

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Dr Lilly Evans, Richard Kellaway (Chairman), Ross McWilliams, Jack Rankin, Adam Smith (Vice-Chairman) and Simon Werner

Also in attendance: Councillor D Wilson.

Officers: Russell O'Keefe, David Scott, Andrew Brooker, Kevin Mist and David Cook

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Saunders. Councillor Rankin reported he would be late.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meetings held on 27th October 2015 and 23rd November 2015 were approved as a true and correct record.

MAIDENHEAD POST OFFICE

The Panel considered the report regarding the recent announcements made by Post Office Ltd to make changes to 42 of its 314 directly-managed Crown Post Offices that could result in the closure or re-location of the Maidenhead Post Office.

Members were informed that the Post Office Ltd. was looking for a franchisee to takeover the service and this could lead to relocation and a lower level of service. The report highlighted services currently provided. The tendering process would last 28 days and would be followed by a six week consultation period.

Cllr Werner raised concern that the post office was currently understaffed and this may be a ploy to run the service down. Cllr Werner said that this was an important facility for Maidenhead that would not be suitable to run as a reduced service as part of a franchise. He informed that his party had opened a petition against the proposals and that there was also a RBWM petition.

Cllr E Wilson reported that he had raised his concerns with the Maidenhead Advertiser and raised the question how would Post Office Ltd meet its obligations to provide a service; there were smaller post offices in the AREA SUCH AS Furze Platt but these may also be lost.

Cllr Dr Evans mentioned that they had an obligation to provide services based on an areas population.

Resolved unanimously: The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the report and fully endorsed the recommendations. During discussion the Panel raised concern that this important facility for Maidenhead seemed to be deliberately being run down so the services could be franchised to another location / provider. The Panel requested that Cabinet add to the reports recommendations that:

- **Post Office Ltd should be requested to provide financial information about the branch.**
- **Post Office Ltd be asked to explain how are they going to honour their duty to provide a universal postal service in Maidenhead.**

FINANCE UPDATE

The Panel noted the January 201 Cabinet report that provided an update to on the Council's financial performance. Services were currently projecting a £192k underspend. However due to four non-service variances totalling £262k there is a net underspend of £454k on the General Fund. Council had agreed in December that a number of budget movements to fund the Adult Social Care pressure should be implemented. These changes had been included in the report.

The Chairman mentioned that Maidenhead Golf Club would be discussed in Part II – private meeting.

BUDGET 2016/17

Andrew Brooker gave a presentation on the proposed 2016/17 budget that included an overview of the national and local context. This included issues such as an increased demand for adult social care and a decreased grant settlement.

The Panel were informed that appendix J detailed the Medium Term Financial Plan that set out areas such as out income and expenditure assumptions over next three years, 1000 new houses per year and Adult Social Care precept of 2% pa.

The Panel were shown the recommendations and main points which were contained within the budget report including the proposed freeze in council tax at band D rate of £906.95.

(Cllr Rankin joined the meeting)

The Chairman asked if the 2% precept for Adult Social Care would cover the pressures and was informed that larger Council's would generate more but they also had increased pressures.

Cllr Smith felt that clarity was required on the Grant Settlement and the ability to keep collected business rates from 2020; it was not clear if the Council could keep all rates or a percentage of the rates collected. He also felt that an additional paragraph should have been added after 3.43 (Minimum Revenue Provision) to add context to the proposed changes to the different asset classes.

Cllr Rankin recommended that with regards to the Capital Programme CB001657 –Chariots Place Enhancements should be approved.

Resolved Unanimously: that the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel felt that clarity was required on the Grant Settlement and the ability to keep collected business rates from 2020; it was not clear if the Council could keep all rates or a percentage of the rates collected. It was also felt that an additional paragraph should have been added after 3.43 (Minimum Revenue Provision) to add context to the proposed changes to the different asset classes. With regards to the Capital Programme Panel Members were asked to contact Cllr Dudley directly on any projects in the report that they recommended go onto the approved Capital Programme. It was mentioned that CB001657 –Chariots Place Enhancements should be approved.

IPMR - Q3

The Panel considered the performance outturns against the key Council priorities for Quarter 3, 2015/16 contained within the IPMR..

David Scott informed of changes in the format of the report to make it more accessible. Overall performance was slightly better than the previous quarter but down on the same period the previous year. Work was underway to review the KPI's and the report would be further refined. Paragraph 2.11 suggested that three indicators be removed the lower their and moved back id performance dropped.

The Chair raised concern about the planning performance indicators and mentioned it was an area Members received a lot of complaints about. Cllr D Wilson, Lead Member for Planning, commented that he was also disappointed with performance. Remedial action was being undertaken and performance, although still unsatisfactory, was improving. Applications had risen and other authorities were experiencing similar issues. The Corporate Director had made this a priority issue to look at.

(Cllr McWilliams joined the meeting)

Cllr Werner questioned if there were sufficient resources to undertake the work and suggested that there should be two new KPI's looking at satisfaction and closure.

Cllr Dr Evans mentioned that there should be more adherence to neighbourhood plans and tht this would help reduce successful appeals.

It was noted that the Council was working with Parish Council's about delegating planning decisions to them; Bray PC were in advanced talks.

Cllr Smith asked if the indicator on the stability of children in care had to include children moving from foster care to adoption. The Panel were informed that this was a national indicator so the KPI's equation was set. A move should not always be seen as negative, there may be instances were a foster career was struggling so a move would be best for the child.

Resolved Unanimously: that the Corporate Services O&S Panel fully endorsed the recommendations. During deliberations concern was raised about the performance of the Planning Department. It was explained that remedial actions were in place; however Members said they received a lot of complaints about the service. The Panel also raised concern about the public's perception of the planning system when so many applications were being lost at appeal. It was noted the importance of adopting neighbourhood plans.

SHARED SERVICES

The Panel noted the January 2016 Cabinet report that provided an update on the current arrangements for shared services and further opportunities for sharing of services with partners.

The Chairman asked for clarification on why the Berkshire Pension Fund was not included and on our engagement with the other five Berkshire authorities exploring opportunities for devolution. The Panel were informed that RBWM was the lead authority for the Pension Fund and ran this for the other authorities rather than being a shared service. With regards to devolution the Berkshire Leaders and Chief Executive Groups had been looking at this and examining what areas could be shared and future opportunities.

Cllr McWilliams asked for clarification on the IT shared service option and asked if this would be a single system across all authorities. The Panel were informed that this would not be a single system / service but opportunities to share parts of the service such as procurement.

Cllr Smith mentioned that 'Landfill' had been included twice in paragraph 2.1 and that in paragraph 2.3 it should say what BCF stands for.

Members noted the report.

WINDSOR OFFICE ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

The Panel considered the January 2016 cabinet report that provided an update on the joint feasibility study between Thames Valley Police (TVP) and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) to consider a shared office and police station site in Windsor.

The Panel were informed that that work had been undertaken to optimise the council offices in Windsor. There was a clear requirement to continue to have a viable front office and staff space in the town. In January 2014 Cabinet authorised a joint feasibility study with Thames Valley Police (TVP) to explore a Windsor office accommodation strategy for both public bodies. Consultants had determined that the wholesale redevelopment of York House would not be cost effective. However, adding a further floor to the existing building would provide significant additional value and thus this was being explored.

Cllr Rankin reported that it was important that both RBWM and TVP retain a presence in Windsor and there was a need for more parking; the proposed solution seemed to meet all three requirements.

The Panel noted the report.

WINDSOR UK

The Panel were informed that this item had been added to the agenda as the report had been withdrawn from the January Cabinet meeting and had been added as an amendment to the Forward Plan to go to the February Cabinet meeting.

Members were informed that it was proposed to combine the chamber of commerce with the Town Centre Partnership and create a Community Interest Company. The report would be circulated to Panel Members for comment when available.

In response to questions from the Chairman it was confirmed that the CIC would be looking at introducing BIDs.

Cllr Dr Evans raised concern that surrounding areas such as Ascot and Sunningdale had not been engaged with the Town Centre Partnerships and would not like to see them excluded by the proposals. It would be difficult to persuade local businesses to participate when they have not seen any benefits.

The update was noted.

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 following items 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.

(Cllr Werner left the meeting)

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....