

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.20 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Parry Batth (Chairman), Philip Houldsworth (Vice-Chairman), Andy Croy, Lindsay Ferris, Mike Haines, Ken Miall, Ian Pittock, Malcolm Richards and Shahid Younis

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

Officers Present

Peter Baveystock, Service Manager, Cleaner, Greener and Reactive Highway Services
Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Sarah Hollamby, Interim Director of Locality and Customer Services
Mark Redfearn, Lead - Localities Service

54. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Guy Grandison, Kate Haines and Bill Soane.

55. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 October were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

56. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

57. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

58. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

59. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE REVIEW

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 13 to 46, which included the final draft of the Committee's report on the Grounds Maintenance service.

The report reminded Members of the discussions held at the meetings on 1 August, 19 September and 17 October 2018. The evidence submitted to the Committee had been used to produce the draft report and the set of draft recommendations to the Council's Executive.

The Committee discussed any final amendments to the report and received comments from the following Officers:

- Sarah Hollamby, Acting Director of Locality and Customer Services;
- Peter Baveystock, Service Manager, Cleaner, Greener and Reactive Highway Services;
- Mark Redfearn, Lead – Localities Service.

The Scrutiny review of the Grounds Maintenance service had been carried out following a large number of complaints about grass cutting in the period from March to May 2018.

From the evidence submitted, it was apparent that the Council's contractor (ISS Facility Services) had not deployed sufficient resources (staff and equipment) to complete the initial round of grass cutting in a reasonable time. Consequently, in some parts of the Borough, the grass grew very long as the contractor attempted to catch up on the cutting schedule. The situation was worsened by the unseasonably wet and cold weather in March/April.

In carrying out the Scrutiny review the Committee focussed on three key issues:

- Were there problems with the structure of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract?
- Were there problems with the way the Council's contractor was delivering the service?
- Were there problems with the way the Council monitored and managed the contract?

The Scrutiny report made a number of recommendations relating to the future delivery of the Grounds Maintenance service (the contractor having changed from ISS to Tivoli Group in June 2018). The recommendations focussed on measures which ensured that the service was fully resourced in terms of staff, supervisors and equipment in time for the 2019 grass cutting season. The Committee also made recommendations relating to improved communication about the service and the development of local networks involving residents, community groups and Town and Parish Councils.

The draft recommendations to the Executive were as follows:

- 1 That the Executive Member and Director of Locality and Customer Services meet with senior management from Tivoli Group to discuss the operation of the grounds maintenance service and to emphasise the Council's expectations for service delivery in 2019.
- 2 That the Executive Member and Director of Locality and Customer Services liaise with their counterparts at RBWM to identify areas of common interest and concern and make joint representations to Tivoli Group as necessary.
- 3 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services review the level of WBC's client monitoring/management resource available for the beginning of the next grass cutting season – March/April 2019.
- 4 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services review the contractual options available to the Council in the event of continuing underperformance by the grounds maintenance contractor.
- 5 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services explore options for co-location of the grounds maintenance client and contractor teams and review the weighting of KPIs to emphasise the performance of the key public-facing elements of the service.
- 6 That the implementation of the Localities Service be used to develop a framework for improved engagement and performance management of community services (including grounds maintenance) with local residents, community groups, Town and Parish Councils and ward Members.
- 7 That WBC Officers work with the contractor to seek input from appropriate specialist groups, including RSPB and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife

Trust (BBOWT) in order to inform management plans for biodiversity sites (woodland, copse and thicket) across the Borough.

- 8 That, as part of the Council's 21st Century Council programme, new technology be used to deliver more comprehensive, up to date information on grounds maintenance schedules, routes, performance and customer feedback via the Council's website.
- 9 That the Council continue discussions with Town and Parish Councils about the potential for further asset transfers and options for mutual support in relation to the grounds maintenance service, with regular updates to the Borough Parish Liaison Forum.
- 10 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services submit a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, at its meeting in February 2019, setting out the arrangements in place to ensure an effective grass cutting service in 2019.
- 11 That the Director of Locality and Customer Services submit a further report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, at its meeting in October 2019, setting out details of performance issues and lessons learnt during the 2019 grass cutting season.
- 12 That the Executive instruct Officers to provide updated guidance on the Council's approach to public consultation, in line with the commitments set out in the Council's Constitution and the relevant legal principles.

In relation to the next steps, the Chairman confirmed that the Scrutiny report would be submitted to the Executive at its meeting on 30 January 2019. The report would be accompanied by a covering report from the Executive Member and Director of Locality and Customer Services setting out which recommendations were accepted and which, if any, were not accepted (with supporting reasons). The Chairman would be invited to attend the Executive meeting to present the report on behalf of the Committee.

The Chairman invited Sarah Hollamby to address the Committee. Sarah stated that the report's recommendations were reasonable and generally acceptable. Sarah outlined the work that was currently under way to ensure that the contractor has sufficient resources in place to deliver an effective grass cutting service in 2019. Additional client monitoring resources would also be put in place to ensure that the contractor was achieving the required standards across the Borough.

During the ensuing discussion of the Scrutiny report Members and Officers raised the following points:

- It was clear that the contractor (ISS followed by Tivoli) did not achieve the required contractual standards in 2018 and this also appeared to be the situation at other Councils who used the same contractor.
- It was noted that the WBC contract was outcomes-based. However, it was felt that the contract contained too little prescription which meant that the Council was, in effect, putting too much trust in the contractor.
- The evidence from 2017 indicated that the contractor could deliver an effective service. It was contingent on WBC to ensure that the contractor had sufficient staff and machinery for the start of the grass cutting season in 2019.

- It was important to have clear evidence of non-performance by the contractor in case it was necessary to terminate the contract at some point in the future. Officers confirmed that the contract did contain key performance and management indicators. The KPI weightings would be reviewed in order to emphasise the importance of the grass cutting element of the contract.
- There had been some useful communication activity in 2018 which helped residents and community groups to understand the issues affecting the service. This should be built upon in 2019. There were tools on the market which could help to facilitate more effective communication.

The Chairman stated that the draft report would be reviewed to reflect the Committee's discussions and the comments from Officers. A final version would then be circulated to the Committee for approval prior to submission to the Executive in January 2019.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Sarah Hollamby, Peter Baveystock, and Mark Redfearn be thanked for attending the meeting to discuss the Scrutiny report;
- 2) further consideration be given to the points raised at the meeting prior to final agreement of the report;
- 3) the report be submitted to the Executive at its meeting on 30 January 2019;
- 4) in line with the Scrutiny report's recommendations, the Committee receive further progress reports on the Grounds Maintenance service at its meetings in February and October 2019.

60. COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT Q2

The Committee considered a report, set out Agenda pages 47 to 100, which gave details of Council Plan performance monitoring for Quarter 2, 2018/19 (July-September).

The report stated that 70% of the performance measures were achieving the assigned targets (Green), with 17% with performance marginally off-target (Amber) and 9 measures (13%) off-target (Red).

The key performance indicators reported Red in Quarter 2 were:

- EA1i – Percentage of Wokingham borough state-funded primary schools with a current Ofsted rating of Good or better/ EA2 – Percentage of children who attend a Wokingham Borough state-funded school (Primary, Secondary or Special) which was Good or better.
- EA7 - Percentage of infants who received a 6-8 week review by the time they were 8 weeks old.
- EA11 (new) - 12-month rolling voluntary turnover of qualified Social Workers within the Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Service.
- SC7 – Percentage of household waste reused, recycled and composted.

- VP1iv – Non-elective admissions.
- VP4 – Percentage of referrals in 2018/19 which are repeat referrals within 12 months of the previous referral to Children’s Social Care.
- VP7 - Percentage of children leaving care who achieved permanence.
- VP8 - Percentage of child protection visits due in the period which were completed on time (within 10 days of the previous visit).

The report highlighted a service area which was achieving a high level of performance, Council Tax Collection (CE3). For the fourth consecutive year the Council had achieved the highest Council Tax collection rate in the country and was on track to be one of the leading Councils in 2018/19. The collection team maintained excellent performance by continually improving processes and seeking improvements through the 21st Century Council programme such as the introduction of a self-serve option.

The report also provided responses to the issues raised by the Committee in relation to the Quarter 1 performance report.

The Chairman invited Members to comment on the performance management data in the report and any indicators causing concern. In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points and questions:

- In relation to the Wokingham Town Centre Market Place Regeneration project, Members sought further clarification on the stated reasons why the Market Place was not included in the list of key regeneration projects.
- In relation to the list of key performance indicators, why were some indicators (e.g. T9, T10 and T11) marked as “information only”?
- The number of Red indicators and the number of indicators showing deterioration were noted with concern. What steps were being taken to address the performance underlying the indicators showing deterioration?
- In relation to the performance indicators for Children’s Services, Shahid Younis gave details of some of the challenges facing the service and the steps being taken to improve performance. These included the recruitment of a new Director of Children’s Services and the filling of other key vacancies.

Shahid also confirmed that steps were being taken to develop more positive relationships with key partners such as the Schools Forum. It was noted that, whilst the service was moving in the right direction, some of the changes would take time to fully embed.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Council Plan Performance Monitoring report for Quarter 2, 2018/19, be noted;
- 2) further information be provided in response to the points and questions raised by the Committee.

61. BOROUGH PLAN UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 101 to 102, which gave details of progress relating to the development of the new Borough Plan.

The report stated that a number of public engagement events had been held in September 2018 which generated over 1,300 comments on the challenges facing the Borough. The highest number of public comments were received about traffic congestion, the impact of development, affordable housing and clean, green enjoyable spaces.

The Chairman asked for confirmation of the timeline for completing the Borough Plan. It was reported that the key milestones were:

- Community Conference to be held in January 2019;
- Further report to the O&S Management Committee – January 2019;
- Final draft of the Plan to the Executive in February 2019;
- Final approval of the Borough Plan by Council in March 2019;
- Borough Plan formally adopted in April 2019.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the progress report on the development of the new Borough Plan be noted;
- 2) the Committee receive a further update report on the development of the Borough Plan at its meeting on 16 January 2019.

62. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION FORWARD PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme and the Individual Executive Member Decision (IEMD) Forward Programme, as set out on Agenda pages 103 to 110.

Members considered the Forward Programmes and discussed items which may be suitable for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny work programmes.

RESOLVED: That the Executive and IEMD Forward Programmes be noted.

63. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered its forward work programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 111 to 124.

Members requested an update report on the implications of Brexit for the Council and its companies. The Chairman agreed that consideration of Brexit related issues was appropriate and requested that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee in January 2019.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny future work programmes be noted;
- 2) the Committee receive a report on the implications of Brexit for the Council and its companies at its meeting on 16 January 2019.

64. UPDATE REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OR NOMINATED MEMBER OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Chairman asked the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees present to provide an update on issues considered by the Committees since the previous meeting of the Management Committee.

Ken Miall reported that the Regional Schools Commissioner would be attending the next meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This would allow the Committee to question the Commissioner about the relationship between the Council and academy/private schools in the Borough.

Mike Haines reported that the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to an extraordinary meeting in February 2019 to consider the impact of changes to train services and the proposed Coppid Beech Park and Ride project.

RESOLVED: That the updates from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

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