

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 24 MAY 2017

PRESENT: Councillors David Burbage (Vice-Chairman), Dr Lilly Evans, Lynne Jones, Ross McWilliams and Colin Rayner (Chairman)

Also in attendance: Cllr D Wilson

Officers: David Scott, Jacqui Hurd, Andy Jeffs, Rob Stubbs, Alison Alexander, Anna Robinson and David Cook.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved unanimously: that Cllr C Rayner be appointed as Chairman and Cllr Burbage be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Services O&S Panel.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Quick, Cllr Dudley, Cllr Saunders, Cllr S Rayner and Jennifer Jackson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Panel considered the Cabinet report regarding the final outturn statement in 2016-17. The Panel noted the underspend of £447,000 on the General Fund, an improvement of £46,000 since the last update.

The Panel were informed that an additional recommendation would be put to Cabinet in relation to the appointment of the Braywick Leisure Centre Design Team. The following proposed Cabinet recommendation was circulated at the meeting:

Delegates authority to the Executive Director in liaison with the Lead Member for Finance and Lead Member for Culture and Community Services, for the appointments of the Braywick Leisure Centre Project Design Team within the overall approved capital programme, including progressing the Concept Design and related consultation into a Final Project Brief which will be submitted for approval by Cabinet in summer 2017 before significant progression of the Detailed Design and submission of a Planning Application.

The Panel were informed that the budget was already in the capital programme but to comply with the council's contract rules, Cabinet approval was required to make the appointment.

Cllr McWilliams asked that regarding the Capital programme CT51, where did the £500k go and was informed that as the funds were no longer required it would go back into the capital budget.

Cllr Jones asked that 2 paragraph 4.17 showed savings related to the Housing capital programme and asked what these were. The Panel were informed that this related to the question from Cllr McWilliams above regarding CT51, a briefing note would be circulated to the Panel.

Cllr Burbage asked that with regards to the Community Protection and Enforcement Services, how did the underspend arise and what was the increase in approved estimate when compared to the budget. It was agreed that an update would be circulated to the Panel.

Resolved unanimously: that the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the Cabinet Financial Update report and fully endorsed the recommendations, including the additional recommendation circulated at the meeting regarding the appointments of the Braywick Leisure Centre Project Design Team. The Panel requested additional information relating to the revision to the Housing Capital Programme, the savings from community protection and enforcement services and why the approved estimate is larger than the budget originally set. In response to questions it was reported that the accounts complied currently with all the current legislation requirements, there were no outstanding inspections from any government agency and there were no outstanding debt or legal costs that were not yet accounted for.

- The update circulated to the Panel is appended to the minutes.

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK QUARTER 4

The Panel considered the latest Cabinet performance monitoring report and Cllr McWilliams explained that that 73% of indicators were on target, however there were a number that were off target.

Cllr McWilliams mentioned that paragraph 8.2 provided details of the process for Lead Members attending scrutiny when they have had indicators reporting 'Red' for two consecutive quarters.

Panel members did not support the proposals contained with paragraph 8.2 and the Chairman said it was for himself and the Panel to decide if they wished to call Lead Members to the Panel to be held to account for poor performance.

Cllr Jones said she would not approve the proposal that the Lead Member need only attend the appropriate scrutiny panel relating to that indicator as she would have to attend all Panels and this would restrict Members being able to scrutinise the whole performance report.

Cllr McWilliams informed that the process was designed to reduce duplication with Lead Members and officers having to attend multiple Panel meetings to discuss the same issues. Cllr McWilliams agreed to re-consider the paragraph.

(Cllr L Evans joined the meeting)

Cllr D Wilson. Lead Member for Planning, attended the meeting and reported that he was happy to attend scrutiny panels as required. With regards to the planning indicators within the report three were reporting as 'amber'; just off target. The Panel were informed that with regards to lost planning appeals it was difficult to achieve the target due to officer recommendations being refused at planning meetings. Members had the right to go against officer recommendations, however the reasons for refusal needed to be robust to stand up to potential appeals.

The Chairman mentioned that if a refused application went to appeal then it had an 80% chance. The Chairman asked if the reason for lost appeals was because of lack of Member training and poor reasons for refusal. Cllr D Wilson replied that all members on planning panels were required to undertake training and that any reasons for refusal had to be robust. It was also important that Members attend appeal hearing to explain their reasons for refusal especially if they had been lobbied by local residents and were representing those residents at the meeting.

Cllr L Evans mentioned that the Government would be making the target even harder to achieve. Cllr Wilson said that the recent white paper wants to reduce the national target from 35% to 10% of appeals lost and if introduced the indicator would be reporting 'red'. If the Planning Department was seen to be failing the Government could take over the service. Once the Borough Local Plan was adopted and when neighbourhood plans were in place it would be easier to defend appeals.

(Alison Alexander joined the meeting)

Cllr Jones mentioned that some of the planning targets had retention and recruitment of staff as part of the reasons for under performance and asked for turnover figures for the last three years, how this compared to neighbouring authorities and the number of planning officers.

The Chairman mentioned that Radio 4 had reported that a number of planning officers across the country often worked two jobs. The Panel were informed that there had been an improvement in recruitment but there were still 12 vacant posts filled by agency staff. Minor applications had been dealt with by private company whose staff may also deal with other authorities applications.

The Chairman thanked Cllr D Wilson for attending the meeting and moved the discussion onto the performance of the contact centre.

The panel were informed that In relation to OCS63a and b, the measure had originally excluded calls abandoned. The data had masked the fact that residents were waiting too long and abandoned calls; in the last month 7000 calls had been abandoned. Remedial actions were being taken and in the short term six extra staff were being employed. The take up of the digital channel had not been as high as expected. The long term solution would be to introduce a new telephone system, or outsourcing, or a mixture of the two. It was noted that an action plan had been implemented by Cllr Hill that would be taken up by the new Lead Member Cllr S Rayner.

Cllr Burbage asked if the number of staff had been reduced before the evidence base had shown if the new digital platform was working. The Panel were informed that officers and Members had made the decision in line with the transformation programme, there had been over 10.000 residents with a My Account however the number of calls to the contact centre had not reduced.

In response from a question from the Chairman the Panel were informed that calls were taking longer to reduce the number of repeat calls.

Councillor Jones highlighted that before the one minute count began there was a recorded message. The Panel were informed that the recorded message lasted about 26 seconds before getting to the options. It was important to try and understand why residents were hanging up after one minute and how to get them onto the digital platform.

Cllr L Evans mentioned that the two times she had tested the system calls lasted over 10 minutes to be answered and that the on hold music was terrible. The Panel were informed that when the new system was introduced the customer experience would be improved.

Cllr McWilliams asked when a report would be presented to Cabinet and was informed this was due in September but remedial actions were currently underway.

The Chairman asked what message we could give to our residents and was informed that 14 key processes were on the digital channel with street care and highways due to go live at the end of June 2017. This should decrease the volume of calls but residents should be told that the unacceptable performance would be improved. It was acknowledged that the digital offer needed to be better than the current offer.

With regards to complaints concern was raised that there had been an increase from 39% to 50% of complaints upheld. The Panel were informed that an annual complaints report would be coming to the Panel as well as to Adults and Children's O&S Panels.

Cllr Burbage asked if it was expected that the number of complaints upheld would be decreased. The Panel were informed that this was expected as areas of under performance were targeted for improvement.

With regards to the HR indicators Cllr Burbage asked if the level of sickness would include those members of staff who had been transferred to other agencies. The Panel were informed that contracts would have included indicators but these would not be reported in the performance report.

The Chairman asked what action was being undertaken regarding fly tipping and was informed that there would be mobile CCTV cameras in locations to capture culprits.

Resolved unanimously: that The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the Cabinet Council Performance Report and fully endorsed the recommendations.

There was disagreement with paragraph 8.2 as Panel Members and the Chairman felt that it was for the Panel itself to decide which Lead Members they wished to invite to attend Panel meetings to explain their performance against indicators within the report. The Panel's role was to hold Cabinet to account and scrutinise Cabinet reports as required; Cllr McWilliams explained that the purpose of the paragraph was to reduce duplication of effort as currently Lead Members and officers were attending multiple scrutiny Panels to discuss the same topics. Cllr McWilliams felt that it was more appropriate for Lead Members to explain performance to the appropriate Panel, for example the Lead Member of Children's Services to explain performance to the Children's Services O&S Panel. The Panel felt that as they had an overarching role they would reserve the right to call any Lead Member to account. Cllr McWilliams agreed to review the guidelines.

The Chairman stated while he was Chairman he could call any paper he required to make sure he was carrying out his role to his best ability and for residents. The Cabinet Members should be able to be summoned by overview and scrutiny panels otherwise there is no reason for their existence.

The Panel felt that an additional action should be added to the remedial action for CCS31 Planning Appeals Lost requesting more training for Members sitting on Planning Panels and that the Member that proposes the motion to go against officer recommendations works with the appropriate officers on any appeal and attends appeal hearings.

With regards to the Planning Department's performance the Panel requested additional information on the recruitment and retention of planning officers over the past three years, how this compared to other authorities and the number of planning officers working for RBWM.

Big concern was raised about indicators OCS63a and b – calls answered less than one minute. The Panel were concerned about the drop in performance and the service being offered to residents. It was recommended that more could be done to incentivise the use of the digital platform. The Panel were very concerned at the 7000 calls been dropped in a month. The Panel wanted a quick resolution to the problem. The Panel requested a report at their next meeting to see if figures had improved.

There were a number of indicators with the wrong RAG status and it was recommended that the report be reviewed and amended before Cabinet, for example ACH20 was more the 10% off target and thus should not be reporting as Amber. The same applied for OCS69 and OCS66.

With regards to fly tipping the Chairman recommended that he Police should be encouraged to use their powers to ask drivers to produce their waste transfer licence. There should be joint action by the Police and trading standards to do spot checks on vehicles carrying waste,

The Chairman mentioned that there were failing indicators within the Children’s and Adults Directorate and asked the Managing Director if any children or adults were at risk. It was reported that no children or adults were at risk.

The Chairman thanked Cllr D Wilson for attending the meeting to discuss his portfolio’s indicators and for Cllr Carrol for sending in a written response.

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 7.30 pm, finished at 9.15 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....

Financial Update Report – circulated after the meeting.

1 and 2 – Capital Programme - Originally scheme CT51 was allocated a £1m budget from section 106 monies, £500k of this was not expected to be spent on 2016/17, the remaining £500k was to be used to fund the Brill House project which will develop 5 new build 3 bed houses and 11 supported living affordable units. A report to Cabinet in June will seek to use the unspent £500k on Do It Yourself Shared Ownership. As S106 its all being allocated to affordable housing as required.

3 – Community Protection and Enforcement Services – The principal elements of the CPES underspend for 16/17 were in the waste and parking services. In Waste there were lower disposal tonnages, increased recycling and high demand for garden waste services resulting in an underspend of £250k. In the Parking service, strong income performance in Maidenhead and Windsor car parks combined with the positive impact of an enforcement pilot resulted in an underspend of £310k, with several minor variances across the services account for the balance.

4 - Community Protection and Enforcement Services – A reconciliation of the budget from original to approved estimate is detailed below.

Original Budget	12,084
Transfer of Parking to Highways	(5,127)
Revised Budget	6,957
Heathrow Expansion budget	30
Redundancies (4)	173
Centralisation of training budgets	(33)
Allocation of Pay Reward budget	53
Advertising income target, car parks	(25)
Transfer of posts (2)	104
Reallocation of directorate savings	(36)
Approved Estimate	7,223