

TITLE	Discussion with Executive Member
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 9 January 2018
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director, Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration

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 submission from the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration;
- 2) highlight 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.

Councillor Stuart Munro (Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration) and Philip Mirfin (Deputy Executive Member) have been invited to attend the meeting to outline key issues and challenges coming up over the next year and to answer Member questions.

Background

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 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 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.

Councillor Stuart Munro (Executive Member) and Philip Mirfin (Deputy Executive Member) have been invited to attend the meeting to discuss the Business, Economic Development and Regeneration portfolio and the key issues to be considered in the next year.

Councillor Munro's responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the projects relating to town centre regeneration;
- Overseeing the Council's Asset Strategy in relation to all Council owned property;
- Overseeing the Council's external funding strategy in order to maximise income from government, EU and other sources;
- Overseeing the Economic Development Strategy and the development of good working relationships with local businesses;
- Leading on the Local Enterprise Partnership and City Deal;
- Acting as primary press spokesman on matters relating to the portfolio.

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

Also appended to the report is the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2016/21, agreed by the Executive in June 2016.

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 Executive Member impact on a wide range of areas which have an impact across the organisation and the Borough.

List of Background Papers

Economic Development Strategy 2016/21

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Date 22 December 2017	Version No. 1

Key Lines of Enquiry

Stuart Munro, Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Regeneration

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 – Policies

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

Line 2 – Arrangements

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

Line 3 – 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.

Line 4 – Consultation

Can you please inform the Committee of any consultations planned for any of these issues? What other steps will you take to involve residents and community groups in the development and implementation of new or amended policies?

Line 5 – Economic Development Strategy

What progress has been made in achieving the objectives set out in the Economic Development Strategy 2016/21? What are the key targets underpinning the strategy? Are the targets being achieved?

Line 6 – Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

How does the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership support the Council in realising its goals in relation to business, economic development and regeneration? How is success measured and reported?

Line 7 – Communication

What are the key communication issues relating to your portfolio? How do you intend to get the key messages across to residents, partners and the media?

Note: An update on Town Centre Regeneration will be considered by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2018. Consequently, this part of the portfolio is not addressed in the key lines of enquiry.

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