

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.15 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Simon Weeks (Chairman), John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman), Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Pauline Helliar-Symons, John Jarvis, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Ian Pittock and Shahid Younis

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Keith Baker and Anthony Pollock

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Graham Ebers, Director of Corporate Services
Julie Holland, Service Manager, Business Improvement

34. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Parry Batth.

35. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Further to Minute 28, (discussion with Councillor Angus Ross), Michael Firmager clarified the planning position relating to the increased risk of flooding following the hard surfacing of front gardens.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

37. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

38. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

39. DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR KEITH BAKER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Keith Baker, Leader of the Council, attended the meeting to discuss the current operation of Overview and Scrutiny and opportunities for closer working between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Councillor Baker outlined his views on the current strengths and weakness of Overview and Scrutiny at the Council. He felt that Overview and Scrutiny tended to be a reactive process. Greater value could be added if Overview and Scrutiny became involved at the early stages of policy development. He also felt that Overview and Scrutiny meetings tended to be confrontational which meant that opportunities for closer working with Members of the Executive were not being maximised.

Councillor Baker welcomed the opportunity for closer working between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. He suggested further discussions between himself

and the Chairman of the Management Committee to explore how this might work in practice.

Members raised the following points and questions:

- Members did not feel that Overview and Scrutiny was confrontational in tone but did agree that Executive Members who were invited to attend could be given earlier notice of the issues to be discussed and the scope of questions to be put.
- Members agreed that Overview and Scrutiny could play a larger role in policy development. This could be via pre-decision scrutiny of new policies or in depth reviews of specific issues which led to new policy development.
- Members noted that the Committee had previously agreed to a new approach to developing its work programme. This included early discussions with Executive Members and a horizon scan to establish key issues which would arise in the year ahead. At the same time it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees needed to retain some flexibility in order to examine urgent issues which arose during the year.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Keith Baker be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) Councillor Baker and Councillor Weeks meet to discuss practical measures to improve the working relationship between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

40. DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR ANTHONY POLLOCK, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE

The Committee received a presentation on the recent public Budget Engagement exercise. Councillor Anthony Pollock, Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance and Graham Ebers, Director of Corporate Services, attended the meeting to answer Member questions.

The presentation stated that the Budget Engagement exercise had included five public sessions, attendance at community events and the Wokingham Careers Fair, a presentation to the Borough Parish Liaison Forum and an online survey. The numbers of residents attending the sessions were relatively low in terms of the Borough's overall population. However, it was a significant improvement on the attendance for the 2015 sessions which was a positive development.

The emerging findings from the public engagement exercise included the following:

- Protecting vulnerable adults and investment in prevention services – strong support with comments showing an awareness of the linkages between the two priorities;
- Waste and recycling – feedback suggested a willingness to consider changes to the current service delivery model;

- Libraries, Keeping the Borough Clean and Tidy, Sport, Leisure and Countryside – generally received less support than other priorities which could indicate a willingness to see reduced spending or new service delivery models;
- Increasing Charges to Protect Services – received enough support to indicate that higher fees and charges may be supported if they were linked to protecting services.

Members raised the following issues and questions:

- Had the feedback from the 2015 and 2016 exercises led to any changes in Council service priorities? It was confirmed that the 2016 feedback was more substantial, but as the exercise had only recently completed, it had not yet impacted on the 2017/18 Budget discussions.
- The number of residents involved in the various elements of the process, 538, was welcomed as a positive development. It was felt that this number would improve again next year as the process was refined and improved.
- Members suggested that preparation for the 2017 engagement exercise should start earlier in terms of booking the best venues and preparing early publicity material.
- Members advised caution in relation to the feedback on keeping the Borough clean and tidy. It was considered that the Borough was currently a clean and tidy place. However, Members felt that, if standards were allowed to fall, residents would notice quickly. The recent issues around the new grass cutting contract were cited as evidence.
- It was suggested that the outcomes from the public engagement exercise should be reported in the Wokingham Borough News together with publicity for next year's events.
- Members felt that social media could be used more effectively to signpost the events and online activities. This would also help the Council to engage with younger people across the Borough.
- Members suggested that the Council engage with local secondary schools at the start of next year's autumn term. Schools may be interested in engaging with the process which would help to broaden the range of views received.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Anthony Pollock and Graham Ebers be thanked for attending the meeting;
- 2) That Member comments and suggestions be fed into the development of the Budget engagement exercise for 2017.

41. COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2016/17 QUARTER 2 REPORT

The Committee considered the Q2 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report 2016/17, set out on Agenda pages 13 to 72. Julie Holland, Service Manager, Business Improvement, introduced the report and answered Member questions.

Julie Holland stated that, following a request at the previous meeting, the report contained a comparison of Red, Amber and Green indicators compared to the previous quarter. The report also included an appendix which set out the thresholds used in allocating Red, Amber and Green status. It also included an appendix which set out the indicators which had been discontinued from 2015/16.

The report indicated that the breakdown of performance indicators in Quarter 2 was 37 Green, 10 Amber and 5 Red. The indicators of greatest concern (Red) related to:

- % referrals in 2016/17 which are repeat referrals within 12 months of a previous referral to Children's Social Care;
- % Children who became subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) who are subject to a CPP for a second or subsequent time within 24 months;
- % Care Proceedings completed in 2015/16 within 26 weeks of application;
- % Looked After Children living within 20 miles of Berkshire West;
- Kgs of residual household waste per household per annum.

Julie Holland stated that, following concerns expressed by the Committee, the timeliness of the performance management information had improved. She also informed the Committee that the 21st Century Council change programme was reviewing the Council's performance management system with a view to making performance data much more timely and accessible.

Members raised the following issues and questions:

Members welcomed the improved timeliness of the performance data but noted that it was still being considered by the Committee almost two months after the end of Quarter 2. It was suggested that Councillors Helliard-Symons and Weeks raise this issue at the next meeting of the 21st Century Council Member Group.

Members queried the current arrangements which meant that performance data was considered by the Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Briefing before being submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It was felt that the performance data should be circulated to all Members at the same time. This would allow the Committee to consider the data and potential lines of enquiry before the Agenda papers were circulated.

Members requested further information on internships, a potential target relating to housing self-builds and the reasons why the indicators in Appendix C, Agenda page 71, were no longer reported to Members as part of the quarterly monitoring report.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Quarter 2 Council Plan Performance Monitoring report be noted;
- 2) Member concerns relating to the timeliness of performance data submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be fed into the 21st Century Council change programme;
- 3) additional information be circulated to Members on the specific issues raised during discussion of the report.

42. CORPORATE PEER REVIEW

The Committee considered a report, Agenda pages 73 to 94, which gave details of the Corporate Peer Review of the Council undertaken in early 2016. Appended to the report were the review team's Feedback Report and the Action Plan developed by the Council in response.

The report stated that the Peer Review team had identified a number strengths and a number of key challenges facing the Council over the next few years. It was planned for the team to revisit the Council in February 2017 in order to monitor progress against their earlier recommendations. The report also stated that the issues highlighted in the Feedback Report could be used to inform discussions about the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' work programmes for 2017/18.

Members raised the following issues and questions:

- It was considered that the Feedback report presented an accurate picture of the Council's strengths and the challenges it faced, particularly in relation to funding reductions;
- Members felt that the Peer Review process was useful in raising the profile of the Council as an effective, well-run organisation. This could help to attract further funding and investment into the Borough.
- Members asked for more information on the background to the Peer Review and the timeframe for any future reviews. It was felt that the changes arising out of the 21st Century Council programme should be allowed to embed before any further corporate reviews were commissioned.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Corporate Peer Review report and Council Action Plan be noted;
- 2) That the issues raised by the Peer Review team be fed into the discussions on the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' work programmes for 2016/17.

43. SHARED SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Committee considered a report, Agenda pages 95 to 99, which reminded Members of the establishment of a Shared Services Task and Finish Group in September 2015.

The Group had met in March 2016 to agree terms of reference and a work programme. However, it was subsequently reported that Shared Services was one of the areas being reviewed as part of the 21st Century Council change programme.

In setting its work programme the Management Committee had agreed the principle that scrutiny reviews should not duplicate work taking place in other parts of the Council. In line with this principle the Task and Finish Group had put its work programme on hold pending a discussion by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Shared Services Task and Finish Group work programme be put on hold pending the outcome of the review of Shared Services being undertaken as part of the 21st Century Council change programme.

44. MONITORING OF PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Committee considered a report, Agenda pages 101 to 108, which set out details of public and Member questions submitted to the recent meetings of the Council and Executive.

Members considered the questions and discussed the potential for further investigation of the issues raised.

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

45. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE FORWARD PROGRAMME AND THE INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme and the Individual Executive Member Decision Forward programme, as set out on Agenda pages 109 to 116. Members discussed the Forward Programmes and considered the potential for items to be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. During the discussion Members considered the potential for reviews on Optalis and the updating of the Local Plan.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Weeks discuss the potential reviews of Optalis and the Local Plan Update with Councillor Baker.

46. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered its forward work programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 117 to 128.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Members requested an update on the item relating to the usage of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds;
- It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would include items on the Coombes Task and Finish Group, Career Choices and Guidance and an update on Foster Carers and Social Worker Recruitment;
- It was suggested that the item on plans for primary care facilities for the Arborfield Strategic Development Location (SDL) be widened to cover the other SDLs in the Borough;
- It was suggested that an item be included on the future management of community hubs within the Borough's SDLs;
- It was suggested that an item be included on the process followed in developing the expression of interest to the Government relating to the potential garden community at Grazeley;
- It was suggested that Overview and Scrutiny Committees should review Budget monitoring in instances where significant overspends and underspends occurred.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee forward work programmes be approved with further consideration to be given to the review items put forward by Members.

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

The Committee received update reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen in relation to recent meetings.

RESOLVED: That the update reports from the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

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