

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 20 JUNE 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.30 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Philip Mirfin (Chairman), Chris Bowring, Ken Miall, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Bill Soane and Shahid Younis

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Prue Bray, John Kaiser, Ian Pittock, Malcolm Richards and Simon Weeks

Officers Present

Neil Carr (Principal Democratic Services Officer), Andy Couldrick (Chief Executive), Alex Deans (Interim Head of Highways and Transport) and Heather Thwaites (Director of Environment)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Parry Batth, Michael Firmager, Kate Haines, Pauline Helliard-Symons and Clive Jones.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 March 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

6. 21ST CENTURY COUNCIL

The Committee received a presentation from Andy Couldrick (Chief Executive) and Heather Thwaites (Director of Environment) on the Council's "21st Century Council" change programme. The programme had been developed in the light of a very challenging four year financial settlement from the Government. Members and Officers had concluded that further incremental savings would be increasingly difficult to achieve and, therefore, more fundamental changes were required to the shape and size of the organisation.

The key principle underpinning the 21st Century Council programme was that improved interaction with service users could improve the customer experience and, at the same time, deliver significant savings to the Council. The presentation highlighted the main workstreams under way as part of the programme and the ongoing governance structure. An important milestone would be the submission of a business case to the Council's Executive in September 2016.

The presentation highlighted the principles and assumptions which underpinned the programme, including:

- More self-serve for customers and staff supported by refreshed and new IT;
- Fewer hand-offs with more first-time resolution of issues;
- Multi-skilled, multi-tasked locality facing staff;
- Specialists released to focus on their areas of expertise;
- Different roles and behaviours for staff and managers;
- Training and support to develop "21st Century" Officers and Members;
- Proposed investment in IT, implementation capacity, staff training and support would be delivered in order to ensure that the projected revenue savings were achieved within the three year timespan of the current Medium Term Financial Plan.

Andy Couldrick highlighted three issues submitted as potential items for Overview and Scrutiny review which would be addressed as part of the 21st Century Council programme, viz:

- The collection, storage and reporting of corporate information – to be addressed via a new integrated Electronic Document and Records Management System;
- Housing Benefits and Rents – removing silos and joining up through a new organisational model;
- Multi-disciplinary wardens – to be investigated through the new organisational model.

Members welcomed the presentation and raised the following points:

- It was important to build resilience into any new systems to reduce dependence on the knowledge of key Officers;
- Back office systems must be able to talk to each other and support greater standardisation across the new organisation;
- It was essential to have effective managers in place at the start of any new ways of working and new IT support systems;

- It was important that staff from front-line services were involved in the design of new systems and processes;
- New ways of working should be driven by the needs of residents and customers rather than the needs of service providers;
- The Council should be clear about its statutory services and should explore alternative delivery models for its discretionary services;
- New IT systems should be able to generate accurate and timely management information to support Members and Officers in their roles;
- The proposed business model should be rigorously challenged to minimise the risk of overruns and overspends, especially on new IT systems.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Andy Couldrick and Heather Thwaites be thanked for the presentation on the 21st Century Council programme;
- 2) A further presentation/report be submitted to the Committee at its meeting on 7 November 2016.

7. ROAD REPAIRS - IMPACT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVES

The Committee considered a report, Agenda pages 11 to 14, which provided an update on highways maintenance activities delivered through the Highways Alliance made up of the Council, WSP and Balfour Beatty. Councillor Malcolm Richards (Executive Member for Highways and Transport) and Alex Deans (Interim Head of Highways and Transport) attended the meeting to answer Member questions.

The report stated that highways maintenance issues had been considered previously by the Committee at its meeting on 23 November 2015, when Members had requested a follow-up report in the summer of 2016.

The report highlighted changes in key personnel which had provided an impetus for improvements in service delivery and the adoption of best practice. These improvements would be aligned with the 21st Century Council change programme and the re-letting of the current highways and transport contracts over the next few years.

The report gave details of the way maintenance works were carried out and quality checked. Over the past year 85% of works checked met the required standard, with any failures being remedied by Balfour Beatty at no cost to the Council. Residents were encouraged to report general highway maintenance defects online via the Council's website while Members were encouraged to use the dedicated email address highwaysformembers@wokingham.gov.uk

Members raised the following points and questions:

- What criteria were used to determine whether work should be carried out on a specific road? It was confirmed that the Council's Highways Maintenance Policy set

out criteria which were used to assess the level and timing of works. The Government was due to publish new guidelines later in 2016 which would enable more local input decisions about the criteria for intervention. Members requested further information on the criteria and definitions used.

- Examples were given of roads being marked up for work with no follow-up action taking place. It was confirmed that if roads were marked up the work should be done and that failure to carry out works was probably due to a system error. Members were asked to report any such instances.
- Members gave details of situations where better co-ordination between different sections of the Highways team would have resulted in more effective service delivery and better customer service. It was confirmed that one of the key aims of the 21st Century Council programme was a reduction in departmental and service silos resulting in more joined up service delivery.
- In relation to the checking of work carried out by Balfour Beatty, what measures were being introduced to improve the current pass rate of 85%? It was confirmed that discussions were ongoing with both WSP (design) and Balfour Beatty (delivery) to improve service quality and customer service.
- The specific example of recent works on the footpath in Shute End was discussed. It was felt that the work was not carried out to a high standard. It was confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the contractor about the quality of work on this project.
- The introduction of cycle lanes on the Reading Road was discussed. Members expressed concerns about the quality of work and the phasing of the different sections. It was confirmed that the timing of the next phases of work would be discussed with the contractor.
- Members noted that in recent years they had been asked to provide a list of priority works in their Wards for consideration by the Executive Member. Councillor Richards confirmed that he was developing a list of priorities and Members should contact him with any local issues.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Councillor Richards and Alex Deans be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) further information on issues raised by the Committee be circulated to Members.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme, set out on Agenda pages 15 to 20. The Chairman invited Members to submit any issues or questions relating to the forthcoming Agenda items to Neil Carr in the Democratic Services team. This would enable Officers to attend the meeting with the relevant facts and figures.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) a report on transgender issues in schools be added to the Work Programme for the meeting on 5 September 2016;
- 2) an update on the 21st Century Council Programme be added to the Work Programme for the meeting on 7 November 2016;
- 3) Members submit ideas for future Agenda items to the Chairman or Neil Carr in the Democratic Services team;
- 4) the Work Programme, as amended, be confirmed.

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