

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2017 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.50 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Simon Weeks (Chairman), John Kaiser (Vice-Chairman), Parry Batth, Michael Firmager, Kate Haines, Pauline Helliari-Symons, John Jarvis, Ken Miall, Ian Pittock and Shahid Younis

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Officers Present

Neil Carr, Principal Democratic Services Officer

48. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Lindsay Ferris and Philip Mirfin.

49. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pauline Helliari-Symons declared a personal interest in Item 53, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service – Service Redesign Consultation, in relation to her role as one of the Council's representatives on the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. Councillor Helliari-Symons remained in the meeting during discussion of the item.

51. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

52. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

53. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE REDESIGN CONSULTATION

The Committee considered a report, Agenda pages 13 to 76, which set out details of a service redesign consultation being undertaken by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer), Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer) and Jim Powell (Group Manager) attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the redesign proposals.

The report and presentation set out the strategic context underlying the service redesign proposals. During 2016, the Fire and Rescue Service had consulted on its strategic plans and its response standards. It was now consulting on its service redesign proposals. The consultation started on 12 December 2016 and would run until 13 March 2017. The redesign proposals had been developed to ensure that the service:

- had the right resources, in the right place, at the right time in order to keep our communities safe;
- was able to deliver a modern, fit for purpose service which was efficient, innovative and resilient;

- was able to balance its budget in response to reductions in central government funding.

In order to facilitate the consultation process the Fire and Rescue Service had developed a number of costed options each of which would deliver the required level of savings. The options put forward a combination of service changes covering aspects such as closure and/or remote management of fire stations, changes to the current shift systems and disestablishment of the Retained Support Unit.

Following the presentation, Members raised the following points and questions:

- What impact would the possible closure of the Wargrave fire station have on service delivery to local residents and businesses? It was confirmed that the Wargrave station was a retained station and that nearly all local incidents were currently handled by fire crews from Wokingham Road, Maidenhead or Henley. Consequently, there would be little impact on service delivery if the station was closed.
- What were the current key performance standards for the service and what would be the impact of the redesign proposals? It was confirmed that the key performance indicator was attendance at incidents within 10 minutes of the receipt of an emergency call. The service was currently achieving its performance standard of 10 minute attendance in 75% of cases. The service redesign proposals would not have a significant impact on the achievement of the performance standard.
- Why was there no preferred option set out within the consultation? It was confirmed that the legislative requirements for public consultation meant that it was not possible to set out a preferred action. Doing so may result in a legal challenge. Consequently, options were developed which met the overall requirements for service quality, value for money and risk management. At the end of the consultation period the Fire Authority would meet and go through a process of “conscientious consideration” of the different options and the relevant feedback received for each one.
- In addition to the service redesign proposals what steps were being taken to develop closer working with the other emergency services? It was confirmed that discussions were ongoing to develop closer working arrangements and shared facilities wherever possible. As an example, the new tri-service station in Hungerford was due to open in the summer of 2017. This station would be shared by ambulance, police and fire and rescue services.
- Would the service redesign options result in staff redundancies? It was confirmed that most of the options in the consultation would result in workforce reductions. However, every effort would be made to use natural wastage and avoid compulsory redundancies. One of the key aims of the consultation was to ensure that front-line and back-office staff were fully engaged with the process and supportive of any service changes resulting from the proposals.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons summarised her perspective on the consultation exercise from her role as a member of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

Overall, the Committee supported the proposed outcomes underpinning the consultation and recognised the challenges facing the service. Members also welcomed the detailed evidence base and the methodology used to develop the service redesign options.

Members agreed that points raised during the discussion be incorporated into a draft letter setting out the Committee's response to the service redesign consultation. The draft letter to be circulated to members of the Committee for comment prior to the submission of a final response to the Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Andy Fry, Trevor Ferguson and Jim Powell be thanked for attending the meeting and giving a presentation to the Committee;
- 2) the Committee recognises the challenges faced by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and supports the methodology used in developing and consulting on service redesign proposals;
- 3) Democratic Services draft a response letter, summarising the Committee's views on the consultation and redesign options and circulate the draft letter to Members for comment;
- 4) the final version of the letter, incorporating Members' comments, be submitted to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service as the Committee's formal response to the consultation;
- 5) Members submit individual responses to the consultation to reflect the views of their constituents, as necessary.

54. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMES 2017-18

The Committee considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 77 to 83, which set out proposals for strengthening the Overview and Scrutiny work programming process. The report highlighted the benefits of effective work programming and reminded Members of recent discussions with the Leader of the Council about ways to develop more effective working between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The report proposed an earlier start to the work programming process with a revised timetable as follows:

- January – initial consultation with Overview and Scrutiny Members, Executive Members and key stakeholders;
- February – development of a long list of Scrutiny topics for consultation and feedback;
- March – final work programmes confirmed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee;
- April – publication and implementation of the work programmes;
- November – mid-year review of the work programmes.

Appended to the report was a draft 2017/18 work programme for each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Further items for consideration arising out of the consultation exercise would be added to the existing draft programme for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 28 March 2017.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The draft Overview and Scrutiny work programmes, appended to the report, be approved for public consultation;
- 2) The public consultation process, set out in the report, be approved;
- 3) The Overview and Scrutiny work programmes for 2017/18 be finalised at the next meeting of the Management Committee on 28 March 2017.

55. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The Committee considered a report, set out on Agenda pages 85 to 109, which provided an update on the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act placed a general duty on public bodies to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who shared a protected characteristic and those who do not. The protected characteristics were age, sex, race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

The report stated that, in order to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty, public bodies had a further specific duty to publish supporting information and set out and monitor Equality Objectives. The report provided demographic information about the Borough and gave examples of initiatives undertaken by the Council which demonstrated compliance with the statutory duty. The report also set out five proposed Equality Objectives as follows:

Objective 1 – Services are easily accessible for all our residents and are capable of responding to the changing needs of our communities;

Objective 2 – Vulnerable individuals and groups are supported and looked after.

Objective 3 – Consultation and engagement are effective and inclusive for all our communities.

Objective 4 – The Council's workforce is committed to equality and reflects the communities it serves.

Objective 5 – The 21st Century Council programme will deliver on the Council's commitment to equality through service commissioning and delivery, improved procurement and partnership working.

Appended to the report was the Equality Monitoring Workforce Report for 2016/17. The report demonstrated how the Council had met its statutory obligations in relation to its workforce. The report also demonstrated how employee data was captured and analysed to ensure that the Council was complying with its duties.

The report stated that further monitoring reports would be submitted on an annual basis to ensure that the Council met its duties under the Equality Act and its workforce reflected the communities it served.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Public Sector Equality Duty report be supported for submission to the Council's Executive;
- 2) the five Equality Objectives set out in the report be endorsed;
- 3) annual monitoring reports be submitted to the Committee to demonstrate the Council's compliance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

56. MONITORING OF PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Committee considered a report, set out on Agenda pages, 111 to 118, which gave details of public and Member questions submitted to a recent meeting of the Council.

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.

57. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE FORWARD PROGRAMME AND THE INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION 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 119 to 128. Members discussed the Forward Programmes and considered the potential for items to be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Forward programmes be noted;
- 2) an update report on implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on 28 March 2017.

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

The Committee considered update reports from the recent meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as follows:

Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2017. An update report was set out at Agenda page 129. Members noted the briefing provided to the Committee by Superintendent Rob France on the merged Bracknell and Wokingham Police areas and welcomed the offer to Members to join police patrols.

Members raised the issue of the new cycleway/footpath aimed at improving access to the Bohunt school. Concern was expressed at the Council resources available to meet the demand for cycle proficiency training for children who were likely to use the new cycleway.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2017. The Chairman gave a verbal update and referred to the report of the Coombes Primary School Task and Finish Group which had been considered at the meeting. Following the discussion at the Committee a further meeting of the Task and Finish Group had been scheduled to discuss the findings of the report with the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Director of People Services. The finalised Task and Finish Group report would be submitted to the Council's Executive in due course.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2017. The meeting had been cancelled due to unavailability of external partners. A number of items would be carried forward to the next meeting on 8 March 2017.

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

59. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered its forward work programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 132 to 138.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

The next meeting of the Management Committee (28 March 2017) would consider a report on the infrastructure projects that can be funded from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

The next meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (21 March 2017) would consider the final report of the Coombes School Task and Finish Group and a report on the Children Missing Education Strategy.

Members noted that additional scrutiny items were likely to be added following public consultation on the draft work programmes considered earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny forward work programmes be approved.