

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 MARCH 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.40 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: John Kaiser (Chairman), Laura Blumenthal (Vice-Chairman), Parry Batth, Lindsay Ferris, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Ken Miall, Ian Pittock, Malcolm Richards and Chris Smith

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Julian McGhee-Sumner

Officers Present

Graham Ebers, Director of Corporate Services
Heather Thwaites, 21st Century Council Programme Director
Matt Pope, 21st Century Council Programme Manager
Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist

76. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Kate Haines, Bill Soane and Shahid Younis.

77. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 February 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

79. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

80. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

81. 21ST CENTURY COUNCIL

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 9 to 30, which gave details of progress relating to the 21st Century Council change programme.

Julian McGhee Sumner (Executive Member for Finance), Heather Thwaites (21st Century Council Programme Director), Graham Ebers (Director of Corporate Services) and Matt Pope (21st Century Council Programme Manager) attended the meeting to provide the update and answer Member questions.

The report reminded Members of the key outcomes arising out of the 21st Century Council programme, including:

- greater access to Council services through digital channels;
- swifter resolution of issues and the ability for residents to track progress;
- greater focus on problem solving and customer responsiveness;
- a leaner, more efficient Council costing significantly less to run.

Heather Thwaites gave details of the latest developments:

- Phase 1 of the programme had been completed successfully;
- Phase 2 was to be delivered in two tranches with the programme extending to September 2018;
- implementation of the Customer and Locality provisions was progressing to plan;
- the People Services part of the programme was delayed resulting in a potential underachievement of savings.

Appended to the report was a paper from Manjeet Gill (Interim Chief Executive) which provided an assessment of the implementation of the programme to date. The Chief Executive's overall assessment was that the programme was ambitious and bold and an appropriate response to help address, in part, the ongoing funding challenges facing the Council. The business case was considered to be sound, encompassing many initiatives that high performing Councils across the country were progressing.

The report also contained a list of key lines of enquiry which the Committee wished to explore, including:

- achievement of the programme against the September 2016 business case;
- delivery of financial savings against target and the impact of the delay in People Services;
- implementation of IT schemes on time and on budget;
- factors underlying the delay in the People Services part of the programme;
- progress in improving Councillor interactions with officers and residents;
- safeguards for residents who were unable/unwilling to self-serve using the Council website;
- management of the key risks outlined in the business case;
- the current state of staff morale and the organisational impact of interim/agency staff.

During the ensuing discussion Members explored the key lines of enquiry and raised the following points:

- In relation to the 21st Century Council IT improvements, were the changes achieved through the purchase of new systems or through achieving greater functionality from existing hardware and software? It was confirmed that the improvements were a combination of the two. Some improvements, such as the improved mapping system were the result of new investment.
- Did the new IT systems improve linkages to contractors and third parties? It was confirmed that this approach was a key part of the new systems. For example, Veolia (the waste contractor) was using the Council's portals and software. The aim was to promote a "one Council" approach for the benefit of residents and customers.
- In relation to the delay in the People Services were the team confident that the projected savings would be achieved? It was confirmed that the Interim Director of People Services, Paul Senior, was committed to delivering the savings within the amended timeframe. Recruitment of a permanent Director was being organised in the context of the process for recruiting a permanent Chief Executive. Graham Ebers confirmed that the underachievement of savings in 2018/19 was balanced by a new savings target for 2019/20. The slippage was factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

- In relation to the Change Readiness data in the papers, were there any key trends? What was the data indicating about the state of staff morale? It was confirmed that the Change Readiness surveys were undertaken before the start of consultation on new phases of the programme and after structure changes had been completed. So, for example, the December 2017 responses were made up of nearly 50% staff from People Services at a time when the previous Director had left and the Interim Director had just arrived. It was important to understand the organisational context within which each survey was undertaken. It was accepted that delays in the programme had increased uncertainty and impacted on staff morale.
- In relation to constant changes in the local government landscape, such as the changes to health and social care, did the 21st Century Council model have the flexibility to adapt to the changing environment? It was confirmed that the model was developed within the context of a changing landscape. So, for example, part of the reason for the pause in People Services was to ensure that the Council and its partners were maximising the potential for partnership working.
- How was the Audit Committee monitoring the financial elements of the 21st Century Council programme? It was confirmed that the Audit Committee had considered various aspects of the programme such as the mitigation of risk and governance. The Audit Committee would receive further updates in due course.
- In relation to the new service delivery channels, were service pressures emerging which required additional resources? It was confirmed that a strength of the new organisational model was the involvement of services in designing and owning the new ways of working. Where service pressures were identified, such as Highways, additional capacity was delivered.

RESOLVED That:

- Julian McGhee-Sumner, Graham Ebers, Heather Thwaites and Matt Pope be thanked for attending the Committee to answer Member questions;
- progress relating to the implementation of the 21st Century Council change programme be noted;
- the Committee receive quarterly update reports, with a specific focus on the delivery of the People Services elements of the programme.

82. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES 2018-19

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 31 to 40, which gave details of the Overview and Scrutiny work programmes for 2018/19, as discussed at the previous meeting.

The report also contained a request from Finchampstead Parish Council for the inclusion of a Scrutiny item relating to the condition of footways, kerbsides and road signs. The request highlighted the following issues:

- Many road signs were ineffective due to being dirty, damaged, obscured and/or out of date;

- Many footways were unfit for purpose, especially for residents with mobility or visual impairments;
- Many kerbsides had accumulated debris which resulted in blocked gullies and uneven/slippery roadsides.

Members felt that the Scrutiny request was worth pursuing and agreed to include it in the work programme for the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Pauline Helliard-Symons advised that the following items should be added to the work programme for the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Care Leavers Council Tax Exemption;
- New Education Vision Strategy;
- Hearing the voices of young people;
- Draft Strategy for children with special educational needs and disabilities;
- Children in care and care leavers survey.

Members considered the possible inclusion of an item relating to the new highways and transport contracts. It was felt that an update on the tendering process and timeframes should be sought before deciding whether to include an item in the relevant work programme.

It was agreed that the item on SDL delivery/Local Plan Update be amended to include updates on the Council's 5 year land supply.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The 2018/19 Overview and Scrutiny work programmes, as amended, be approved;
- 2) the Scrutiny request from Finchampstead Parish Council be approved for inclusion in the Community and Corporate work programme;
- 3) the Overview and Scrutiny Committees allocate items from the work programmes to specific meetings during 2018/19;
- 4) the Director of Environment be asked to provide an update on the tendering process for the new highways contracts, prior to consideration of a specific Scrutiny item at the next meeting;
- 5) the next meeting of the Committee be held on 23 May 2018.

83. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme as set out on Agenda pages 41 to 46.

Members welcomed the proposed Unauthorised Encampment Policy and agreed that the Parking Strategy 2018/22 be considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Executive Forward Programme be noted;

- 2) a review of the proposed Parking Strategy 2018/22 be included in the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2018/19.

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

The Committee noted that there were no further updates from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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