

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Stuart Carroll, Lyne Jones, Ross McWilliams, Eileen Quick and Colin Rayner (Chairman).

Also in attendance: Cllr Jack Rankin and Lisa Targowska

Officers: Terry Baldwin, Alison Alexander, Rob Stubbs, David Scott, Chris Hilton, Hillary Hall and David Cook.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr L Evans, Cllr Burbage, and Cllr McWilliams reported he would be late.

Lead Members Cllr Dudley (Leader) and Cllr N Airey (Children's Services) and deputy Lead Member Cllr Gilmore (for Manifesto Delivery) gave apologies for not being able to attend and present their reports.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Carroll declared a Prejudicial Interest in item 6 (Maidenhead Golf Club) due to his role as Deputy Lead Member for communications, he left the room for the duration of the discussion and voting on the item.

Councillor C Rayner declared that during his role as Major he had attended social events with Mr Shanley and he and his wife had supported Burchetts Green CE Infants School, as his interest was not Prejudicial he remained in the meeting.

MINUTES

Resolved unanimously: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 23rd August 2016 were approved as a true and correct record.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Panel reviewed the Cabinet report regarding the Council's financial performance to date in 2016-17. The Panel were informed that there was a projected £418k underspend on the General Fund. The Council had a Development Fund balance of £1.104m bring reserves to £6.198m which was above the minimum £5.27m set by Council. Details of performance by directorate were included in section 4 of the report.

The Panel were informed that the report also contained a recommendation to approve a £113k S106 capital project for Porny School and the removal of £195k capital budget no longer required for the satellite grammar school feasibility project.

With regards to usable / unusable split Cllr Carrol requested that the amount of unusable reserves and what they are used for be sent to the Panel.

Cllr Quick questioned the budget pressure on Home to School Transport and was informed that now the school term had started the amount of budget pressure will be available by the end of September 2016.

The Chairman raised concern that the Planning, Development and Regeneration Service continued to be performing poorly with a projected £77k overspend and he was disappointed

that no representative from Planning had attended the meeting. The Chairman mentioned that issues such as staffing continued to be a problem for the service. Members were informed that there was currently a restructure for the department and that there had been difficulties recruiting the right calibre of staff for the Borough Local Plan.

Cllr Jones raised concern that there had been continued restructure of the Planning Department over the last five years resulting in a lot of skilled officers leaving the Council and that we were now playing catch up.

The Chairman questioned when was the planning department going to make an application for funding to deal with the Lower Thames Strategy planning application. As this could lead to over spends in future financial quarters.

The Chairman questioned why there was a variance of £35k for Communities and Economic Development and was informed that a briefing note would be circulated to the Panel.

Cllr Carroll mentioned that given to the Government statement regarding Grammar School it was prudent to remove the budget line, however he questioned why there was a £5k variance. The Panel were informed that this was due to the initial work undertaken on the project.

Resolved unanimously: That The Corporate Services O&S Panel reviewed the Cabinet report regarding the latest financial update and unanimously endorsed the recommendations; but had many reservations and thus the endorsement was subject to the following concerns been addressed by Cabinet. A major concern was raised that the Planning Department continued to be performing financially poorly for yet another quarter and that the Lead Member was not in attendance again to explain the overspend of his portfolio.

The Chairman questioned when was the planning department going to make an application for funding to deal with the Lower Thames Strategy planning application. As this could lead to over spends in future financial quarters.

BUDGET 2017-18 - INITIAL SAVINGS PROPOSALS

The Panel considered the Cabinet report showing proposed savings for the 2017-18 budget. The report highlighted that the Medium Term Financial Plan had identified the need to make savings of £5.6m in 2017-18. Some of the proposed savings would be subject to further reports to Cabinet for approval. The final savings proposals would form part of the budget build and be presented to Council.

Councillor Jones raised concern that report summary point three and the recommendations implied that officers and Lead Members would be able to implement saving proposals without any formal scrutiny processes. Members of Overview and Scrutiny should be able to judge the viability of proposals in Appendix A and thus she could not agree to support the recommendations.

The Chairman mentioned that at previous meetings it had been mentioned that saving proposals would go via Council and Cabinet for all Members to consider. The Panel were informed that the larger saving proposals coming due to Delivering Differently had been to Cabinet and would be coming back to Cabinet and thus scrutiny prior to being implemented.

Cllr Rankin reported that the report was a statement of intent with the budget being signed off by Council. It allowed Members to get an early look and say on areas being considered.

Cllr Quick reiterated concern raised that the second recommendation suggested that after this report had been approved by Cabinet that saving proposals could be implemented.

The Panel felt that there was not enough information in the report to enable them to make informed comments on any of the saving proposals. The Panel were informed that detail behind proposals would be in future Cabinet reports that would be subject to scrutiny.

(Cllr McWilliams joined the meeting)

The Panel made alternative recommendations, as detailed below, and asked Cabinet to consider changing the reports recommendations accordingly.

Resolved unanimously: The Corporate Services O&S Panel reviewed the Cabinet report regarding Initial Savings in Respect of 2017-18 Budget. The Panel endorsed the need to identify saving proposals but felt that the report lacked detail behind the individual proposals and thus could not endorse the recommendations being put to Cabinet. The Panel request Cabinet consider and to adopt the following alternative recommendations:

- (i) Note the savings listed in Appendix A for submission to Council in the 2017-18 budgets and authorise officers to undertake work on proposed schemes where approval would be subject of any subsequent reports to Cabinet between October 2016 and January 2017 to allow them to be included in the 2017-18 Budget report to Council and to full debate by Councillors.**
- (ii) Authorises Strategic Directors in agreement with Lead Members to develop requirements for the implement savings proposals.**

If Cabinet were minded to approve the proposed recommendations it should be noted that point five in the report summary be amended accordingly. The Panel felt it would also have been useful to add to the report where a proposed scheme is subject to Cabinet approval or where a scheme had already been approved for implementation.

MAIDENHEAD GOLF CLUB

The Panel considered the Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee report regarding the next steps necessary to be undertaken to progress the development of Maidenhead Golf Course.

Cllr Rankin informed he would be presenting the report to the sub-committee and would be requesting £250,000 to cover property and technical consultancy fees as well as initial legal advice. He informed the Panel that a key point was identifying the required infrastructure and that this was the first stage of a planned approach.

Cllr Quick reported that it was a prudent approach to ensure we got the development right but questioned how the £250k figure was reached. The Panel were informed that this was detailed in section 4.1 of the report and was based on previously tendered development management submissions.

The Chairman questioned if the development of the site would be undertaken by one contractor or if due to its size it would be split into a number of development site with sufficient infrastructure in place. He also requested that Cabinet be mindful of VAT implications when selling the land for development.

Resolved unanimously: that the Corporate Services O&S Panel reviewed the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations but with a lot of

reservations and subject to the follow mater being attended to by Cabinet. The Panel felt it was important that financial advice be sought regarding VAT implications on expenditure as it may not be recoverable if the land which may be developed is sold without VAT. This could increase this budget by 20%.

(Cllr Carroll left the meeting during consideration of this item and did not vote on the matter)

COUNCIL MANIFESTO TRACKER

The Panel considered the report that provided the detail of progress that had been made against the Council's 137 Manifesto Commitments. The covering report provided the analysis whilst the appendix provided the detail for each commitment.

(Cllr Carroll joined the meeting)

The Chairman mentioned that the administration had only met 21 commitments and questioned if future delivery would be effected by future savings. The Panel were informed that the report detailed where savings had already been met and where progress was on target to be met; there were also details of the three commitments that would not be met.

Resolved unanimously that: The Corporate Services O&S Panel reviewed the Cabinet report regarding progress being made on the administrations manifesto commitments and fully endorsed the recommendations. Subject to that items highlighted in 'red' are fully explained by the Lead Member reporting why these manifesto promises cannot be archived by this Council.

The Panel requested that where commitments were not being met that the Lead Member attends Panel meetings to explain why and what remedial action was proposed. There were concerns with the budget savings having to be made that they might lead to some of the manifesto comments not being honoured.

Cllr Bateson was congratulated on achieving 50% of Manifesto Commitments already.

IPMR - HR INDICATORS

The Panel considered the report responding to the request for further information regarding the Integrated Performance Management Report adverse HR indicators reported in quarter 1 2016/17 and the measures in place to address them.

The report detailed the working days lost per full time equivalent and showed that the top five reasons for absence are:

- Stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue.
- Other.
- Muscular skeletal.
- Infection.
- Stomach, liver, kidney and digestion.

The Panel were informed that the average number of days lost in the public sector was 7.9 per full time equivalent whilst at RBWM it was currently just above 9 days. There was a difference between directorates where staff working with vulnerable people where not expected to work if ill.

The report also provided detail of the level of agency staff used and the cost of employing agency staff.

Cllr Carroll mentioned that he was concerned about the statistics mental health but pleased to see remedial action was being undertaken. The Panel were informed that the Council had worked with our Public Health colleagues and were in discussions with Cabinet about bring forward some of the planned actions.

In response to questions about reporting sickness the Panel were informed that the employee had to phone their line manager, a text or email was not acceptable, and if they did not call their line manager would be expected to contact them. It was noted that sick pay was used and that employees could self certificate for 7 days. The Chairman mentioned that by law you did not have to pay sick leave for the first three days.

Cllr Targowska mentioned that the authority were looking at positive measures to reduce absence before they considered punitive measures and questioned the chairman's statement regarding sick leave.

In response to further questions the Panel were informed that the Employment Panel received reports focused on action plans and that HR Business Partners reported to a team management level. There were also measures in place regarding the impact of the transitional programme.

Resolved unanimously: that the report 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.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 9.05 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....