

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden, David Burbage (Vice-Chairman), Lynne Jones, Eileen Quick and Colin Rayner (Chairman)

Officers: David Scott, Russell O'Keefe, Rob Stubbs, Jennifer Gunn, Simon Fletcher, Andy Jeffs and David Cook.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr McWilliams and Cllr L Evans.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2016 were approved as a true and correct record.

(Cllr Quick joined the meeting)

6 MONTH UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Economic Development Manager gave a presentation providing a 6 month update on the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan.

The Panel were informed that to help raise the profile of the Council a welcome letter was sent to all new businesses from the Portfolio Member, that capacity building was ongoing with the Maidenhead Chamber of Commerce and work continued on the introduction of Windsor UK.

Further developments included running business advice clinics once a month in Windsor and in Maidenhead, the Maidenhead Town Partnership were reviewing empty shops in Maidenhead with the view of introducing pop up shops and promoting empty shops to potential clients.

An Invest in RBWM infographic was circulated to the Panel, this was created for Members as an aide memoire on economic development highlighting key facts and showing major businesses in the area.

The presentation went on to show the level of inward investment which included the invest in Windsor and Maidenhead website being up and running, Cabinet Members visiting new businesses when appropriate and Members attending forums / meetings to promote the borough.

The Panel were also shown a list of events that had been held with the most noticeable being the work of the Windsor, Eton and Ascot Town Partnership Board delivering an extensive programme of events throughout the year include the signature HMQ 90th birthday events, HMQ90 Portrait Pageant street gallery, annual night market, food markets, pancake races and new bandstand programme.

Maidenhead had also delivered a successful events calendar with highlights including Wimbledon on the High Street, Maidenhead Festival and Maidenhead at the Movies.

The presentation went on to show work undertaken to help residents equip themselves with the skills of today and for tomorrow this included apprenticeship clauses being part of RBWM procurement process, working with partners on apprenticeships and the work being undertaken by the Grow Our Own team.

Cllr Bowden questioned how the proposed expansion of Heathrow could help with apprenticeships as they currently supported neighbouring authorities but not RBWM. The Panel were informed that the other authorities were closer than RBWM, however East Berkshire Colleague did offer engineering courses.

Cllr Burbage asked if there were defined outcomes or key performance indicators that showed that work undertaken was making an impact. The Panel were informed that there were KPI's for services supporting economic development but as the strategy had only been in place for one year its impact was not so noticeable, however the action plan would show where there was an outcome. There were also targets having an impact at a micro level such as the employment of apprenticeships.

The Chairman mentioned that the Crown Estate should be added to the infographic and asked how many young people were unemployed. The Panel were informed that the level of unemployment between 16 to 19 year olds was very low in the borough.

In response to a question from Cllr Jones regarding the use of media it was noted that the Town Centre Managers used twitter accounts and RBWM had its twitter feed and Facebook; there was also a lot of work done via external networks.

The presentation was noted.

COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION

Item withdrawn.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Panel considered the latest financial update report due to go to Cabinet. Members were informed that the general fund level was in excess of £6m, which was above the recommended level of £5.27m.

The Panel noted that:

- £180,000 provision for the clearance of Shurlock Road.
- Home to School Transport had a projected a pressure of £340,000.
- Temporary accommodation arrangements projected a pressure of £470,000.
- Domiciliary care provision was projected to underspend by £200,000.
- Funding change in nursing care were also expected to result in a £300,000 underspend.
- The overall projection was for an overspend of £300,000.
- Operations and Customer Services had projected an underspend of £400,000 related to residual waste tonnage, garden waste collection, parking income and reduced ICT costs.

In response to questions the Panel were informed that there would always be turnover in departments such as planning due to the high level of competition and demand, that there had been a saving on legal costs by better management of legal requirements and that the savings in the Finance department were due to a recent restructure.

Resolved unanimously: The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations.

TRUST REPORT

Members noted that the item had been marked as 'to follow' on the agenda, as when the agenda was published the report had not been available as officer approvals had not yet been completed.

The Panel considered the Annual Trust report that was for information only. The report provided an update on the management and administration of those Trusts where Cabinet acted as the Trustees and those trusts where RBWM had a role. In previous years the annual report had been considered by Cabinet however for 2016 it has been agreed that the report would be considered by the Corporate Services O&S Panel.

The Panel were informed that discussions had been commenced to investigate the potential for the Prince Phillip Trust Fund to take on some of the RBWM trusts to consolidate into the Prince Phillip Trust Fund.

Cllr Burbage questioned what had happened to £21k from the Workings Boys Club and was informed that this had been split between the organisations running costs and 4 Marlow Road. Cllr Burbage also asked why the accounts showed a loss of £40k and was informed that this was due to the change in market valuations of their mixed investment portfolio.

The Chairman mentioned that the report would have been improved if it showed the amount of money the organisations had distributed, to how many people, what their assets were and a year on year comparison. It was agreed that officers would see if this was possible for next years report.

It was questioned why none Councillors were representing the authority on some of the organisations. The Panel were informed that this was part of the authorities appointment to outside bodies and certain organisations allowed none Councillors to be appointed as the Council's representative. The Chairman mentioned that it was easy to appoint trustees but difficult to remove.

Cllr Jones mentioned that some of the submissions dates still said 2015 and was informed that this was because for those organisations there had been no new information submitted.

Resolved unanimously: that the update be 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 items 8-9 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.

After the conclusion of the Part II discussion the Panel continued in Part I.

FUTURE PROVISION OF DEBT

Members noted that the item had been marked as 'to follow' on the agenda, as when the agenda was published the report had not been available as officer approvals had not yet been completed.

The Panel considered the Cabinet report regarding the creation of a new Debt Recovery Enforcement Service, branded as Thames Valley Enforcement Agency, through the commercial trading arm, RBWM Commercial Services from 1 April 2017.

The Panel were informed that the council currently used an external bailiff to collect certain overdue debt such as Council Tax. The proposal was to bring the service in-house. Start up costs would be £114,000, however this would yield £423,000 of new revenue and a saving of £132,000.

In response to questions the Panel were informed that the new service would be run locally but the plan was to offer the service to other authorities with any profit coming back to the Council rather than going to shareholders. Members were informed that two enforcement staff was sufficient as there was no requirement for them to act in pairs and they would be equipped with body CCTV, there would also be overflow arrangements with another agency when required.

The Panel raised concern that the enforcement officers could be mistaken for community wardens and were informed that they would be set up as a separate company and not wear the RBWM badge.

Cllr Burbage questioned the fee structure and was informed that this was set by law but it was expected that the volume of work would not decrease and that the new company would be able to do more work but for less overheads.

It was mentioned that it was important that the officers recruited were sufficiently qualified and that the name Thames Valley Enforcement Agency could be mistaken for Thames Valley Police. It was noted that the name could be changed if required and that with regards to recruitment there had been benchmarking with other authorities who had also been through this process.

Cllr Jones mentioned that the service was once in house and then outsourced and questioned what had changed. The Panel were informed that not all outsourced services were as successful as expected and that this offered an opportunity to maintain standards but also bring funds back into the Council.

Resolved unanimously: The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations. The Panel raised concern that the proposed name Thames Valley Enforcement Agency could be construed for Thames Valley Police and that we had to be careful that they were not viewed as community wardens.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.45 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....