

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), Mohammed Ilyas, Eileen Quick, Lynne Jones and Gerry Clark

Also in attendance: Cllr McWilliams.

Officers: David Scott, Russell O'Keefe, Rob Stubbs, Suzanne Martin and David Cook

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr L Evans, Cllr Saunders (as Lead Member) and Alison Alexander.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2017 were approved as a true and correct record.

GUILDHALL

David Scott informed the Panel that he had been asked to attend the meeting to provide an update on why there was a budget pressure of £60,000 being reported for the Guildhall in the October Finance Update Cabinet report.

The Panel were informed that the budget shortfall was made up of a £50,000 shortfall in projected income from the Guildhall and £10,000 from the Visitor Information Centre. The projected income shortfall come from three main areas; fewer wedding bookings, room availability being limited by corporate meetings and intense competition from other venues who had dedicated marketing budgets.

The Guildhall had an income budget of £205,000 with the main shortfall being fewer than 30 wedding bookings when compared to the previous year. The Guildhall is limited in that it only has two rooms and no dedicated marketing budget. The Guildhall is having to trade off its reputation as a listed building and local hotels suggesting it as a ceremony venue with the reception being held at hotels. There was also limited access and parking.

It was also noted that the income target for this year had been £40,000 higher than the previous year's outturn figure.

Cllr Brimacombe mentioned that the Guildhall had been discussed for a number of years and that he was surprised to hear that an income target that was £40,000 over the previous year's outturn had been set. He also mentioned that a post had been recruited to assist in marketing. The Panel were informed that the downturn in the wedding market had not been anticipated and we did not have the marketing capabilities of the competition.

Cllr Brimacombe suggested that as the Guildhall could not compete with neighbouring competition than we should focus on the Guildhalls unique selling points and uniqueness.

Cllr Quick mentioned that parking near the Guildhall was a problem and suggested that the three spaces outside could be better planned and utilised. With regards to corporate meetings limiting the use of the Guildhall she mentioned that there was an understanding in place that fee paying events would have the priority use if they covered the costs of moving corporate events. It was noted that some corporate events, such as planning meetings had been moved.

(Cllr Burbage and Cllr Ilyas joined the meeting)

The Chairman mentioned that the problems had been identified but there seemed to be no plan to put them right. The Guildhall's biggest asset was its history and we should do joint ventures with local hotels. He recommended that Cabinet should set up a task and finish working group to evaluate how to best utilise the asset.

The Chairman also raised concern that there had been a number of local groups who previously used the Guildhall but could no longer due to increased fees yet on the evenings they would have used it the hall remained empty. The hall's chamber should not be empty especially during holiday seasons such as Christmas. It was also mentioned that the kitchens also needed modernising.

Cllr Brimacombe mentioned that as well as its historical value we also had the mayor who could give certificates celebrating events held at the venue.

The Chairman also mentioned that although the staff did an excellent job it would be beneficial if they had uniforms more fitting to the location and events being held.

The update was noted.

FINANCIAL UPDATE REPORT

The Panel considered the latest Cabinet Financial Update report.

The Head of Finance informed that there was a projected overspend of £185,000 with pressures continuing within Children's Services and with the dedicated schools grant. The Council remained in a strong financial position with combined reserves remaining above the approved level.

The Panel questioned why there was an overspend with AFC and was informed that AFC was not based on costs but for more resilience and improves services. There had been a steady increase in children in care and high cost placements. The Panel mentioned that in the early discussions regarding AFC it had been predicated on savings.

Cllr Jones mentioned that the recommendation asked for revenue funding for a service level agreement with SportsAble but there was no detail on what this was for. The Panel were informed that this would be for additional services that they provided such as promoting better physical and mental wellbeing for the elderly.

Cllr Jones questioned why such activities were not being funded via the Better Care Fund and if we funded them via other means. The Panel were informed that SportsAble did apply for grants from the Council. Cllr Jones requested that funding figures be circulated to the Panel.

The Chairman asked if the service level agreement could be circulated to the Panel.

Cllr Burbage questioned why at the bottom of the table on agenda pack page 24 that the total Place Directorate budget had reduced from £4.1 million to £2.9 million and was informed that this was due to restructures, for example Law and Governance, after the budget had been set.

Cllr Jones questioned the £20,000 capital budget for the Cookham Parish Council to develop its Neighbourhood Plan and if there was Government Funding. The Panel were informed that there was some Government funding and that further analysis on Neighbourhood Plan funding would be provided included the number of plans on target.

Cllr Quick mentioned that the Children's O&S Panel had been made aware of the pressures and asked if the Council had any funding for unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Panel were informed that there was government funding but RBWM did not have many unaccompanied asylum seekers.

The Panel questioned the York House redevelopment and if it was on time and within budget. They recommended that a programme board should be established that oversaw the project and that this should be run by the Council. The Panel were informed that professional project managers were in place and that their work was reviewed by the Property Services Manager.

Resolved unanimously: that the Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations subject to the Panel reviewing the service level agreement with SportsAble and the Panel being satisfied that the requested amount is sufficient to meet the objectives.

The Chairman asked the director of Finance if there were any financial issue that could affect our current Council budgets apart from Children Services, he replied that he was not aware of any outside what was reported within the report.

The Panel were very concerned about the project management of the York House redevelopment project and requested that a Programme Management Board be established to oversee the project with any emerging issues of over spend on the current approved budgets being brought to Panel.

ELECTORAL REVIEW PROCESS

The Electoral Services Manager informed the Panel that a briefing note had been produced, at the Panels request, regarding the key stages of the electoral (boundary) review.

The Panel received an update on the Council's decision to request that the local Government Boundary Commission for England undertake a review of the borough. It was explained that the process must adhere to strict timelines and that evidence provided during the consultation would help for the final recommendations.

The Panel were informed that the review would consist of two stages:

Stage one reviewed the future size of the Council from 2019 onwards detailing the number of councillors needed for the authority to carry out its duties. An Electoral Review Working Group was established for this purpose and they concluded that the size of the Council should be 43.

The second stage of the process was to look at ward patterns that would accommodate the proposed 43 Members. The closing stage of the consultation was 4 December 2017.

The Boundary Commission would take the two months between December 2017 to February 2018 to evaluate the submissions and put together a draft recommendation, the final recommendations would be June 2018.

Cllr Brimacombe asked if the review had been initiated by the Council and that it was not obligatory. It was confirmed that this was the case, however there were two wards that were out of balance and a review trigger would have come later.

Cllr Ilyas mentioned that Cllr Jones and himself had been on the working group and a set criteria had been in place to review ward patterns. The Panel were informed that the Boundary Commission said that proposed wards had to be based within 10% of the population average based on projected figures five years after 2018. The figure of 2,764 was being used.

The Panel questioned the estimated figures used as there may be more or less housing development taking place and they were informed that planning policy had been consulted to get the population estimates.

The Chairman asked what figures the proposed 43 councillors had been based upon and was informed that the 2017 electorate and projections to 2023 were used.

Cllr Brimacombe mentioned that if we were to reduce councillor number down to 43 we had to be mindful of their workload, those with executive functions and those who worked and thus make sure an undue burden was not placed a small number.

Cllr Clark asked that with the proposed developments and cross rail where we able to adjust the proposed figures. The Panel were informed that the final recommended number of councillor could change and the example of West Berkshire's review was used where the final recommendation had been changed.

The Chairman asked how the review working group had been selected and was informed that it had been based on a recent task and finish group with the Leader and Opposition Leader suggesting the membership.

(Cllr McWilliams joined the meeting)

Cllr Brimacombe asked how the population growth had been predicted especially with the uncertainty of the Borough Local Plan. The Panel were informed that the BLP had been taken into consideration, the Boundary Commission had asked for the population to be projected by an indicative 6%. The Council felt this projection should have been higher.

The Chairman mentioned that the Prime Minister had talked about the need to additional affordable housing and asked how this was going to be achieved. The Panel were informed that the PM had mentioned an additional 5000 units across the country and thus we could absorb any number allocated.

The Chairman also mentioned that when the Royal Borough came into existence it had been agreed that there would be an equal number of councillors across the three main urban hubs and asked if this would remain. The Panel were informed that the review would look at the borough as a whole and numbers would be allocated equally on population projections.

The Panel noted the update.

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK QUARTERS 1 AND 2

The Panel considered the latest performance report due to be presented to Cabinet. The Principal Member highlighted that 16 indicators were on target; 8 were just short and 1 was off target. Relevant KPIS would be considered by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel with this Panel receiving the full Cabinet report.

Cllr Burbage questioned why the full set of KPIs had not been presented to the Panel. The Principal Member confirmed that the operational KPIs should have been included in the paperwork for the Corporate O&S Panel; he would ensure they were included for future meetings.

Cllr Jones questioned if the target for the number of days of roadworks on highways saved per year was still viable as the commentary said that the operation of the Permit Scheme would impact the target being achieved.

Cllr Jones also questioned why some targets were reporting as Amber yet would not be met by year end and thus should be reported as Red. The Principle Member replied that there were a number of different methodologies to performance management and that we had chosen to adopt a reporting method that had a percentage of tolerance built into our targets.

Cllr Brimacombe questioned the affordable housing target and was informed that the previous year we had delivered 3 units this year it was currently 17 against a target of 12. This was still a low figure and the borough were working with developers. Moving forward there would also be an increase in development on land owned by the Council and thus we would be in a better position to provide affordable housing.

Cllr Brimacombe mentioned that the authority had not yet had a discussion on the type of affordable mix and was informed that the affordable housing strategy was used to support our planning policies and that there was a 30% target on development sites.

The Chairman mentioned that there seemed to be a majority of targets that had a downward projector and requested that at future meetings the Lead Member should attend for targets not meeting expectations.

Cllr Burbage mentioned that on the RBWM Transparency Page there had been no KPIs added since April. The Panel were informed that a new performance management system had been introduced and that the page would be updated.

Resolve unanimously: that the Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report and fully endorsed the recommendations subject to:

- **That operational KPI's are made available to the Panel and on the Council's website.**
- **That the Panel's concern over a large number falling performance be noted and that Lead Members and Managing Director provide progress reports of key activities and outcomes, in line with appendix 2, to be made available to the Panel.**
- **That the Lead Member attends this Panel when a targets performance has decreased over two quarters and explain any remedial action being taken.**
- **That an operational KPI be introduced showing the number of affordable housing units being applied for planning permission within the Royal Borough every 6 months.**

The Chairman requested clarification if there were any vulnerable residents at risk due to the large number of falling performance figures especially vulnerable children and adults. The Panel were informed that there were no issues arising from the report.

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 the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Part II minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2018 were approved as a true and correct record.

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

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....