

TITLE	Leader and Executive Member Updates
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 20 September 2017
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director, Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Leader and Executive Member for Highways and Transport

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny is one of the checks and balances which ensure that the Council and its partners make and implement effective decisions.

Discussions between the Committee and Executive Members are aimed at developing greater understanding of key issues over the year ahead and identifying issues which can benefit from challenge and/or support from Overview and Scrutiny.

The outcome will be greater clarity on the challenges facing the Council and a more robust decision making process.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) consider the submissions from the Leader and the Executive Member for Highways and Transport;
- 2) identify any issues which will benefit from challenge and/or support from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees over the year ahead.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

As part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2017/18 Members have identified the benefit of discussions with the Council's Executive Members. The aim of the discussions is to increase awareness of the key policy and service issues over the year ahead and to identify areas where Overview and Scrutiny is available to provide effective challenge and support.

Members have agreed the principle that Overview and Scrutiny can add more value if it is proactive rather than reactive. This will be achieved if issues are scrutinised prior to implementation and emerging policies are considered at an earlier stage.

Councillors Haitham Taylor and Bowring have been invited to attend the meeting to discuss the key issues and policies to be considered in the next year.

Background

As part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2017/18 Members have identified the benefit of early discussions with the Council's Executive Members. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees aim to facilitate this process by:

- considering issues which reflect local needs and concerns;
- prioritising topics for scrutiny which have the most impact or benefit;
- involving local residents and stakeholders;
- being flexible enough to respond to new or urgent issues.

The aim of the discussions with Executive Members is to increase awareness of the key policy and service issues over the year ahead and to identify areas where Overview and Scrutiny is available to provide effective challenge and support. Members have agreed the principle that Overview and Scrutiny can add more value if it is proactive rather than reactive. This will be achieved if issues are scrutinised prior to implementation and emerging policies are considered at an earlier stage.

Councillors Charlotte Haitham Taylor and Chris Bowring have been invited to attend the meeting to discuss their portfolios and the key issues to be considered in the next year.

Councillor Haitham Taylor is Leader of the Council

The Leader's responsibilities include:

- Appointing Members to the Executive and making changes during the Municipal Year;
- Co-ordination of Strategy and overseeing the production of the Council Plan;
- Working with Executive Members to co-ordinate the Council's services and advising the Executive on progress against the Council's financial targets;
- Developing the Council's Communications and Marketing Strategy;
- Raising the Council's profile and promoting consultation, communication and participation with residents, community groups, businesses and the public sector;
- Overseeing the operation of Council-owned companies and their subsidiaries;
- Overseeing the Council's IT function.

Councillor Bowring is Executive Member for Highways and Transport

This portfolio includes responsibility for:

- Production of the Council's Local Transport Plan and the Community, School and Subsidised Transport Strategy;
- Monitoring highway maintenance plans, including street scene and signage and winter road maintenance;

- Representing the Council on outside bodies and in negotiations with regional, national and Government bodies;
- Parking policy, implementation and management, including Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE);
- Provision of cost-effective home to school transport services;
- Liaison with train operating companies and Network Rail on strategic planning issues;
- Communication and media relations relating to Highways and Transport services.

Annex A contains the key lines of enquiry agreed by the Chairman and submitted to the Leader and Executive Member for Highways and Transport in advance of the meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	NA	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	NA	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	NA	NA	NA

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

To be considered as part of the discussions.

Cross-Council Implications

The roles of Leader and Executive Member for Highways and Transport impact on a wide range of areas which have an impact across the organisation and the Borough

List of Background Papers

NA

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Date 8 September 2017	Version No. 1

Key Lines of Enquiry
Charlotte Haitham Taylor – Leader of the Council

Introduction

In order to assist the committee in their discussions we have created some indications on the lines of questioning we wish to pursue. These are not exclusive and we reserve the right to look at any other areas which emerge during the discussion. It would be helpful to the operation of the Committee if all answers are as brief as possible.

Presentations

In line with good custom and practice for other councils presentations are not allowed during the meeting but they can be circulated in advance if considered to be helpful for our discussions.

Line 1 – Remit

The remit of the Leader and the Executive is documented in the Constitution. It is not particularly clear in the current Constitution exactly what specific “point” responsibilities the Leader has. Almost all the sections of 5.2.6 refer to things like “working with”, “overseeing”, “ensuring that there is an appropriate level...”and so on. There are many leadership models ranging from strong hands on to total delegation. Can the leader clarify what leadership model she is operating under and what specific areas she feels directly responsible for?

Line 2 – Priorities

Can you please clarify exactly what your priorities are for the next two years? In answering can you explain why you have chosen these and what your plan is to address them?

Line 3 – Communications with Councillors

Increasingly there are many comments from councillors that they feel “by passed” by officers when actions are currently underway. There are many examples where councillors are informed of things after they have happened or not informed at all. Whilst this appears to occur across the Council, Highways appear to be the one service that continually crops up. Councillors should be considered as a valuable asset in keeping their residents informed of what is occurring in their ward. Can the Leader comment on this and, if she agrees, what remedies are being put in place?

Line 4 – Town Centre Regeneration

Wokingham Town Centre regeneration is now well under way which will ultimately bring benefits to all residents. However, other towns in the Borough do have their own needs especially around capital investment. Costs for the Wokingham regeneration have continually increased and been accepted without much public scrutiny. Can the Leader please comment on these points especially around the investment elsewhere and the increasing costs?

Line 5 – Budgeted Savings

Can the Leader please comment on whether the budgeted savings are likely to be achieved? If any are unlikely to be achieved can the Leader please clarify what steps are planned to rectify this.

Line 6 – Independent Remuneration Panel & Executive

With the impending report of the new IRP due in November can the Leader please clarify their views on the size of the Executive (which has increased by two), multiple SRAs and the interaction between Fire Authority, NED & SRA payments?

Key Lines of Enquiry

Chris Bowring - Executive Member for Highways and Transport

Introduction

In order to assist the Committee in their discussions we have created some indications on the lines of questioning we wish to pursue. These are not exclusive and we reserve the right to look at any other areas which emerge during the discussion. It would be helpful to the operation of the Committee if all answers are as brief as possible.

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Line 1 – Communications

Highways, in particular, are one of those services that residents see instantly as they try and navigate holdups in the road network. For some time now Councillors have been blindsided by actions taken on the roads without any advanced notice. As Councillors are usually the first port of call for questions by residents this lack of information has led to extreme frustration by residents as they expect their local Councillor to know. It is also an inefficient way to operate as with the information Councillors can help to stop residents contacting the Council as they can be the line of information. Can you inform the Committee what is being done about this lack of information?

Line 2 - Policies

Can you please inform the Committee of any creation or deletion of policies for the next fiscal year? Can you also cover any planned amendments of existing policies for the next fiscal year?

Line 3 – Arrangements

Can you please inform the Committee of how you plan to develop these over the next fiscal year? Will backbenchers be involved – e.g. a working party? Will this involvement be cross party? If a working party will the chairman be independent?

Line 4 – Consultation

Can you please inform the committee of any consultations planned for any of these?

Line 5 – Timescales

Whilst accepting that timescales have to be flexible what is the target completion of these activities? If there are any intermediate steps (e.g. consultations) can you include them in the timescales.

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