

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden, Dr Lilly Evans, Lynne Jones, Eileen Quick and Colin Rayner (Chairman).

Also in attendance: Cllr Dudley and Cllr Rankin.

Officers: Andy Jeffs, Russell O'Keefe, Harjit Hunjan, Anna Trott and David Cook.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Burbage and Cllr McWilliams.

Apologies were also received from the following Lead Members regarding consideration of the Council Performance Management Framework Quarter 3 2016/17, Cllr Carroll, Cllr N Airey and Cllr Coppinger.

Apologies were also received by Cllr Saunders as Lead Member for Finance.

Apologies were also received from the Managing Director and Head of Finance.

Cllr Jones reported that she would be late.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

APPRENTICESHIPS WITHIN THE ROYAL BOROUGH

Councillor Jack Rankin, Lead Member for Economic Development and Property, introduced the report regarding the Council's and the Borough's offer regarding apprenticeships.

Cllr Rankin informed the Panel that the government had proposed to change the way it funded apprenticeship training and set targets for the number of apprenticeships employed by public sector bodies. An Apprenticeship Levy had been introduced and a new national apprenticeships target was being set; RBWM would have a target of 33 apprenticeships being introduced.

The Panel were informed that the Council's apprenticeship scheme was funded by a revenue budget of £40,000 to employ six apprenticeships posts annually. Since 2013 85% of apprentices who completed an apprenticeship had progressed to full time employment within the Council or externally. This annual target had been increased to 18 starters for this year with a target of 33 by April 2018.

To help meet the stretched target Cllr Rankin informed the Panel that Community Partnerships and the HR teams would continue to work with Council Services to review vacancies prior to recruitment to assess if they could be filled by an apprentice.

Cllr Rankin also informed that from 1 May 2017 the government proposes to set annual targets for public sector organisations having 250 or more employees which required a minimum of 2.3% of the head count to be apprentices.

With regards to private organisations the Borough could not force them to increase apprenticeships, however we could be a conduit to help them improve their offer. On 17 March 2017 the Borough would be holding an apprenticeship day and Panel Members were welcome to attend.

(Cllr Jones and Cllr Dr L Evans joined the meeting)

The Chairman asked how many apprenticeships the Council had three years ago and was informed that it was about 6 per year.

Cllr Bowden mentioned that our sub-contractors were to be encouraged to take on apprenticeships and asked if the Council could offer driving lessons or specialist driver training. The Panel were informed that the Government had changed the apprenticeship framework that were developed by employers and there were a lot of incentives available.

Cllr Quick said that section 2.8 of the report mentioned a joint venture being undertaken to create 62 new apprenticeships and asked if these would be in the construction industry. Cllr Rankin replied that this would be the case if the joint venture was approved by Council.

Cllr Jones mentioned that the schools minister had indicated that in most cases the LEA would be responsible for paying the new levy especially if small school could not take on apprenticeships. Cllr Rankin replied that the levy would be taken from payroll and Cllr N Airey and the Managing Director would need to discuss the implications with schools on an individual basis. Cllr Jones suggested that the £15k given to offset the levy could be used to help the impact on smaller schools.

Resolved unanimously: that the Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel request that Cabinet review the implications of the Apprenticeship Levy being charged to small maintained schools especially the adverse impact on their budget.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Cllr Jack Rankin Lead Member for Economic Development and Property presented the report regarding the Council's financial performance to date.

Cllr Rankin informed the Panel that Cabinet was due to consider the proposed Budget for 2017/18 that was aimed at protecting the most vulnerable residents as well as laying out the serious investment required to deliver regeneration projects as well as remaining a low tax Council, with the core Council Tax rising by less than one percent.

For this financial year the report was showing a projected £539,000 underspend on the General Fund which was a further improvement of £66,000 since the report was last presented to Cabinet. Cllr Rankin reported that as such the Council remained in a strong financial position with combined General Fund reserves of £6.37 million, which was in excess of the £5.27 million recommended as a minimum level.

Cllr Rankin gave the following update regarding each of the Council's directorates:

Adults, Children and Health Services were projecting an overspend of £72k which was a decrease of £120k since last reported. There had been significant impacts; both favourable and adverse coming from demand led services, especially where demand was difficult to predict and when small fluctuations could have significant impact.

Corporate and Community Services were predicting a £64k underspend with improved positions in development and regeneration being offset by small pressures in leisure services and visitor management.

Operations and Customer Services were reporting an underspend of £542k which was an improvement of £11k since last reported. There had been revenue additions of £45k for ICT transfer to Optalis and £20k into CCTV.

Cllr Rankin also directed the Panel to the cash balances projection which was in line with previous months, he also pointed the Panel to section 4 of the report that highlighted the capital programme with reported slippages. Cllr Rankin reported that the proposed budget estimated new borrowing requirements of £73 million.

Cllr Rankin thanked officers and Members for all their hard work in steering the authority into a good position; especially when considering the financial position being reported by other authorities setting their budgets.

Cllr Quick asked for clarification on section 4.14 of the report where it was reported that £700k provision for additional traveller pitches would no longer commence due to S106 funding not being received. It was agreed that an update would be circulated to the Panel.

Cllr Dr L Evans mentioned that the report showed that there had been a decrease in spend for adult social care but the authority was trying to get more funding into adult mental health. The Panel were informed that this was about better commissioning of placements that had produced a saving.

Cllr Jones reported that the smoking cessation contract was about being pro-active and thus she was concerned that there was a reported underspend. Cllr Rankin reported that the saving was as a result in the review undertaken by Cllr Carroll that resulted in the targeted approach.

Cllr Jones asked if there would be any impact regarding the traveller pitches that were not going to be produced. The Panel were informed that the assessment criteria had changed and new assessments were being carried out as part of the borough local plan.

Cllr Dudley reported that with regards to mental health there was expecting to be considerable demographic growth in the Royal Borough and that Cllr Carroll, Principle Member for Public Health and communications, was looking at Mental Health.

Cllr Dr L Evans reported that statistics showed that the borough had a net loss of people aged between 20 to 40 years of age but an increase in those 64 and over. Cllr Dudley replied that a main driver for young people leaving the borough was the cost of housing and that this would be looked at by the Borough Local plan. Statistics also showed the need to look at long term provision for adult social care.

Cllr Dr L Evans also asked if the slippage in the Capital Programme could adversely impact on a projects cost. The Panel were informed that slippage on the programme usually occurred as invoice cycles of contractors did not fit into the Council's Financial cycle.

Resolved unanimously: that the Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel have requested additional information regarding the additional traveller pitches as detailed in section 4.14 of the report.

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK QUARTER 3 2016/17

The Panel considered the latest performance management report due to be presented to Cabinet.

The Chairman informed that Cabinet had previously agreed that Lead Members whose indicators were off target for two consecutive quarters should attend scrutiny to explain what remedial actions were in place. Due to this meeting being called at short notice the Lead Members would be invited to the Panels next meeting.

The Strategic Director for Corporate and Community Services introduced the report and explained that Cllr McWilliams had informed that overall, performance had improved compared to the previous quarter, with 68% of indicators on target. Where indicators were off-target, improvement plans, agreed with the Lead Member, were in place and published on the borough website.

The Panel were informed that the document was continually evolving and further improvements to the layout and use of data were planned for the next quarter.

Cllr Dudley informed the Panel that it was important that Lead Members were aware of their responsibilities and thus was pleased to see that they would be held to account when performance was off target.

Cllr Dr L Evans reported that she felt that the document was still trying to report on too many indicators reporting at different levels and she felt that there should be three or four high ranking areas reported. The Panel were informed that local government was unique in the diverse areas that it covered and thus it would be difficult to assess performance in a few indicators. The number of reported performance indicators had been reduced and further refinement would continue.

Cllr Dr L Evans mentioned that some of the targets can take a long period of time to achieve and thus it would be useful to have a dynamic to show how performance has improved over time. The Panel were informed that this information was available and used to be in the IPMR but Members requested that the performance report be reduced and made more accessible.

Cllr Quick raised concern about the uptake of free school meals and asked if RBWM provided any support to schools to encourage uptake. Cllr Dudley informed that a paper was due to come to Cabinet and that it was important to try and improve the attainment gap for pupils on free schools meals.

It was noted that schools were trying to reduce the stigma attached with having free school meals by having on line registration and payment of school meals so pupils were not aware whose meals were free.

Cllr Jones reported that as early year pupils all received free school meals that there was no incentive for parents to register for 'free school meals' and thus some schools were losing funding.

Cllr Bowden questioned why the apprenticeships figures in the performance report were not the same as in the apprenticeships report previously considered. The Panel were informed that the performance report reported up to the end of quarter three and thus was behind the apprenticeships report that provided up to date data.

Cllr Bowden also raised concern about the use of 'deprived areas' for some of the targets as this could give a wrong impression of certain areas. The Panel were informed that the data related to indices of deprivation but the wording could be reviewed. Cllr Dudley reported that we had to be mindful that although we live in a wealthy borough we had to be mindful of pockets of deprivation.

Cllr Jones raised concern that smoking cessation targets were being missed yet the Financial Update report showed an underspend in this area and thus she would like to see further detail behind this indicator. Cllr Dudley replied that there would be a recovery plan on the RBWM website and Cllr Carroll would come to scrutiny to discuss issues raised.

Cllr Quick reported that with regards to complaints there was only one upheld. She felt it would have been useful to know how many complaints had been submitted to make this information meaningful. Cllr Dr L Evans mentioned that page 9 showed the number of complaints. She also raised concern that residents had mentioned to her that they had made contact with the borough but had not heard back.

Cllr Jones reported that she had asked for a report to come to the next Panel meeting regarding complaints and who to contact especially as the delivering differently projects were in place.

Resolved unanimously: The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel requested that the Lead Members should be Summoned as detailed in Table 6 (KPIs where performance was off target last quarter and is still off target in Q3 or measures that were on target in Q2 and have declined) attend the next Corporate Services O&S Panel (to explain what actions are being taken to improve performance and meet targets). Please see Cabinet resolution from 24 November 2016:

iv. Notes that if performance remains off target for two consecutive quarters, or the Corporate Services and/or relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel decide the improvement actions have not been progressed, the relevant Lead Member(s) and officers should attend the next Corporate and/or relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting for further review

The Panel requests that Cabinet review the use of 'deprived areas' within the report as this gives a negative impression of certain areas. The Panel noted that Index of Multiple Deprivation was used.

With regards to ACH19 - Number of residents who quit smoking for at least four weeks in the three target cohorts (mental health, young people, pregnant women) concern was raised that this was reporting off target yet there was an underspend in this area. The Panel requests clarification relating to the underspend and more detailed data regarding the target.

FUTURE ROYAL BOROUGH SERVICE MODEL FOR RESIDENTS

Cllr Dudley, Leader of Council, introduced the Cabinet report regarding the proposed new delivery model for the council. Cllr Dudley explained that the way the council would operate was dramatically changing and was moving to a commissioning model.

The Panel were informed that although the number of staff employed directly by the council would reduce from 1076 to 489. The vast majority would continue to be involved in the provision of services to residents but employed not by the borough but by Achieving for Children, Optalis or Volker.

Cllr Dudley explained that the current strategic officer model had been brought in during 2013 with a Managing Director operating as a 'first among equals'. It was the view of Cabinet that in a complex organisation there needed to be ultimate accountability and in the current model this could be blurred. A new structure was being proposed with the new service model and function map being shown in appendix 2A and 2B.

Cllr Bowden questioned the numbers regarding enforcement and Cllr Dudley replied that community wardens were not being transferred. There would be a report regarding enforcement going to Cabinet in April and that enforcement of residential parking areas would be a priority.

Cllr Bowden also mentioned that under shared services it mentioned the civic amenities site in Slough and asked if residents were aware that they could use this site. The Panel were informed that the site was well used by RBWM residents. The Chairman mentioned that residents should be aware they could use the site but at a cost to the authority; people should be encouraged to recycle more.

The Chairman also questioned the different costs for the landfill sites used by the authority at Bracknell, Thatcham, Surrey and Slough.

Cllr Jones reported that she welcomed the report and felt that the appendices showing lines of responsibility was useful.

Resolved unanimously: That The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel requested that when senior officers are appointed they are introduced to Members at Full Council and that a directory be produced so Members are aware of which officers they can contact. The Chairman felt that it should be also recorded which officers are attending full Council meetings.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 5.00pm, finished at 6.30pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....