

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 10 July 2018
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bowler, G. Carr, Franklin, Frost, Gollick, Hampson, Hand-Davis, Hayward, W. Johnson, Mitchell, Pourali, Tattersall and Wright together with co-opted member Ms P. Gould.

13 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

Apologies for absence were received from Ms K Morrith in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

14 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Pourali declared a non-pecuniary interest with regard to Minute No. 16 insofar as any discussion related to Berneslai Homes, of which she is a Board Member.

15 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2018 were approved as a true and accurate record.

16 Norfolk Property Services (NPS) Barnsley - Performance Review Report

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

David Shepherd, Service Director - Economic Regeneration, BMBC
 Neil Copley, Service Director – Finance BMBC
 Mike Rawlins, Partnership & Shared Service Manager - Economic Regeneration BMBC
 Catherine Pantry, Strategic Finance Manager, BMBC
 Jill Bills, Business Improvement Advisor, BMBC
 Michael Potter, Service Director – Business Improvement & Communications, BMBC
 Councillor Roy Miller, Cabinet Member - Place
 Karen Temple, Managing Director - NPS Barnsley

The Service Director (Economic Regeneration) introduced this item and provided Members with the findings of the performance review of NPS Barnsley (NPSB) which started in October 2016.

It was explained that although performance is reviewed on an ongoing basis, a comprehensive review was undertaken which made a number of recommendations

aimed at service improvement and achieving value for money. These recommendations are included in the report. All aspects of the review were overseen by the Council. The improvement plan is a dynamic 'living' document which will be amended over time. Members were asked to consider the recommendations and service improvements for the future provision of services delivered under the NPSB.

Questions were then invited from Members and the following lines of enquiry were challenged and pursued:

It is difficult to establish if the service offers value for money due to the difficulty of comparing like with like. It was explained that more granular detail will be contained within the improvement plan, which will be reported back by December with planned implementation in April 2019. Two exercises were undertaken as part of the improvement plan to identify comparators but this has been difficult because of the unique character of the company and the fact that 'cheapest' does not necessarily mean the best. NPS employ 100 people, 75 of whom are from Barnsley and as it is a Joint Venture Company, 50% of profits are shared with the Council – to date over £2m has been returned to the Council. Although the Council owns 20% of the company, this does not deliver exclusivity of work to NPS on anything owned by the Council – NPS still have to bid for work. Planned maintenance and day to day, emergency or cyclical work is subject to obtaining 3 quotes and a Value for Money (VFM) check.

Customer satisfaction levels are high. Service users have a voice and customer feedback feeds into direction of resources and service improvement. Rich management information is used to drive service improvement.

A Member queried the company's complaints reporting mechanism and asked if they were open to challenge. Members were reassured that if there are any problems, NPS want to hear about them and welcome the chance to put it right. Complaints can be forwarded via email, telephone and visits.

Members were aware of issues with unsatisfactory work done in their wards which remain unresolved, whilst other members stated that work done by NPS had been exemplary. There is a mechanism for Members who are dissatisfied in that the issue can be escalated to Cabinet and/or Cabinet spokespersons to resolve. It was felt that in some instances communication needed to improve and that councillors need to be aware of project specifications which would enable them to evaluate completed projects. Responsibility for failings in workmanship or design remains with NPS Barnsley.

Although there are 19 recommendations contained within the report, these are not indicative of failing performance but rather provide a blueprint for the future and a focus on long term improvement and value for money. It was explained that as this is a longstanding partnership of over 8 years some changes will have to be made. The NPS joint venture partnership is viewed as an example of good practice across the country and compares favourably with other authorities. Peer companies across the country look to emulate NPS Barnsley's unique design and construction mix. It was highlighted that a Joint Venture company is very different to the ALMO arrangements with Berneslai Homes and has different mechanisms for control and influence.

NPS do a small amount of work for Berneslai Homes on the construction side, mainly relating to district heating systems. The company is aware of problems with the heating systems on new build and existing sheltered housing complexes which relate to system design. Difficulties also arise when attempting to explain the bio mass system and the importance of reducing the carbon footprint to older tenants. It was explained that NPS did not install the heating system at Ward Green school 4 years ago.

Problems have been experienced with NPSB using the Council's SAP system for recording and charging of jobs undertaken on the Council's behalf, attributable to human error. The Improvement team has looked at this with a view to streamlining the process and is addressed within the report recommendations

NPS aim to be more proactive and replace failing parts before failure. A planned maintenance system is in place with effectively managed supplier arrangements so that replacement parts can be ordered ready to install in good time.

NPSB employees have been involved in the review and have been consulted on the proposed changes within the improvement plan. Whenever information has been available, it has been shared with staff so that they are aware of what is happening. A number of staff briefings are planned to share the improvement plan with a view to protecting staff morale at a time of change.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) Further investigation is done into the works at Worsbrough Pavilion and consideration of the initial specification;
- (iii) NPSB communication and sharing of performance information with BMBC needs to improve, and
- (iv) The contents of the report and associated recommendation be noted.

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