

Time commenced – 18:03

Time finished – 19:03

## **Corporate Services Scrutiny Review Board**

22 July 2021

Present: Councillors Nawaz, T Pearce, Pandey, J Khan and Cooper

In Attendance: Rachel North – Strategic Director for Communities and Place  
Alison Parkin – Director of Financial Services

### **01/21 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received for Cllr Naitta and Cllr Ingall.

### **02/21 Late items introduced by the Chair**

There were no late items.

### **03/21 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **04/21 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### **05/21 Update on the new Partnership Model**

The Strategic Director for Communities and Place presented the Board with an update on the new Partnership Model.

The Board noted that the partnership Board had been established in June 2020 and had only met virtually. It was noted that the Partnership Board was a platform for system wide collaboration and a Space to create a common purpose. It was reported that the Partnership Board was creating a way of working together on outcomes for the city.

The Strategic Director for Communities and Place informed the Board that the role of the Partnership Board was to:

- Galvanise partners, citizens and other stakeholders to enable Derby to become the best it can be through positive collaboration
- Set the vision and ambition for Derby
- Establish common goals / shared outcomes that all partners can work towards
- Act as steward for our city and advocate positively for the city
- Celebrate success and take stock of progress made

The Board noted that the membership of the partnership Board was made up of:

- Group leaders
- Vice Chancellor University of Derby
- CX Clinical Commissioning Group
- TMUK / Rolls Royce
- Marketing Derby
- Derby College
- DWP
- Community Action Derby
- YMCA
- Active Derbyshire
- Environment Agency
- Chamber of Commerce
- Quad
- Bishop of Derby
- Derbyshire Police

The Board noted that the Council provided a democratic leadership within the Partnership Board and was also a builder of collaboration. It was reported that the Council was a facilitator and enabler and worked to create the environment in the city for others to thrive.

It was reported that reflections on the Partnership Board's first year were:

- Broader awareness of each other's perspectives
- Developing and maturing our relationships
- Outstanding work during Covid Emergency
- Agreed a City Recovery Plan framework
- Delivering a wide range of collaborative community and economic recovery actions and projects

The Board noted that going forward the Partnership Board would have the following objectives.

- Resolve challenges for City Recovery post Covid are significant
- We need to be driven by OUTCOMES for Derby
- We need to harness all the ideas / resources/ energy across our Partnership
- Our 'way of working' during Covid MUST be sustained and developed
- We need to be agile to flex our structures to meet challenges of above

It was noted that the currently there were six thematic boards within Derby along with a Community Recovery Board and an Economic Recovery Steering Group.

The Board noted that the Council had received the following feedback from a shaping workshop held in June 2021:

- Need to design a shared collaboration space
- Review of evidence and outcomes is important
- Inclusive approach – invite all partners to first sessions and identify a chair / facilitator to lead an outcome based workshop

- Important to involve our customers / stakeholders and build on enablers (e.g. insight, comms, partnership resource)
- Let's integrate as much as possible e.g. Health and Well-being, JUCD

It was reported that in response to this feedback a new model of partnership working would be implemented with a more thematic, outcome based, structure. It was noted that the four new thematic outcome boards would feed into the Partnership Board. It was noted that the four thematic outcome boards were:

- Resilient Derby - Joined up Place working, Addressing Inequality, Poverty Commission, Health and Well-Being
- Green Derby - Climate Change, Commission, Mobility, Our City Our River
- Growth Derby – Skills, Employment, Investment
- Vibrant Derby – City centre Reinvention, Cultural Compact, Framework for Change

The Strategic Director for Communities and Place informed the Board that the next steps of the Partnership Board were:

- Stakeholder mapping and communication to partners – July / August 2021
- Enablers in place – July / August 2021
- Mapping of plans / strategies and refresh of evidence base against four themes – August / September 2021
- First meetings of new thematic boards focused around outcomes – September 2021
- Review of draft outcomes by Partnership Board – October 2021
- Team Derby Plan drafted – November/December 2021
- Review of new ways of working – March 2022

A councillor questioned how the Council planned to attract employers into Derby. The Board noted that the Council were working collectively with partners through programmes such as 'Ascend' to increase business confidence and help citizens find jobs.

A councillor questioned whether the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the Council's ability to attract investment. It was noted that the Council were working hard to create an attractive environment for investment and were focusing on how the city centre could be reinvented. It was noted that going forward there would not be enough retail interest to fill all of the empty shops in Derby and that increasing accommodation in the city centre may be an option going forward.

A councillor questioned whether the Council had requested any Government funding for city centre projects. It was reported that the Council had put in a bid for £20m from the levelling up fund for the Becketwell Arena. It was also reported that the Council had received £60m from the transforming cities fund for a rapid transport system in the city. It was noted that the Council had also received money from the future highstreets fund.

A councillor questioned whether representatives from Derby Homes and Cabinet Members would be involved in the four new thematic outcome boards. The Strategic Director of Communities and Place informed the Board that Derby Homes would be heavily involved in the four boards and were leading on locality

working and the poverty commission. The Board noted that the Cabinet Members would also play a role in the four boards along with other councillors.

The Board noted that the Council had recently submitted an expression of interest in becoming the UK City of Culture 2025 and that the Council had received 100 letters of support from partners within 10 days. The Board noted that this was an example of the success of the Partnership Board in bringing organisations within the city together.

#### **Resolved to**

- **note the information provided within the presentation.**
- **request that an update on the Partnership Model be brought to the first Corporate Services Scrutiny Review Board meeting of the 2022/23 municipal year.**

### **06/21 How Council Tax, Business Rates and Collection Rates have been affected by Covid-19**

The Director of Financial Services presented the Board with an update on how Council Tax, Business Rates and Collection Rates have been affected by Covid-19.

The Board noted that there were 111,896 domestic dwellings in the city and that the Council had billed £123.9m in Council Tax in 2020/21 and £133.4m in 2021/22. The Board noted that there were 9,119 commercial assessments in the city and that the Council had billed £152.7m in Business Rates in 2020/21 and £79.6m in 2021/22.

The Director of Financial Services informed the Board that based upon the Council's 20/21 outturn report, Council Tax and Business Rates had accounted for 58% of the Council's total funding in 20/21.

The Board noted that on 25 March 2020 the Council had announced that all recovery action for Council Tax & Business Rates would be suspended until 30 June 2020. It was reported that in 20/21 the Council had achieved a current year collection rate for Council Tax of 92.25% (previous year 93.62%). It was noted that in 20/21 the Council had achieved a current year collection rate for Business Rates of 90.22% (previous year 96.85%).

The Board noted that during the 2020/21 financial year the Council had no Court time and that due to COVID-19 a reduced number of cases had been allowed. It was also noted that in 2020/21 there had been limited Enforcement Agent activities and that the service had seen a reduced capacity as staff had been diverted to other COVID-19 priorities such as payment of Business Support Grants.

The Board noted that at its peak, Derby saw 34,400 citizens furloughed in June 2020. It was noted that there was clear evidence that more people were out of work in Derby or were receiving less weekly income which inevitably, for a proportion of households, reduced their ability to pay Council Tax. The Board noted that the Council had worked with external partners including the Citizens

Advice Bureau and the Department of Works and Pensions, to ensure that both emotional and financial support for residents was signposted and that take up was maximised.

It was reported that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for business had been very significant with the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors being particularly badly affected. The Board noted that the Council had made it a priority to support the business community by prioritising the payment of business support grants and awarding a series of new reliefs announced by the Government. It was noted that recent figures had confirmed that the Council had awarded over 15,000 business support grants, totalling over £80million.

It was reported that in 2020/21 the Council also awarded over £42million in new and extended relief schemes announced by the Government. It was noted that doing this not only meant businesses did not have a business rates bill to pay, but it also protected the Council's financial position as these reliefs were fully funded by central Government.

The Board noted that the pandemic also affected the Council's collection of previous years arrears in 2020/21. It was reported that in 2020/21 the Council had collected Council Tax arrears of £3.214million against a total of £3.645million in 2019/20. The Board noted that the main explanation for this reduced impact was that much of the Council's arrears debt was already secured, by way of attachment of earnings or attachment of benefits. It was reported that once the recovery suspension period had passed, the Council were able to re-instate recovery on many previous years debts.

The Board noted that the position was starker for Business Rates and that in 2020/21 the Council collected Business Rates arrears of £1.399million against a total of £4.020million in 2019/20. It was reported that the explanation for this was that some of the enforcement methods available for the collection of Council Tax were not available for the collection of Business Rates, for example the Council could not collect Business Rates by attachment of earnings.

It was reported that for 2021/22 there were some encouraging early signs that collection rates were improving, particularly for Council Tax. It was also noted that recovery activity was taking place for both Council Tax and Business. It was reported that the team would also have pro-active recovery conversations with Council Tax and Business Ratepayers in appropriate cases following contact.

The Board noted that going forward the service faced the following potential challenges:

- Ending of the furlough scheme
- The end of Universal Credit uplift
- Lack of court time
- Changes to the Business Rates relief schemes
- Competing demands

A councillor questioned whether the lack of court time would lead to the Council being unable to collect debts. It was noted that the Government had extended the Council's collection fund deficit period from one year to four years in order to

assist the Council with this. It was noted that the Council would continue to collect debts and would focus its resources in areas where it was most likely to see a return.

A councillor commended the team for their work during the pandemic and questioned whether the Council could ask the Government for more support. It was noted that the Government had provided a Business Support Scheme that had now ended, and that Restart Grants had also been funded by the Government. The Board noted that the Council were not expecting any additional schemes from Government to support businesses in paying their rates.

The Chair asked for a timeline of steps taken by the team in the recovery of debts process to be shared with the Board. The Director of Financial Services agreed to provide this.

**Resolved to note the information provided within the presentation.**

## **07/21 Work Programme for 2021/22 Municipal Year**

The Board considered a report setting out the Work Programme for 2021/22 Municipal Year. It was agreed that members would contact the Chair of the Board with any suggestions for future items or topic reviews.

**Resolved:**

- 1. to note the information provided within the report.**
- 2. that members would contact the Chair of the Board with any suggestions for future items or topic reviews.**