

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 JULY 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.45 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Simon Weeks (Chairman), John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman), Prue Bray, Michael Firmager, John Jarvis, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin and Ian Pittock

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Anthony Pollock

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Graham Ebers, Director of Finance and Resources

11. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Parry Bath, Kate Haines, Pauline Helliars-Symons and Shahid Younis.

12. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 17 May and 31 May 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

15. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

16. PARTICIPATORY BUDGET EXERCISE FOR THE 2016/17 BUDGET

The Committee considered a report and supporting Appendices, set out on Agenda pages 23 to 62, which gave details of the Participatory Budget Exercise carried out in October 2015. Councillor Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance and Graham Ebers, Director of Finance and Resources, attended the meeting to discuss the report and answer Member questions.

The aim of the exercise had been to provide information on the financial challenges facing the Council and develop a better understanding of the views and priorities of local

residents. Appended to the report was a copy of the presentation slides used during the sessions and a breakdown of the comments submitted on a range of saving options for Council services.

The sessions were advertised on the Council website, news and social media and took place in five locations comprising Charvil, Finchampstead, Lower Earley, Wokingham and Woodley. Although attendance was low, the exercise was considered to have been a successful first attempt. It was intended to undertake a similar exercise later in 2016 which would incorporate the learning points from last year. These included more accessible venues, improved publicity and greater use of online promotion and feedback.

The Committee considered the 2015 exercise and made suggestions for improvements in the 2016 exercise. During the discussion Members made the following points:

- Would the sessions be more effective using fewer but bigger locations? It was felt that more locations would encourage local communities to attend and that Ward Members should be consulted about the most suitable sites.
- What were the aims of the sessions, and were they achieved? It was felt that the sessions combined information sharing and a two-way discussion on the financial challenges facing the Council. The feedback provided a different perspective which helped Members to understand the views of local residents.
- Interest and attendance could be boosted if Town and Parish Councils were given early notification of the upcoming events. For example, event details could be included in Town and Parish newsletters. It was felt that greater involvement of the Town and Parish Councils was a useful suggestion and would be pursued.
- It was important to use well known, accessible venues in order to boost attendance. For example, the use of St Crispin's school had generated a good turnout with good parking provision. Running the sessions at different times as an experiment would also help to identify the most suitable timings for local residents.
- Early notice of the upcoming events could be included in the annual Council Tax billing process. The sessions could also explain the different elements of the Council Tax bill, e.g. Town and Parish precepts, police and fire, etc.
- In terms of locations, it was suggested that Shinfield should be included and that the Crescent Centre was a good location for Earley. It was also suggested that a Saturday morning session in the Wokingham market place could attract residents. This location had worked well in relation to the town centre regeneration process.
- In relation to the presentations on individual services it was considered that Officers should highlight key risks and the way in which decisions impacted on a range of services. For example, savings in a discretionary service area could help to mitigate the increasing demand for statutory services in another service area.
- It was important to establish success criteria for the sessions and to carry out an evaluation at the end of the process. If the sessions were not deemed to be successful, alternative methods of communication with residents should be considered.

- Greater use of social media and online content were suggested. For example, video of the budget presentation could be posted on line and be followed up with an online survey.
- It was suggested that the presentation slides be amended to clarify the areas of spending which were controlled by the Council and which areas were ring-fenced.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Councillor Anthony Pollock and Graham Ebers be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) the ideas and suggestions put forward by the Committee be considered for inclusion in the participatory budget process to be undertaken later in 2016;
- 3) Councillor Pollock and Graham Ebers be invited to attend the Committee meeting on 22 November 2016 to provide feedback on the delivery and outcomes from this year's participatory budget exercise.

17. COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE MONITORING - FOLLOW UP

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 63 to 68, which gave details of follow-up performance monitoring information requested by Members at the Committee meeting on 31 May 2016.

The follow-up information related to the following performance indicators:

- Care proceedings completed within 26 weeks of application;
- Looked after children living within 20 miles of their home;
- Reducing the education gap at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4;
- Schools with an Ofsted rating of "good" or better;
- Kgs of residual household waste per household per annum;
- Household waste reused, recycled and composted.

Members considered the follow-up information and commented specifically on the outcome of recent Ofsted inspections for local schools and the recycling of wood.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Performance Monitoring follow-up report be noted;
- 2) further information be requested in relation to the Household Waste per household indicator to show trends in the tonnages of wood collected for recycling.

18. DEVELOPING THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 69 to 74, which outlined proposals to strengthen the Overview and Scrutiny work programming process.

The report gave details of the work programming discussion held at the Overview and Scrutiny Member training event held on 6 June 2016. The training session identified the need for a more structured work programming process which involved Executive Members at an earlier stage. It was felt that this approach would help to focus on key priorities and reduce the risk of duplication.

The report described the work programming template drawn up by the Centre for Public Scrutiny which included the following annual milestones:

- January/February – initial consultation with Overview and Scrutiny Members, Executive Members, partner organisations, community groups and residents;
- March – production of a long list of potential topics for consultation and review;
- April – production of a shortlist of topics for final agreement by Members;
- May – sign off the work programme and the Overview and Scrutiny annual reports.

The report also gave details of the current protocol relating to Overview and Scrutiny's role in policy development, agreed with the Leader of the Council earlier in 2016.

In discussing the report, Members made the following points:

- The move to a more structured work programming process, as set out in the report, was welcomed and it was suggested that the new approach be introduced at the start of 2017;
- It was felt that the policy development protocol should be reviewed as part of the refresh of work programming;
- It was important that the new process retained the flexibility for urgent items and gave Members the opportunity to request Agenda items in the run up to Overview and Scrutiny meetings;
- It was felt that the development of a clearer Executive annual work programme would assist Overview and Scrutiny in highlighting forthcoming issues for investigation and review.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The proposals in the report for a revised Overview and Scrutiny work programming process be approved;
- 2) That the current Overview and Scrutiny Policy Development Protocol be reviewed and aligned with the work programming process starting in 2017;

- 3) That the Chairman discuss the proposals for improved work programming with Councillor Keith Baker, the Leader of the Council;
- 4) That Councillor Baker be invited to attend the Committee's meeting on 22 November 2016 to discuss areas for improvement and closer working between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

19. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 75 to 78, which gave details of public and Member questions submitted to the Executive on 30 June 2016.

A regular report on public and Member questions was one of the ideas for improving the Overview and Scrutiny process approved by the Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2016. The aim of the report was to raise awareness of potential issues for further investigation and review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Members considered each of the questions submitted to the Executive and discussed the potential for further investigation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted, with no further action to be taken on this occasion.

20. 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 Forward Programme, as set out on Agenda pages 79 to 88.

Members discussed the Forward Programmes and considered the potential for items to be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Executive Forward Programme and the Individual Executive Member Decision Forward Programme be noted;
- 2) the proposed Executive items on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the Establishment of a Wokingham Multi Academy Trust be flagged up for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

21. UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

The Committee considered update reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen, set out at Agenda pages 89 to 94.

The reports gave details of the range of issues considered at recent meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the actions arising.

Members discussed the issues raised in the reports and discussed potential items for further investigation and review.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmens' reports be noted;
- 2) Councillor Bray circulate a report on the proposed allocation of resources for Civil Parking Enforcement across the Borough;
- 3) the proposal for developing a work programme for highway works be considered by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 November 2016;
- 4) the issue of weekend hospital bed-blocking be considered by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 5) the issue of proposed medical facilities in the Arborfield SDL be considered by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

22. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered its forward work programme and that of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 95 to 106.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny work programmes, as amended by earlier discussions, be approved.