

## AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Paul Brimacombe (Chairman), Stuart Carroll, Dr Lilly Evans, Lynne Jones, Jack Rankin and Edward Wilson.

Also in attendance: Cllr Stretton,

Officers: Alison Alexander, Russell O'Keefe, Simon Fletcher, David Thompson, Rob Stubbs and David Cook.

### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Smith and Cllr Saunders.

Cllr E Wilson, Cllr Jones and Cllr Carroll reported that they would be late.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rankin declared a personal interest in item 5, Brocket Hall, as this was not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest he stayed and considered the item.

(Cllr Carroll joined the meeting.)

### MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 30 August 2016 were approved as a true and correct record subject to the following amendments and actions arising:

- Page 7, remove 'to the' before Berkshire Pension Fund as it was repeated.
- Page 8, transfer of Audit Regulations. The chairman had met with Cllr Saunders about this coming to the Audit Panel, awaiting progress from finance and KPMG.
- Page 9 the Chairman mentioned Cllr Smith recommended that the charts on pages 9 and 10 of the Annual Accounts report would have benefited from five years of comparative data and recommended that this be added to future reports. The Panel were informed that this would be added to future reports.
- Cllr Rankin had mentioned that the charts on page 10 of the Annual Accounts would benefit from explanation notes. The Chairman requested that this be actioned.
- Page 10, Transformation Programme. The Panel requested that the number of training days be added to future reports. The Chairman requested that this be actioned.
- Page 10, it was requested that the Leadership document be circulated to the Panel; this had not yet happened.
- Page 11, on demand training / coaching for managers. The Panel would be interested to know how this went.

### BROCKET HALL

The Chairman informed that he had asked for the Panel to receive a report on the property called Brocket so Members could consider, from a financial viewpoint, the present and future utility gained from this Council owned asset. The report showed the future use being proposed and explained how this provided the greatest utility for the Council.

Members noted that the item 'Brocket Hall' 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.

Cllr Jones mentioned that there had been concern for a number of years about the number of reports marked as 'to follow' on agendas and the lack of transparency as to why reports were not available at agenda publication.

Cllr Rankin mentioned that delaying the report for publication on a future agenda would raise more concern by local residents on the future of the property.

Cllr Stretton also mentioned that one reason why the publication of the report had been delayed was because the report was initially going to be Part II and she had requested that it be amended so it could be considered as Part I.

Cllr Rankin introduced the report and gave a brief overview of the Brocket's history including that it was a Grade II listed building inspired by the arts and crafts period with the main features of the house being its main entrance hall, panelled reception rooms and the staircase. There were many other noticeable features but these were the main ones and also its main limitation on use.

The Council's property team had been asked to consider the best use of the property and had concluded that this would be as residential lets as it would generate an income for the Council, retain the property in Council ownership and maintain the main historical features. Whilst undertaking the review of the property the Council commissioned CSK Architects to undertake a feasibility study.

Cllr Stretton reported that it had been proposed that the property could be used by the Registration Service and thus a feasibility study in its use had been undertaken. This study concluded that the property was not suited for use by the Registration Services due to parking restrictions and the layout of the listed building.

Cllr Stretton and the public were not convinced by the feasibility study and reported that they continued to engage about the property's future use.

The Interim Head of Contracts and Commissioning reiterated the restraints on the building's future use due to its Grade II listing and the restrictions of maintaining significant architectural features such as the main entrance hall. If the building were to be put back into public use there would also be issues such as the installation of ramps and a lift that would require a change to the building's infrastructure.

Mr Morgan, a local resident, informed the Panel and agreed that it was an important building that had its restrictions in use. He felt that residential use would be appropriate but felt that the southern garden should be protected as well as aspects of southern wall. He felt that the property's valuation of £2.3 million seemed low; however the Chairman mentioned that a new valuation would not be required as there were no plans to sell the building.

(Cllr E Wilson and Cllr Dr L Evans joined the meeting)

Mr Mellins, Maidenhead Heritage Trust, reiterated the buildings historical and architectural significance and raised concern that aspects of the buildings fine interior would be lost if the building was converted into residential properties and requested that more time be given to examining future use and retention of the building.

The Chairman reported that the options for consideration seemed to be that the property was converted into apartments, that an alternative public use be found or that a mixed use could be considered. In response the Panel were informed that by converting the property into apartments would help protect features such as the entrance hall and staircase and associated fine detail.

Cllr Stretton mentioned that this Panel role was focused on the financial aspects of the Council and its assets; however there was the need to protect the heritage of the borough. It was important that the Council found a use of the building that would keep it in public ownership and maintain public access. The architects had looked at options for the building under the remit given to them and there were other options not considered. There were also other aspects of the building, such as the kitchens, that were important to retain; these would be lost if converted into residential use.

Cllr Carroll as local Ward Member and Panel Member thanked the residents for attending the meeting and supported everything that had been said about the building's importance. He also thanked Cllr Rankin for being open and transparent about the building's future use and bringing this to the Panel.

Cllr Carroll requested that Members and officers further fully explore the building's future use and asked the question if it was feasible to maintain a community use. He was not fully against the property having a residential use as long as this was the best option and all other community uses had been explored. It was important to have an in depth explanation on what the building would look like before a final decision was made.

The Chairman agreed with the comments made by Cllr Carroll and felt that this should form part of a Task and Finish Groups remit. The Chairman also reported that there was an excellent example of a 'time capsule' house in London that showed alternative use for historical properties.

Cllr Stretton mentioned that she had spoken to the Chairman of the Culture and Communities O&S Panel who supported the idea of establishing a Task and Finish Group to look into the future use of Brocket and that this could include members of the public.

Mr Mellins reported that there were exciting regeneration projects being undertaken in Maidenhead but there was also a role to play by historical buildings like Brocket that would attract and help people stay in the area.

**Resolved unanimously: that the Panel recommends that the Culture and Communities O&S Panel promptly establish a Task and Finish Group to examine the future use of Brocket and that Members of the Audit and Performance Review Panel be invited to attend. Members of the public should either be invited to be on the Panel or called as witnesses.**

## PLANNING PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCE

The Chairman informed that he had asked for this item to be brought to Panel to explore the effectiveness of increased resource and the return on this investment on planning performance. He had asked that the Panel be shown information on the trend of applications to the Planning Department and the response time.

The Strategic Director , Corporate and Community Services, gave a presentation on planning performance compared to the level of resource committed. The presentation contained a table that showed the total number of planning applications processed, the percentage of major, minor and other applications processed in time against the national targets and the level of budget committed. The figures showed that from Q1 in 2015/16 to Q2 2016/17 performance across the IPMR measures had improved with significant improvement from Q1 2016/17 onwards.

The Chairman asked for clarification on the figures in the presentation and was informed that the figures up to Q4 2015/16 were actual expenditure whilst the figures for 2016/17 were showing projected year end expenditure. In response to further questions the Panel were informed that the increased costs had mainly been down to increased legal costs.

Cllr Jones asked for clarification on funds being taken out of the Development Fund and going into the Planning Department and was informed that the Development Fund had not been used for funding the Borough Local Plan as this had been capitalised.

The Chairman mentioned he wanted to know the level of investment that had been required to get the Planning Departments into a 'better place' he wanted to see the return on investment and asked if this investment had been in payroll. The Panel were informed that there had been no additional revenue investment and the cost of using an external company had come from existing budgets.

The Chairman mentioned that when the IPMR had shown poor performance Councillors had requested that additional resources be put into the department to improve performance. He also mentioned that where poor performance had been identified requiring additional resources we need to question what we got for the additional investment.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that it seemed that processes had been improved rather than the addition of extra funding.

Cllr Jones said it was also important to understand lessons learnt and that at Corporate Services O&S Panel they also talked about the Planning Department as a whole and the service provided.

The Panel were informed that following a recent fundamental review of the service an improvement plan was put in place. This resulted in a range of changes and further changes were planned. The changes included improved processes, staffing and technology. Three new Principal Planning Officers were to be recruited with each one being aligned to the three area teams.

The Chairman recommended that the Lead Member for Planning should inform the wider Council of the changes made to the Planning Department.

The presentation was noted.

## FUTURE DELIVERY OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Panel noted the report and held their discussion in Part II around the confidential appendix.

## OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICES DIRECTORATE PLAN

The Panel received a presentation on the Operations and Customer Services Quarter 2 Business Plan update. Members were informed that this was the second year of a four year plan. The presentation showed performance against Directorate Level Outputs for Community Protection and Enforcement, Customer Service, Highways and Transport, Information Technology and Libraries Arts and Heritage services areas.

Community Protection and Enforcement: the Panel were informed that out of four outputs two were on target and two were not. The Targets reporting as Red were:

- KO1- Reduce the % of penalty charge notices cancelled due to issuing officer error. Mid-year reviews had identified those officers who were off target as far as the agreed error rate. Plans had been put in place to keep error rates on a downward trend through the rest of the year. Most of the errors had been noticed before being issued.
- KO3 - Help to provide a safe Borough and increase resilience and response to crime and associated enforcement through increased numbers of Community Wardens. The Panel were informed that this was a manifesto commitment and that adverts for two new Community Warden had been placed. Aim is to have original full compliment of 18

wardens in place by January 2017. Increased warden compliment was being reviewed as part of Delivering Differently but the year end target would not be met.

Customer Services: the Panel were informed that the department were struggling with KO1, 40% reduction in avoidable contact from over 5 in 10 to 2 in 10. Members were informed that a lot of contacts were avoidable if things were done differently from the outset. Work was being undertaken to improve the service but it would take time to turn around. Another 'Red' output highlighted to the Panel was Corporate Complaints and it was informed that although off target it was not a bad result as it showed that the change in process was working.

With regards to Highways and Transport it was noted that there had been an increase in fly-tipping. An action plan based upon active enforcement with supporting publicity and proactive campaigns were being used to improve performance. Prevention measures at known sites were also in place as well as a review of customer cost for legal asbestos disposal.

Revenues and Benefits continued to perform well with only one target reporting 'amber'; KO3 1.8% increase in in-year Business Rates collection with Q2 at 57.91%, 0.09% below the collection target.

Cllr E Wilson reported that in May 2015 he had asked for 'Do Not Drop' signs but they were not in place. It was agreed that this would be reported to the RBWM Communications Team.

Cllr Carroll mentioned that it had previously been reported that there had been a drop in satisfaction with the Ground Maintenance Contract and that there was a request for improved quality. The Panel were informed that the contractor had staffing issues in Q1 and that the new contract set more stringent targets; performance had improved.

Cllr L Evans questioned street cleaning as she had a concern about the quality in her ward. The Panel were informed that satisfaction levels were high and officers would talk to her about her concerns.

With regards to IT performance the Panel were informed that there was an upward curve of improvement but there was still work needed to improve the speed of the network. The chairman asked if there was a staff satisfaction survey and was informed that there was a 6 month satisfaction survey and areas for improvement were identified and acted upon.

It was noted that the Libraries, Arts and Heritage outputs were all reporting on target. Cllr Rankin also reported that the Directorate was also reporting over £500k underspend.

The Chairman raised that the libraries were successful in the recruitment of volunteers but this was also a risk if service provision was reliant upon them. He also mentioned that he would encourage trying new smaller delivery approaches / KPI's monitor and change if they do not have a positive impact.

**Resolved unanimously: that the Q2 update be noted.**

## TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY - DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY

The Panel received a presentation on the RBWM Transformation Programme regarding the Delivering Differently thread. Members were informed that the key outputs for this area were:

- Local services delivered locally.
- Better use of digital services.
- Consolidated services in customer functions.
- Mixture of operating models.
- Commercial activity developed.
- Creative use of our assets.

- Communities better supported.

With regards to delivering services locally the Panel were informed that work was underway to merge face to face customer services, through our network of Libraries with Cabinet approval being sought in November 2016. The Panel were also given examples of how the Directorate would be making better use of digital services with the expansion of the digital channel and how there would be a refresh of the website to enable better access to services digitally. The Portfolio Member had indicated he wanted 20,000 My Accounts in operation by 2018.

As part of the Transformation Programme the Council was also looking at introducing a number of mixed operating models such as partnership working with Achieving For Children and Optalis, potential outsourcing in Highways and Streetcare and a mixed model approach for ICT. Outsourcing the day to day management of Parking Enforcement was due to be considered by Cabinet in December 2016.

The Council was also looking at further developing its commercial activities such as RBWM Commercial Services replacing private sector activity for debt recovery and the best use of our assets such as Brocket.

The Chairman asked what were the key skill sets that would enable the merger of customer services and library staff and was informed that there was a synergy with the roles as they were both customer facing. Library staff would be trained to provide the simpler transactions. Initially there would be three hubs established to test if the new arrangements were successful.

Cllr Rankin mentioned that if using Windsor Library as a hub it was important not to downgrade the use of York House.

Cllr Jones asked if there would be an issue of staff undertaking confidential discussion with customers if hubs were in libraries and was informed that officers had looked at best practice across the country and only those services suitable to library buildings would be included.

Cllr Jones also raised concern that it looked as if certain manifesto commitments were being met by rebranding current officer roles.

The Chairman mentioned that the traditional working models for Councils did not support 24/7 365 days operation and thus there needed to be changes in the way we work.

Cllr L Evans mentioned that when undertaking transformation projects it was important that the model benefited RBWM rather than spending millions on using private companies without improvement as other Councils had experienced.

**Resolved unanimously: that the Panel note the presentation.**

## TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY - KNOWING OUR SERVICES

The Panel received a presentation on the Knowing our Services element of the Transformation Strategy and was informed that this was aligned to enabling us to deliver differently.

As part of the Council's aim to become an 'Agile Council' as part of Knowing Our Services it was agreed to undertake Fundamental Service Reviews (FSRs) of our activities and using the information gleaned to plan the future scope and volume of service outcomes, and how they could be achieved.

Between March 2016 and October 2016 57 FSRs had been completed, with a further 2 FSRs due to be completed. The FSRs completed had led to a range of service improvements and savings being identified or realised. The Panel were shown the non cashable benefits and savings for the Corporate and Community Directorate following their FSRs.

The Chairman mentioned that at the end of Knowing our Services it was important to review how many SSR's had been undertaken, what the cost was to the service and what was the cost of the journey. They should also be on the RBWM shared drive with executive summaries being made available.

The Chairman said it was a testament of our managers undertaking these reviews along with their day to day activities.

**Resolved unanimously: that the Panel note the presentation.**

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.**

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 9.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....