

Special Cabinet Advisory Committee

Tuesday, 27 February 2024

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Lenny Rolles (Chair)
Cllr Ektaveen Thandi (Acting Vice-Chair)

Councillors: David Beattie
Deborah Croxton
Lee Croxton
Samir Jassal
Alan Metcalf
Leslie Pearton
Tony Rana

Tom Reynolds Assistant Director (Inclusive Growth)
Anita Tysoe Head of Community Support
Michelle Batstone Corporate Change Manager
Tina Kwegan Estates & Valuation Manager
Alan Rhind Estates & Valuation Manager
Charlie Simmonds Committee Services Manager (Minutes)

47. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gurdip Ram Bungar, Alison Williams, Jordan Meade and Alan Ridgers. Councillors Deborah Croxton, Ektaveen Thandi, David Beattie and Alan Metcalf attended as their substitutes.

48. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7 November 2023 were signed by the Chair.

49. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

50. Social Value

The Head of Community Support advised that social value was added value generated for communities over and above core business functions. It included anything that positively contributed towards social wellbeing, the economy or environment.

Social value was often linked to procurement and contracts but can also be achieved through voluntary input from local organisations, such as staff volunteering, contributions of resources or funding donations.

With the significant financial pressures being faced by local authorities, it was more important than ever to draw on opportunities to maximise social value in order to deliver

functions and activities within the limited resources available. The benefits of social value go much wider than Council related outcomes ranging from tackling climate change, delivering significant community developments, to increasing work related skills and access to work or improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act came into force on 31 January 2013, requiring those who commission public services to consider how they could also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. This was linked to the procurement process and required commissioners to think about whether the services they were procuring could secure these benefits for their local areas and communities. The Act also required a minimum 10% weighting on social value in procurement contracts above the public procurement threshold.

Whilst Gravesham developed its own Social Value Policy a few years ago, this was relatively high level and focussed on the opportunities that could be derived from procurement activity, it did not recognise those wider opportunities of contract management or voluntary social value contributions.

The Council was now in a position to develop its own social value commitments and to support other organisations in achieving outcomes that benefit the Borough. Through collaboration, the potential of what social value could deliver could be significant.

To progress this work, an updated draft Social Value Policy, Statement and Framework had been prepared and were appended to the report:-

- the Policy set out the Council's principles and how the Council will adhere to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 by including Social Value in its Procurement exercises; but also how it will further commit by including it in contract management arrangements and supporting local organisations to deliver and achieve their own social value outcomes;
- the Statement aims to communicate key messages and secure support from staff, partners, suppliers and other locally based organisations to help create social value benefits for the community; and
- the Framework set out a list of priority areas which will be shared with other parties to help focus Social Value outcomes on areas that were important to the Council and its community.

The Head of Community Support advised that the next step will be to develop an action plan to focus on the direction of travel and support the delivery of social value outcomes. This will be done by using the Social Maturity Index, attached at Appendix IV of the report, which had been designed to assist organisations in understanding their current position and what actions they can take over the next 3-5 years to further develop Social Value outputs and achievements.

The Committee was informed that 2024 will be the Council's Year of Volunteering and discussions had already taken place about how officer volunteer days can be used to support social value achievements across the Borough. There will be opportunities to partner with other organisations and local employers to increase volunteer capacity and achieve greater outcomes. The Head of Community Support advised that the intention will be for officers to volunteer within the Borough to provide local support and that the scheme will be promoted to local organisations, businesses etc.

The Committee was invited to review and comment on the policy and supporting documents.

The Committee considered the policy together with the supporting documents and highlighted the following:-

- a number of small businesses will not have the expertise on how to maximise social value so it would be beneficial if the Council could offer advice via the business network or a social value day. The Assistant Director (Inclusive Growth) and Head of Community Support advised that they would look to include this as part of the business network;
- it can be difficult to measure the life span of a contract and whether social value targets will be met therefore some authorities opt for a social value payment which can then be distributed. The Head of Community Support advised that she would investigate this further;
- with regards to section 106 agreements via the planning process, the Council should consider how large developments/developers could contribute to local residents/communities around those areas affected by large developments;
- explore opportunities where social value can give back to/contribute towards the community such as supporting people with learning disabilities, long-term unemployment, providing art classes, sport facilities etc;
- the initiative must be well publicised/promoted to local organisations, businesses etc. The Head of Community Support advised that she would be working with the Communications Team in relation to promotion and also asked Members if they could publicise within their wards; and
- in relation to the officer volunteer days, it was important for the Council to monitor the hours volunteered and to calculate it in terms of monetary value so that the Council can promote the support provided. Officers should also be encouraged to undertake volunteer days as it can contribute towards their professional training and development plans.

The Committee noted the report subject to the above being taken into consideration.

51. Review of the Working in Partnership Framework

The Corporate Change Manager advised that, in April 2021, the Council adopted an updated Working in Partnership Framework, with clear guidelines to review the framework every three years or when it was prudent to do so.

Appendix one to the report set out the revised Framework (and accompanying appendices) for the Council.

Following a review of the Framework, the proposed changes were minimal. This was due to an in-depth review being undertaken in April 2021, following the COVID-19 pandemic, which implemented a number of changes and as such, the Framework was considered to be still fit for purpose, subject to Members comments.

The proposed changes were as follows:-

- minor amendments to paragraphs throughout to provide further clarification on processes to be followed and to support better understanding of the Framework in its entirety;

- updates to the core principles to be followed when considering establishing shared services. These were previously reflective of the 'North Kent' principles agreed some time ago and had been updated to reflect the key principles for Gravesham Borough Council; and
- minor amendments throughout to update references to 'Heads of Service' in line with the restructure approved by Full Council last year where applicable (to replace previous references to Service Managers).

The Corporate Change Manager advised that the next step will be for the Framework to be presented to Cabinet for approval, followed by submission to Full Council for formal adoption into the Council's Policy Framework. The Framework will continue to be reviewed at least once every three years, or more frequently if deemed necessary during this period.

The Corporate Change Manager invited the Committee to review and comment on the Framework.

The Committee considered the Framework and highlighted the following:-

- inclusion of an executive summary at the start of the document to provide an overview of the benefits of partnership working, and the Framework itself; and
- inclusion of reference to Social Value considerations in the assessment of any new partnerships where applicable.

The Corporate Change Manager advised that she would incorporate the suggestions into the draft Framework for consideration by Cabinet/Full Council.

The Committee noted the report subject to the above being taken into consideration.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 7.58 pm.