

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

Also in attendance: Councillor MJ Saunders

Officers: Rob Stubbs, Andy Jeffs, Andy Carswell, Anna Robinson and Ben Smith

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Burbage, Ilyas and Jones. Cllr Beer was attending as a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on August 31st 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Cllr Saunders informed Members that a number of overspends had been identified in recent months, which primarily related to services where there had been a greater number of customers than had been anticipated by the budget. These included services for children in need and home to school transport, particularly for pupils with Special Educational Needs. Cllr Saunders stated that as a result, Cabinet and the Senior Leadership Team had reviewed all aspects of expenditure and identified a number of services which had net budget underspends. Many of these related to adult services, where the number of customers had fallen below budget expectations. Cllr Saunders informed the Panel that a net underspend of £18,000 was expected across all service areas as a result. This meant that reserve levels remained at around £8million, well ahead of the recommended minimum of £5.8million.

Members were informed that arrangements over the amount that the Council was expected to contribute towards Achieving for Children's working capital were still to be completed. The initial outlay had been £3.5million, although the maximum amount to be paid was £11.7million

It was highlighted that there had been an unexpected reduction in funding for the Children's Capital Programme, with the capital allocation for the School Expansion Programme having to be revised as a result. However Cllr Saunders informed Members that Officers were satisfied this would not result in a reduction or restriction in the delivery of the School Expansion Programme.

Responding to a point from Cllr Dr Evans about delays to two service areas under Community Protection, Cllr Saunders stated that this had been due to concerns that had been raised during the approval process, rather than by Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Cllr Saunders said ongoing work needed to be done throughout the process before the projects could be properly implemented to Officers and Members' satisfaction.

The Chairman raised the issue of a projected shortfall on the income targets for tourist information and the use of the Windsor Guildhall that had been identified in the report, and requested that a Task and Finish Paper be presented at the next meeting. He stated that it needed to be ascertained why some groups had stopped using the Guildhall on a regular basis. Cllr Quick stated that some groups no longer used it as previously they had been supplied the venue on a free lease or on a heavily subsidised basis. She added that the Windsor Urban Development Management Panel would sometimes have to move to an external venue if another booking was made for the same night as a meeting. She stated however that if the cost of hiring another venue exceeded that of the income derived from the booking, the Development Management Panel would remain at the Guildhall.

Cllr Saunders stated that the Council had budgeted prudently in order that at least £2.5million could be set aside into the Development Fund, which could be devoted to particular projects should the need arise.

Cllr Saunders stated that the Council had maintained its Reserves and Development Fund levels despite not having to make cuts to services or increasing Council Tax, as had been the case with other Local Authorities. However it was not possible to draw a comparison of the Royal Borough's performance against other Councils as there were too many factors.

The Panel **Agreed** to recommend the report to Cabinet, to request a Task and Finish Paper on the projected shortfall on income targets for tourist information services and the Windsor Guildhall, and to thank the Lead Member for attending. The motion was proposed by Cllr Dr Evans and seconded by Cllr Quick. Cllr Beer abstained from the vote as he was a late attendee to the meeting and stated that he was not fully aware of all of the issues relating to the report.

Cllr Quick congratulated Cllr Saunders and the Finance team for their work in ensuring the budget was on track. Cllr Saunders said the major contributor to this was the Adult Services team, led by Alison Alexander.

The Chairman was pleased that the Lead Member was able to attend the meeting to present the report.

Cllr Saunders and Rob Stubbs left the meeting at 7.02pm.

COUNCIL MANIFESTO TRACKER

Anna Robinson introduced the item and reminded Members of the number of manifesto commitments and provided a revised summary on the numbers being met since the last update. Members were informed that since March an additional 29 commitments had been met, meaning a total of 56 commitment, or 41 per cent, had been met. A further 78 commitments, or 57 per cent, were on target to be met. One target had been revised from being unmet to being just short. Anna Robinson provided Members with examples of some of the manifesto commitments that had been met since March, such as the transferral of services to Optalis and Achieving for Children and the implementation of the MASH.

Anna Robinson informed Members that two manifesto commitments, 5.09 and 12.05, were considered just short of being met, while commitment 5.11 was scheduled to be unmet. The Chairman asked who the Lead Member for each manifesto commitment was, and requested that they should attend a meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the new year if those commitments were still on track to be either just short or unmet in January. Anna Robinson said there would now be a focus on ensuring these three commitments would be met.

Cllr Beer asked about the progress of securing either outside funding or assistance with flood prevention schemes. Anna Robinson stated that the Leader had been present at meetings with the Treasury to discuss this, and that a dialogue was continuing with the Environment

Agency in the hope the scheme would come to fruition. Ben Smith reminded Members that a paper on the topic of flood prevention had been discussed at Full Council. He stated that a similar process was being followed by Surrey County Council. Ben Smith stated further that it had been acknowledged there was a funding gap that was currently preventing the scheme from coming to fruition.

Cllr Dr Evans noted that particular attention should be paid to commitment 5.11 as this was the only one with a red rating, meaning it was scheduled to be unmet. Cllr Quick stated her belief that this had been a brave manifesto commitment that would not have been pledged by a less ambitious authority, as the successful implementation of it lay largely outside the control of the Council. She expressed her hope that the commitment would soon be reclassified to being on target. Cllr Dr Evans suggested that more should be done to raise awareness of the focus on closing attainment gaps for poorer pupils. The Chairman suggested that an article could go in Around The Royal Borough.

The Chairman asked if it could be ascertained how many of the green 'on target' commitments would not be met by the time of the next local elections. Anna Robinson reminded Members that the report appendix detailed expected completion dates for each of the commitments; beyond that it could not be said with any certainty when the commitments would be met. She reiterated that the focus would be on commitment 5.11 as this was the only 'red' target scheduled to not be met. Cllr Quick suggested that Councillors should be encouraged to enter into dialogues with the schools in their wards in order to help meet the target.

The Chairman asked if it had been highlighted if any vulnerable adults or children were at risk due to a target not being met. Anna Robinson stated that she did not believe this was the case, highlighting that the commitment to implement the MASH had been met.

Cllr Dr Evans asked if there were any service areas where significant amounts of work had been carried out despite it not being a manifesto commitment to do so. Anna Robinson stated there were none that weren't in some way linked to the manifesto commitments, but highlighted that a significant amount of work had been carried out relating to the Council's housing strategy.

Cllr Beer asked about the manifesto commitment to increase the number of community wardens employed by the Council. Andy Jeffs stated that a paper on this topic was being prepared for the Senior Leadership Team.

The Panel **Agreed Unanimously** to note the progress of the manifesto commitments. It was requested that if any commitments are still off target in January, the appropriate Lead Member should attend the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel and explain why the commitment is off target and what action is being taken to resolve it. It was also requested that in future all commitments in the report that are not on target should include Lead Members' names in that report. The motion was proposed by Cllr Beer and seconded by Cllr Bowden.

The Chairman was disappointed that the Lead Member had been unable to attend the meeting to present the report.

Anna Robinson left the meeting at 7.27pm.

UPDATE ON POOL CARS AND ELECTRIC CHARGING POINTS

Ben Smith introduced the item and reminded Members that Cabinet had considered a report on pool cars and electric charging points earlier in the year and had asked for an update report in six months' time. Members were reminded that it had been proposed that the current pool car fleet of 13 petrol cars be replaced with a fleet of ten electric or hybrid cars, and that a pilot car club scheme which allowed staff access to the cars at weekends had also been put forward.

Members were informed that the installation of on-street charging points that residents could use was being investigated, and that a number of locations had been identified. Ben Smith informed Members that the Highways, Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Panel had recently agreed to ask ward members to consult with their residents to see if further locations for charging points could be identified. Ben Smith confirmed, following a question from the Chairman, that residents pay for using the on-street power points. He stated that there was grant funding available from central government to pay for 75 per cent of the costs of installing public charging points; the remaining 25 per cent could either be met by the Council, which would then see the Council retain any profit, or it could be met by a third party which would pay for the contract to install the charging points and maintain them on behalf of the Council but then be entitled to the profits.

Ben Smith confirmed that a decision on the Mayoral car did not form part of this update being considered by Members.

Cllr Quick expressed her concern that staff members using the pool cars for long journeys would not necessarily have the opportunity to recharge the vehicle due to a lack of public charging points, particularly if they had to recharge them at home. She added that the report made it difficult to compare the benefits of electric cars against hybrid cars. Cllr Quick also stated that one of the roads where it had been requested on-street charge points be installed – Elm Road in Windsor – was particularly narrow and questioned how residents would be able to park along the road without obstructing access to the charging points. She suggested waiting until the end of the current lease for the existing pool cars, as by then it would be likely that a greater range of electric or hybrid cars would be available for consideration. Cllr Quick noted that only one supplier for the cars was being looked at.

The Chairman stated that in his business career it was common to test a vehicle for a six month period before making a decision on whether to make a purchase, and suggested that a test period should be undertaken before the decision to buy a new fleet of ten cars was confirmed. He added that he had rarely seen a public charging point being used by a vehicle that was being recharged.

Cllr Dr Evans stated that although it should be welcomed that the Council was seeking greater sustainability, she expressed concerns that the technology relating to electric vehicles had not progressed as quickly as had been anticipated. She also expressed concern at the feasibility of installing ultra-fast charging points on public streets. Cllr Dr Evans stated her belief that hybrid cars were more economical and had a better mileage range than electric cars.

Cllr Bowden asked if Optalis and Achieving for Children staff had access to the pool cars. Ben Smith confirmed that they did, but that he was not certain of the commercial arrangements.

Andy Jeffs confirmed that the Council would be seeking to install ultra-fast public charging facilities.

The Panel **voted unanimously** not to agree to the recommendation in the report and instead proposed the following recommendation:

That Cabinet notes the report and:

i) Delegates authority to the Executive Director in conjunction with the Lead Member for Adult Services, Health and Sustainability, and the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Highways and Transport to:

a. retain the existing pool car fleet until the end of the current lease; procure one new electric car on a six month lease or hire and one new hybrid car on a six month lease or hire for Officers and Members and group of residents to trial to find what would be best for the Council

b. recommend to Employment Panel that new travel policies seeking to increase pool car use are adopted and embedded

c. identify a partner and develop a 'pilot' car club scheme (Running a successful scheme for another Council) Run the scheme with members and officers and a few residents at first to iron out any problems

d. secure a partner to provide the Council with a fully functional electric charging point and install and maintain it, in order for the Council to ascertain the costings of installation and running of a charging point. The Council also to install its own fully functional electric charging point to find all the costs and income, before the Council decides on installing more electric points in-house or placing with a third party.

The motion was proposed by Cllr Bowden and seconded by Cllr Quick.

The Chairman was disappointed that the Lead Member was not able to attend and present the report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was unanimously agreed to approve the resolution.

The Part II minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

The Chairman thanked officers and Members for attending the meeting.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....