

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL

TUESDAY, 14 MARCH 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Hari Sharma (Chairman), Malcolm Beer, Maureen Hunt, Paul Lion and Julian Sharpe

Also in attendance:

Officers: Andy Jeffs and Wendy Binmore

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jesse Grey and Marius Gilmore.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Sharma – Declared a personal interest as he is employed by First Group.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 31 January 2017 be approved subject to the following amendment:

Cllr Beer requested that the Borough take on the costs for road closures for voluntary organisation events such as the Old Windsor Carnival as the fees it costs to advertise the road closures etc. *could* make the Carnival *procession* unviable for the future.

EMERGENCY PLANNING - PROPOSED SHARED BERKSHIRE SERVICE

Andy Jeffs, Head of Benefits & Business Services stated the paper detailed the review of emergency planning across six Local Authorities. The review highlighted issues such as there being a lack of resilience and multiple points of conduct. The report concluded that the six local authorities should seek to merge their service. West Berkshire would be the host authority with the Royal borough having one person covering its whole area. The budget for the emergency planning function was £71,000. The scheme would begin in October 2017 subject to the approval from the other five local authorities and the scheme would benefit residents and businesses constructively.

The Royal Borough was insisting on having one person from the emergency planning team stationed permanently in Windsor as the area was at high risk from events such as the flood risk, crowded spaces, ministry of Defence facilities, transport (Heathrow), VIP's, public events, Ascot Races and the Horse shows.

The Chairman stated the previous arrangement had corporate resistance that logged all incidents and on page 12 of the agenda, there was a mention of the area having a lack of resistance. He wanted to know why the council was entering into the agreement and why the previous arrangement went wrong. The Head of Benefits & Business Services stated he was not sure the old arrangement went wrong, but the new arrangement would help the Borough to reinforce the current level of resilience. There was currently only one FTE member of staff with little to no resilience and the new arrangement would mean there would be more people available to coordinate and help during an emergency event.

Councillor Sharpe stated he was concerned regarding the whole area as there was little resilience overall and he was also concerned about whether or not the Borough would have sufficient resources to deploy to any emergency situation. He wanted to know if the Borough were putting enough resources into emergency planning and could those resources cope with all requirements. The Head of Benefits & Business Services confirmed that at present, there was one FTE with operations and CSC covering the out of hours side of things. He added that he was trained along with one other member of senior management in Bronze, Silver and Gold incidents.

The Head of Benefits & Business Services explained that the proposal was to try and help a major incident, an extremely large incident. There would be five people of senior level in the team to help bring a safe conclusion to any emergency situation.

Councillor Hunt asked for clarification regarding the two regional teams being deployed dynamically. The Head of Benefits & Business Services confirmed that the teams would be employed by West Berks but, deployed dynamically across the Borough. Councillor Hunt stated it was a very good idea, but she was concerned as the project would be based in West Berks. The Borough had a lot of high profile events and people. The Head of Benefits & Business Services stated the Borough would not sign up to the agreement if there was not one person permanently based within the Borough. During high profile events such as state visits, it was possible to have more than one person based in the Borough during the events. If the shared service was in place when a major incident took place, the Borough had trained people and they would be added to by the senior member of the shared service team to help with coordination and deployment of resources.

The Head of Benefits & Business Services stated there had been flooding and the fire at Windsor Castle. They were two very different incidents and lessons were learned from them. A lot of work had since gone into flood prevention with more money going into the Capital budget for 2017/18.

The Managing Director and Deputy Managing Director were both trained to Gold level to deal with emergency situations; each head of service was trained to Silver level with managers trained to Bronze level so there was a lot of resilience already built into the Borough. A lot of potential events could be dealt with by RBWM, the proposal was just for major events.

The Head of Benefits & Business Services explained that by implementing the shared service, the situation would improve for the Royal Borough. Business continuity plans were in place, as well as town evacuation plans and flood prevention. The council was very proactive. The proposals would mean there would be five senior members of a team with additional knowledge that could help enhance the council's resilience plans. The council can ensure it can cater for larger events and enable them to run smoothly.

Councillor Sharpe said he was still concerned. The proposals covered six Local Authorities with five people. The council was insisting that one of those five people be based within the Borough, but only 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Out of hours times would have to go through the control centre. He said it felt under-resourced. Councillor Sharpe added that if a major emergency event took place, he was not sure what the difference would be compared to what was already in place currently. Councillor Sharpe went on to say that he thought the proposal felt very underfunded and he would feel better if there was one person based in each local authority. He also wanted to know when the other local authorities were looking to approve the proposals. The Head of Benefits & Business Services responded saying the other local authorities were going through a similar process to the Royal Borough. By April 2017, an agreement would be produced and would include reaction times, known key events the council would need cover for and the details of the Berks West and Berks East teams. The only person we know will be based in Berks West is the manager of West Berks. The council would not be entering into the agreement till all the details were known.

Councillor Beer suggested the proposals be reviewed after one year to see if any problems occurred. There had not been an emergency situation for over one year and he was not aware any outside consultants had been used. he was under the impression officers would be dealing with this. The Borough had been managing things under the current arrangements quite well. He asked what part would the senior team play in an emergency? The Borough already had police and fire services and the council looked after road closures and provided emergency accommodation. The council's role would be as coordinators. If there was no major incident, what would the senior team be doing with their time? There should be some provision for them to use their time usefully. The Head of Benefits & Business Services stated there would be a review. There were lots of agencies working on major incidents such as highways and Police. There was a duty rota already in place for members of staff within the council, he added he was included on that rota. He directed Members to paragraph 2.6 which showed how the new senior team would enhance the council's capabilities. If not all of the six local authorities agreed, the council would need to take stock and see how best to provide the service.

The Head of Benefits & Business Services stated there were measures of success to see if the proposals were working after implementation. When not dealing with an emergency event, the team would be reviewing plans. Councillor Beer said he did not think the new team would be able to put their resources into one local authority during a flooding event because the Thames flowed through several areas, he felt the team would not be staffed sufficiently. The Head of Benefits & Business Services confirmed that there was no team in place during the recent floods and there was not an emergency officer either, most staff offered to help. The introduction of the new team wont mean people wont help, the council would still offer the same help and assistance as previously as well as having the team in place.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: The Panel endorsed the recommendations and added two further recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

- 1. If implemented, the proposals are to be reviewed after one year and at regular intervals thereafter.**
- 2. The paper is brought back to Panel following the negotiations and prior to the proposal being implemented.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following resolution:

“that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local government Act 1972, the public can be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on item 6 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1-7 of Part I of Schedule 12a of the Act”.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.49 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....