

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 JULY 2015 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.50 PM

### **Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Tim Holton (Chairman), Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman), Lindsay Ferris, Pauline Helliar-Symons, John Jarvis, Norman Jorgensen, Ken Miall, Malcolm Richards and Shahid Younis

### **Officers Present**

Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
Julie Holland, Service Manager, Business Improvement

### **9. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Prue Bray, (substituted by Lindsay Ferris) and UllaKarin Clark.

### **10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 June 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **11. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

### **12. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

### **13. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

### **14. BALANCED SCORECARD 2014/2015 QUARTER 4**

The Committee considered a report a report on Agenda pages 17 to 26 which set out details of the Council's performance as measured by a series of performance indicators for Quarter 4 of the 2014/2015 financial year. It was confirmed that this was last time the Balanced Scorecard report would be presented in the current format prior to the redesigned scorecard coming into effect.

Julie Holland, Service Manager Business Improvement presented the report and highlighted that out of a total of 64 performance indicators, 50 or 75% had a 'green' status and were meeting the agreed target, 9 were 'amber' and 5 had a 'red' status and were below target. Members were reminded that each indicator had a commentary which gave more context and if a target was not being achieved, the corrective action being taken to improve performance.

The Committee then discussed the Quarter 4 report and a summary of the points raised during the discussion is set out below:

- With reference to Indicator 2 – Turnover of Staff, a number of Members of the questioned how the target of 10-15% had been arrived at and some concerns were expressed that even 10% represented a relatively high rate of staff turnover;
- A general observation was made that the Committee should consider increasing the level of challenge in its consideration of the appropriateness of particular targets and

whether they had been set at too low or too high level. It was also felt that it would be helpful for the Committee to have a clear idea of how the targets had been agreed including the involvement in that process by the relevant Executive Member;

- With regard to Indicator 8 – Looked After Children who have three or more placements within the year it was noted that press coverage indicated that such children often had to cope with the additional disruption of changing schools. Nationally Looked After Children tended to perform less well academically and Members were concerned that appropriate measures were in place locally to support them;
- Members referred to the changes the Government had made to Housing Benefit and questioned whether there was any data to suggest whether this national policy change had impacted on the number of households becoming homeless;
- The high rates of Council Tax collection by the Council were noted and it was felt that was a significant achievement worth recognising;
- With regard to Indicator 59 - the number of dwellings permitted which were considered to be countable within the 5 year land supply, Members sought reassurance that sufficient homes would be delivered to meet the land supply targets;

Julie Holland agreed to look into the areas raised by the Committee including the process by which targets had been agreed. The Committee was reminded that the revised Balanced Scorecard report was significantly shorter and different in presentation than the previous model and contained stronger links to the Council's priorities.

The Chairman commented that as part of the Committee's role to hold Executive Members to account, Executive Members would in due course be invited to attend future meetings of the Committee. This would 1) allow the Committee to ask them questions relating to the performance and operation of Council services within their portfolios including performance as reported via the Balanced Scorecard and 2) provide an opportunity for the Executive Member to highlight and share issue relating to their service area priorities.

Kevin Jacob commented that it was anticipated that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would if it felt appropriate, invite the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing to attend its meetings and that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny could also invite the Executive Member for Children's Services to attend its meetings.

After discussion, it was agreed that a final decision on the scheduling of the invitations to attend the Committee should be made in light of any areas of concern or interest highlighted within the 2015/2016 Quarter 1 Balanced Scorecard.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the 2014/2015 Quarter 4 scorecard of performance indicators be noted;
- 2) That further information in respect of the questions and issues raised by the Committee be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.

**15. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE FORWARD PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme as set out on Agenda pages 27 to 35.

The Chairman referred to the expected decision in relation to the Council's Library Offer on page 31 of the Agenda, (WBC755) which was scheduled to be considered by the Executive on 24 September 2015. He suggested that the Library Offer was an issue that could be of potential interest for the Committee to consider at its September meeting. The

Committee was informed that he had had an initial discussion with Councillor Pauline Jorgensen, the relevant Executive Member who had indicated that she was open to the possibility of the Committee considering information on the item.

In relation to Local Planning Enforcement Plan, (WBC774) it was noted that the plan was due to be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 30 July 2015. In response to a question, Kevin Jacob commented that if the Members were minded to seek a follow up on the implementation of the Plan after it had been agreed by the Executive they could do so either through the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or via the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members would need to come to a view as to when they felt a reasonable amount of time had passed for them to be able to gain an accurate picture of the implementation.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Executive Forward Programme be noted;
- 2) That the further information on WBC755 – Library Offer be brought to the 7 September meeting and the item added to the Committee’s work programme.

**16. HOUSE OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW  
SUGGESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PARRY BAATH**

The Committee considered an overview and scrutiny review request submitted by Councillor Parry Baath as set out on Agenda pages 37 to 39 which asked for an overview and scrutiny review request to be undertaken into the Council’s approach to houses of multiple of occupation, (HMOs). The Committee also considered a supplementary briefing note on HMO prepared by Clare Lawrence, Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services that had been published and circulated after the main Agenda had been circulated.

In discussing the request, a number of Members commented that residents in their own Wards had raised similar concerns and complaints regarding houses of multiple occupation and they agreed that the issue was of current local concern that was becoming more common. Members felt that the issue was of sufficient importance to warrant further investigation. In discussion the following points were raised:

- If the issue was taken any further the policies of other local authorities should be examined for evidence of best practice;
- It was felt that there were potentially gaps in the Council’s response to the increase in HMOs within the Borough;
- There was a need to look at the different criteria and definitions of HMOs that existed within public protection, licensing and planning legislation. For instance would a property occupied by an extended family of more than 7 people constitute a HMO or was it necessary that the occupiers were privately renting to constitute a HMO? What were the different requirements for HMOs and other accommodation such as guest houses?
- There were important issues and risks associated with fire safety when properties were converted into HMOs that needed to be considered;

After discussion it was felt that Councillor John Kaiser, the Executive Member for Planning and Highways should be asked to consider the development of additional local policies on Houses of Multiple Occupation and to report back to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on his conclusions.

**RESOLVED:**

1) That the Executive Member for Planning and Highways be requested to consider the development of additional local policies on Houses of Multiple Occupation;

2) That the Executive Member for Planning and Highways be requested to report back on the outcome of this consideration to a future meeting of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**17. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES**

The Committee considered its forward work programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 41 to 69.

Kevin Jacob reported the following potential additional items to the Agenda for the 7 September 2015 Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee:

- Balanced Scorecard Quarter 1 2015/2016
- Library Offer
- Update on Highways and Transport Services Review
- New Grass Cutting Contract Briefing

It was noted that the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been amalgamated and a new Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee established at the Council meeting on 23 July 2015. References within the work programme to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee now referred to the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons referred to the expected future work programme of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Norman Jorgensen in speaking to the future work programme of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted that in September the Committee would be receiving further and more specific information in relation to the business case for the regeneration of Wokingham Town Centre and in November would be updated on the potential impact of the Government's extension of the Right to Buy Scheme.

Councillor Ken Miall in referring to the future work programme of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted that the Committee would at its September meeting receive a briefing on the closure of the Independent Living Fund. The impact of the fund had the potential to have a significant financial impact on the Council. He commented that it was intended to invite Councillor Julian McGhee-Sumner, Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing to the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the current Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted, subject to the additions set out above.

## **18. UPDATE REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OR NOMINATED MEMBER OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Councillor Ken Miall referred to the activities of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in his written report which had been included on page 71 of the Agenda.

Councillor Norman Jorgensen referred to his report on the activities of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been published and circulated separately from the main Agenda and also referred to the previous points he had made relating to the September meeting of the new Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that both Committees had considered the matters and scrutiny review requests referred to them by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 1 June 2015.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons provided a verbal update on the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 21 July 2015. The meeting had been well attended with a number of members of the public present to ask questions regarding the provision of sufficient primary school places in Earley. The following key points from the meeting were highlighted:

The Committee had considered reports on the Draft Primary School Provision Strategy for 2015-2018 and the Primary Place Planning and Allocation Process. The item on Primary Place Planning and Allocation Processes followed a request from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that it look at the issue of primary school place allocations as a result of an overview and scrutiny review suggestion submitted by Councillor David Chopping.

The Committee had noted the intention of Councillor Ian Pittock to establish a Member task and finish group to oversee the development of the Draft Primary School Provision Strategy and had appointed Councillor Ken Miall as the representative of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the task and finish group. In considering and discussing the report, the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had noted the measures used by the Council to try and estimate the demand for school places and the problems that had arisen in the Earley area in the current admissions round whereby some 30 parents had been unable to secure places at their preferred primary schools for entry in September 2015. The Committee was also informed of the measures put in place to identify and act on misleading applications for school places and the actions which were planned to create additional capacity within Reception and Year 1 in seven Earley schools for the 2016/2017 academic year. Overall, the Committee had been reassured that the problems identified in the two reports were being addressed.

The Committee had also considered a report on the development, purpose and function of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, (MASH). The role of such multi agency hubs was to make it possible for all professionals working with children to identify risk early and put in place plans to address them. In this way the risks of a child slipping through the safeguarding net could be mitigated. Councillor Helliar-Symons commented that this was part of the improvement in the way in which the Council worked with other partners such as the police and NHS in sharing information.

Councillor Helliard-Symons also stated that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been informed that the Council had been successful in meeting the challenge of recruiting sufficient children's social workers through the recruitment of five staff from Australia.

Finally, Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee were informed that the issue of the effect of the Government's planned implementation of 30 hours free nursery provision had been discussed. Members of the Committee had been concerned about the effect of the proposals on nurseries within the Borough because of the increases in their costs. It has been noted that Officers were preparing an consultation response to the Government on the issue.

**RESOLVED:** That the reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairman and the actions outlined within their reports be noted.