Strategy and Partnership team, with responsibility for drafting required strategies and policies across front line services within AVDC. This team would replace / expand on the existing Strategic Housing Team. This would be subject to the business review of Strategic Housing and the other strategic activities in community fulfilment.
- Community Safety would be moved to the newly formed AVDC Strategy and Partnership Team, whilst achieving savings from amending existing roles
- The role of the Community Engagement Officer, Cohesion and Wellbeing should also be linked to the Community Safety team with more of a focus given to Prevent.
- A number of services were proposed to be stopped, moved to a different team internally or delivered in a different way, although it was proposed that further work should be undertaken with external partners to attempt to facilitate the continuation of any community services AVDC no longer offered.

It was explained to Members that over the past few months an analysis of the work of the Communities team had been undertaken in a variety of ways. This included initial work with the team managers and then later with the wider team in detailing the many various work streams that were undertaken. These had then been examined individually to estimate the cost of delivering the services, along with an analysis on how they contributed to AVDC's overarching mission statement.

Following this, the work streams had been broken down further into three distinct groups, which represented the current aims of the Communities team's overall vision. These aims were:

- To ensure communities feel safe (Safe)
- To encourage economically strong, cohesive, confident and active communities (Strong)

- To encourage residents to lead healthier, happier and longer lives (Well-being)

From this analysis it became clear that many of the suggested services proposed to be stopped or delivered differently were within the 'Well-being' aim. The vast majority of the statutory functions came within the 'Safe' aim, with those remaining contained within the 'Strong' aim.

Based on the review work, services proposed to be stopped were:-

- Activate Dance Festival.
- Support for Aylesbury Vale Arts Council.
- Aylesbury Vale Community Chest (already programmed to stop in March '17)
- Support for Bucks School Games (Inter School competition)
- Energise Gold (Activities for the elderly)
- Love Parks (National initiative to encourage people to parks)
- Ladies Only Swimming (Limited offer also included within Active Vale)
- Music in Quiet Places (Concerts in rural areas)
- MUGA Projects (Multi Use Games Area Activities)
- Play Around the Parish (Play activities in more rural areas)
- Purple Flag – Co ordination and submission (safe town centre)
- Stoke Mandeville Stadium Committee Representative
- Theatre in the Villages
- Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Funding Fair
- Village Pub Competition
- Women's Network (empowerment)
- Youth Council / Forum support

Where it was accepted that services should be stopped, work could be undertaken to attempt to ensure that these services could be continued by other agencies, potentially from the next financial year. All options could be explored, including the potential for AVDC to still deliver these, subject to the costs being met, eg. Parish Councils willing to meet the cost of organising and running Play in the Parishes for example.

Services that it might be possible to move to a different team internally had been identified as:-

- Community Safety.
- Chairman's events.
- CCTV.
- Local Democracy sessions (aimed at young people).
- Purple Flag (if the Council continued to offer this).

Services that it might be possible to offer in a new way in the future included:-

- ASB Co-ordinator role.
- Heritage Flame Ceremony.
- Play in the Park.
- Roald Dahl Parade.
- VCS Funding Fair – to be run or organised by someone else.
- Disability sports clubs.
- Doorways Dance club.
- Ladies Only swimming.

- Sportivate / Diversionary Activities.
- Event bookings and Business Support.

Savings that had been identified from previous underspends / savings that could be realised straightaway amounted to £64,519 and were:-

- Grants Support Costs - £4,500
- Equalities and Cohesion - £5,000
- Project Development Fund - £10,000
- Crime Audit - £1,500
- CCTV (potentially more to come) - £25,000
- BT Line Rental - £5,000
- District Play Services - £5,000
- Equipment Repairs (Leisure, Play) - £1,000
- Additional Computer Equipment - £2,000
- Equipment (Leisure, Play) - £4,160
- Advertising, Publicity & Marketing - £1,359

Additionally, deleting the current Communities Manager Post – saving £82,766 (including on-costs). Further savings were likely to be realised over time as the different work streams were either stopped or delivered differently and these would be itemised and represented in next year's budget.

With the district predicted to grow significantly in the coming years, the impact of this had been considered in the review. This growth lent support to the importance of maintaining robust Community Safety and Community Cohesion services. It was imperative that the district continued to be a place which was considered an attractive place to live and work, and where people feel safe.

117 partners (including all of the parishes) had been surveyed during the review asking for their opinions on the different elements of the Communities team they worked with, along with their views on the impact on them of reducing or stopping the service(s). 39 partners responded to the survey and a summary was attached as Appendix A to the Committee report. These results reinforced the recommendations on the services to be potentially stopped as the Arts, Play, Ageing Well and Sport categories had come low down in their priorities. It was noted that there were some discrepancies within the report regarding linking Community Cohesion and Community Engagement, and also linking Safeguarding to Community Safety.

Once member agreement has been obtained a new structure could then be consulted on and put in place. Work would be undertaken with external partners to attempt to facilitate the continuation of any community services no longer offered by AVDC.

Members sought further information on the review and were informed:-

- (i) that the lessons learnt from the review included the importance of involving the whole team in the review and not underestimating the size of the task as it was important to understand the links between the different services that were being delivered and how this impacted on people.

- (ii) that while it was a priority for the Council to look after and protect the most vulnerable and needy people, which had also been considered as part of the recent review of the grants process, the review did not have specific data on particular individuals who might be impacted by the services it was proposed to be stopped. However, it was likely that a number of the services would continue to be delivered by partners or others but in a different way. People would also be signposted to services/activities similar to ones that were to be stopped and that were already taking place in their areas.
- (iii) that the review of the Strategic Housing had yet to take place. Day-to-day enquiries to the Council on housing and other issues were managed through the Customer Fulfilment team which was not being changed but was being reviewed.
- (iv) that further work would be undertaken to ascertain how best to provide support to the Chairman of the Council and in organising the Chairman's events.
- (v) that the CCTV review related to the monitoring contract for AVDC properties. It had been recommended that this service be moved to the Commercial Property and Regeneration Section, who had greater expertise in this area.
- (vi) that the Council would continue to host the County Sport and Activity Partnership (LEAP). Its Sport Development Officers would continue to provide advice and support in a wide range of areas including disability sport, working with clubs and volunteers, and working with children and young people.
- (vii) that the Council would be working with partners such as VAHT and the County Council to enable disability sports to be delivered in a new or different way. For example, the County Council already provided some services to people with disabilities.
- (viii) that the Council was aware from the review of a number of partners who could be willing to deliver some of the services that were being proposed to be stopped.

Members also commented:-

- that they were reassured by the amount of work and thought that had gone into shaping the review and its recommendations. However, there were also some concerns about the lack of data on the impact on individuals regarding some of the services that it was proposed to stop delivering.
- that they were supportive of key events such as the Roald Dahl festival being put onto a more commercial footing. It might also be possible for the Town Centre Management to take a more active role in delivering such events.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the recommendations contained within the Communities Team review be noted.

- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Communities and Civic Amenities be asked to include impact assessment statements for all the services proposed to be stopped (covering issues such as the impact on people's mental health and well-being, as well as the likely impact on the most vulnerable, and on mitigation measures to be put in place) in the report to Cabinet in November 2016.

### **3. FOOD SERVICE PLAN 2016-17**

Under European food law the Food Standards Agency (FSA) was deemed to be the competent authority. To ensure these powers were exercised consistently across the country by local authorities the FSA had developed a framework agreement, part of which included the production by each local authority of a food service plan.

Service plans were seen as an important part of the process to ensure that national priorities and standards were addressed and delivered locally. The details to be contained in the plan were specified by the FSA. Plans had to contain the following information:-

- Service Aims and Objectives.
- Background.
- Service Delivery.
- Resources.
- Quality Assessment.
- Review.

The Committee received a report on the plan which had the Aylesbury Vale Food Service Plan for 2016-17 attached as an appendix. The key features of the Plan were:-

- that there were 1724 registered food businesses in Aylesbury Vale.
- Premises were given a risk rating, A to E. Resources were targeted to ensure higher risk premises (A, B, Non-compliant C and Unrated) were inspected in accordance with the FSA Code of Practice.
- that the number of premises that were deemed to be "broadly compliant" with the law is 97%.
- in 2015/16 in total AVDC had achieved 95% of programmed interventions, and completed 100% of premises inspections rated A – non compliant C.
- that the plan identified areas of improvement or exploration to improve efficiency and to ensure the Council offered the best service to customers. These included:
  - Implementation of online forms.
  - Use of partial inspections or audits of premises.
  - Extending the scope of the Alternative Enforcement Strategy.
  - Assisting with the implementation of the new premises database
  - Updating staff development in line with Food Law Code of Practice changes

The plan was a development of the 2012/13 plan updated to reflect the current situation and legislative changes. The 2012/13 Food Service Plan had been subject to a full audit by the FSA in October 2012. The FSA had revisited in 2015/16 and had been satisfied that the audit action plan had been fully implemented and the audit had been closed.

Members sought further information and were advised:-

- (i) that due to staffing issues (primarily new staff that were training to get full food service accreditation) it had been necessary to buy in contractor inspections to assist with meeting intervention targets, as necessary. This had amounted to

£12,000 in 2015/16 and was likely to be a similar amount in 2016/17. However, overall, this arrangement was delivering savings to the Council.

- (ii) that AVDC had liaison arrangements with various outside bodies and with neighbouring local authorities, and met regularly to discuss current enforcement issues and ensure consistency in approach and joint working across the County.
- (iii) that the Food Service Agency as part of their 2015-20 Strategy was still looking at whether to consult on allowing some autonomy in how some establishments such as Tesco and Sainsbury's, which had their own inspection regimes in place, were inspected. SEMLEP was also looking at how better regulation for business might be put in place. However, both organisations were moving slowly.

AVDC could take the lead in developing its own autonomy scheme but if it didn't comply with the FSA's Code of Practice then it was possible that it would be challenged.

- (iv) that a large supermarket such as Waitrose would be inspected approximately every 18 months, and would take 3-4 hours to inspect plus Officer travelling time.
- (v) that EHO's visiting premises could also bring to businesses attention other services that the Council could provide for them such as the commercial recycling and waste services and planning advice.
- (vi) that Officers would investigate what benefits there might be for the Council in obtaining ISO 22000 accreditations (Food Safety Management).
- (vii) that there were a number of other organisations locally that were able to provide food safety training more competitively than the Council. If AVDC did decide to offer training it would need to employ additional Officers to do this.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the contents of the Food Service Plan for 2016-17 be approved.
- (2) That the Scrutiny Committee was supportive of the Council looking to pilot an initiative(s) on an AVDC food service inspection autonomy scheme, which could both provide opportunities for AVDC and be a more efficient use of Council resources.

#### **4. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered their work programme for the next 6-9 months. A written question had been submitted to the Council meeting on 20 July 2016 concerning enforcement action associated with environmental issues and in relation to a particular planning application.

Whilst it was not within the Committee's remit to consider a particular planning application due to the quasi-judicial nature of the planning process, it was however with the Committee's remit to "assist in the development of the Council's planning policies (excluding the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan) and other plans for the use and development of land."

Members considered the merit of examining in generic terms the Council's planning enforcement procedures and agreed that they would like to receive a general report on planning enforcement to a future meeting to assist in Members' understanding of this area. The report could include information on :

- the nature of enforcement work.
- the basis upon which formal action could be taken.
- justifications that had to be shown in order to take action.
- the different stages in the enforcement process.
- the process for enforcement notices.
- Local Members role / how can local Members' help?

In addition to this matter, the following items had been programmed for future meetings:-

- (i) **1 November 2016** – Waste and Recycling Update, Update on flooding on the Willows development, Services provided by the Community Spaces team and Biodiversity update.
- (ii) **20 December 2016** – Community Safety update / Strategy 2017-20 and Leisure facilities in the Vale.
- (iii) **15 February 2017** – VAHT Annual update and 'Pay to Stay'.
- (iv) **22 March 2017** – no items as yet

Members also commented that they would like to receive information, initially via the Members' Information Sheet, on the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS), impacts on the Council of the Housing Act 2016, and on pest control.

RESOLVED –

That the current work programme as agreed at the meeting be noted.