

CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2020

PRESENT: Councillors Phil Haseler (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Lynne Jones, Julian Sharpe, John Story and Simon Werner

Also in attendance: Councillors John Baldwin, Christine Bateson, Gurpreet Bhangra, John Bowden, Gerry Clark, Jon Davey, David Hilton, Andrew Johnson, Ewan Larcombe, Samantha Rayner, Shamsul Shelim, Gurch Singh and Helen Taylor

Officers: Mark Beeley, Andy Carswell, Nikki Craig, Barbara Richardson, Duncan Sharkey, Karen Shepherd, Adele Taylor and Andrew Vallance

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Mark Beeley, Democratic Services Officer, informed the meeting that Councillor Walters had requested to step down from his role as Vice Chairman, which meant a new Vice Chairman needed to be elected for the remainder of the municipal year. The Vice Chairman would also be Chairman for the meeting as the usual Chairman, Councillor Targowski, had submitted his apologies.

Councillor Story nominated Councillor Haseler to be Vice Chairman, which was seconded by Councillor Sharpe.

Councillor Werner nominated Councillor L Jones to be Vice Chairman, which was seconded by Councillor L Jones.

As two nominations had been received, a named vote was taken.

Election of Vice Chairman - Councillor Haseler (Motion)	
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Simon Werner	Against
Carried	

RESOLVED: That Councillor Haseler would be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the remainder of the municipal year 2020/21.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Targowski with Councillor Story attending the meeting as substitute. Councillor Werner had informed the clerk that he would need to leave the meeting early.

There was also a change to the Panel membership, with Councillor Haseler now a Panel Member and Councillor Walters becoming a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2020 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

Councillor L Jones asked if the action points from the last meeting, which were questions that could not be answered by officers at the meeting, had been circulated. Mark Beeley confirmed that the answers to these questions had been circulated to the Panel but would resend them after the meeting.

COUNCIL TRUSTS

Karen Shepherd, Head of Governance, explained that this was the annual report on the management and administration of a variety of bodies to which the council had appointed representatives as trustees. The report was split into two parts, firstly those bodies to which all Cabinet members acted as trustees, and then secondly those to which other councillors or non-councillors had been appointed as trustees.

Each trustee had been contacted to provide their comments on the workings of the organisation over the last financial year and their comments were detailed in the report. If representatives raised any issues during this process, the relevant lead officer then followed it up. No specific issues had been raised by trustees for this report.

There were a number of lead officers for the various bodies as detailed in the report, Karen Shepherd explained that she was here to present the report on their behalf. She welcomed any questions on the report but if she was unable to answer she would pass them on after the meeting and ensure that they were dealt with.

When considering the previous year's report, Councillor L Jones had raised a query about the Working Boys Club, particularly around the depreciation of the value of the fund. This was followed up by David Scott, Head of Communities. He had confirmed that Cabinet, in their capacity as trustees, had been informed of the reasons for the reduction in the value of the fund, which was mainly to do with uncertainty over Brexit and the US/China trade sanctions. The value of the fund had also subsequently been affected by Covid-19 and this would be reflected in the next set of accounts.

The trustees had therefore requested that David Scott, in conjunction with finance colleagues, should seek to ensure the trust did not pay out any more than the funds allowed, so as not to reduce the principal amount for future years.

Councillor L Jones said that the Working Boys Club had lost 19% of its market value investments and that was only up until March 2020. She believed that investments needed to be reviewed as the body was making a loss on capital investments. This was also similar for the Kidwells Park Trust, which had lost 12% of its market value. Councillor L Jones registered her concern about these two trusts.

Councillor Larcombe spoke about the Flood Relief Fund and questioned if it was enough for a real flood event. The fund was currently £192,000 and he believed this would not go far enough if there was an emergency situation where it was needed. Councillor Larcombe also raised concerns that RBWM had not made funding available for the new River Thames scheme.

Councillor L Jones also said that she had concerns about the Flood Relief Fund. The fund did not mention any risk downstream in Old Windsor, the Windsor to Wraysbury section of the River Thames was not referred to at all.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the report.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Rayner, Lead Member for Resident & Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management & Windsor, explained that the Panel had asked for progress reports on certain areas of the Annual Governance Statement after it was approved at the Panel's June meeting. The three areas included in this progress report were; organisational capacity, contract management and procurement. In organisational capacity, a couple of areas had been completed. This was in transformation, with a new transformation team and strategy being completed, and in equalities as a new Equality Officer had been appointed by RBWM and would be starting soon. Other areas were in the process of being completed but RBWM was awaiting budgetary approval. Regarding contract management, the Agresso system had been rolled out across the council and officers had received training on this system. For procurement, the Corporate Leadership Team at RBWM now saw a monthly waiver document. Councillor Rayner was happy with the progress being made and believed it showed that RBWM was moving in a good direction.

Councillor Story asked who had access to the full list of contracts that RBWM held and how the list worked in practise, for example how often it was updated.

Duncan Sharkey, Managing Director, said that a report was done on a monthly basis that was pulled from the Agresso system but it was not updated in real time. Relevant officers would have access to the system and some aspects of the contracts would be publically accessible information.

Councillor L Jones commented on the resources available as it was mentioned throughout the paper. She asked how much resource there was in the base budget and if it was enough. Increasing resource could have a financial impact, but not having adequate resource could cause an even greater impact.

Duncan Sharkey said that there was always a constraint to ensure that there was a balanced budget. Everything regarding staffing was factored into the base budget since the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy was passed. It was important that areas with no capacity or resource were identified.

Councillor Sharpe said that he had concerns around financial control. He felt it was important to have all expenditure covered by purchase orders and asked when this would come into operation.

Duncan Sharkey explained that they aimed to significantly increase the use of purchase orders. It gave RBWM good financial monitoring and control but some things were not worth doing as a purchase order but for the majority of transactions it was worth doing. Purchase order training was now included as part of budget managers training.

Andrew Vallance, Head of Finance, said that they hoped to expand purchase orders so that they covered most of RBWMs expenditure.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted both actions already taken and those planned in relation to AGS 20.5, Organisational Capacity in Key Areas; AGS 20.6 – Contract management and AGS 20.7 - Procurement.

CORPORATE TRANSFORMATION PAPER

Duncan Sharkey explained that the Corporate Transformation Strategy paper had been taken to the Cabinet Transformation Sub Committee, where the strategy had been approved. The strategy had been requested to be considered by the Panel and Duncan Sharkey was happy to answer any questions that Members had.

Councillor L Jones said that the strategy was a vision of communities working alongside each other and asked how the strategy could be harnessed. She believed that it was a good vision but asked if Parish Councils had been consulted on the strategy.

Councillor Taylor joined the meeting.

Councillor Story said that he would like to understand the context of the report and what actions points were to taken from the strategy over the next 12 months.

Duncan Sharkey said that the strategy was put together by the transformation team along with external organisations who played a key role in relation to RBWM. The strategy was designed to change what was delivered as a council and how to go about making these changes. It had been approved by the Cabinet Transformation Sub Committee in September, with the action plan due to be considered by the Committee in January 2021. The Corporate Leadership Team had already started to implement parts of the strategy, with training taking place for managers over the past few weeks. RBWM wanted to understand the community as an asset and put them at the centre of the organisation. The strategy also flagged up the use of technology and showed that RBWM had the potential to utilise technology better for the benefit of its residents and the services that it provided.

Regarding the point on Parish Councils, Duncan Sharkey said that the document illustrated how the community was at the heart of the strategy. The community encompassed many different aspects and Parish Councils were one of those aspects. Key enablers of the community were outlined in the report which would help to stop RBWM working in isolation. If the council was to change, it would need to be a comprehensive piece of work and it was hoped that the Transformation Strategy was that piece of work.

Councillor Story suggested that it would be good to have the document along with the proposed action plan come back to a future meeting of the Panel to be considered together.

Councillor Sharpe agreed with Councillor Story and said that he would like to see this paper come back to a future meeting. He said the paper set up where RBWM was going with the Covid response and also with things like the climate emergency response too, it was clear to see the direction of travel.

CIPFA ACTION PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot, introduced the report and explained that in his opinion it had gone above and beyond the recommendations that CIPFA put forward in their report.

Adele Taylor, Director of Resources, said that there was an internal group of officers at RBWM that met on a regular basis to discuss progress, with this report detailing what progress RBWM had made. The Property Company would be having a review of its governance arrangements including its relationship with RBWM which would be taking place by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Sharpe said that he had not seen a review document that was as comprehensive as this. This showed that RBWM was moving in the right direction and he was looking forward to seeing where it went next.

Councillor Story commented on the transformation section of the report and asked if there was an opportunity to transform any services.

Adele Taylor said that this linked in with the new Corporate Transformation Strategy that the Panel had looked at in the previous agenda item. There would be areas identified for improvement in the action plan of the strategy.

Councillor Story asked how the training programme was coming on.

Adele Taylor said that a number of budget managers had gone through the training before lockdown. Andrew Vallance confirmed that a substantial number of managers had received the appropriate training.

Councillor L Jones commented on the management of the capital programme and that it seemed a lot of decision making on the programme was down to Members. She felt like sometimes she did not know what would be the best capital decision to make and asked for any pointers that would help Members with their decision making.

Adele Taylor said that if any Member was unsure of the decision that they were making or did not understand any technical aspects of such reports to contact either Adele or appropriate members of the team who would be willing to help. She said that officers had worked hard to improve the financial implications section of reports going forward which would hopefully help Members understand the context and impact of decisions better.

Councillor L Jones agreed that the financial implications section had improved a lot. She thanked officers for an excellent report.

Councillor Hilton said that relatively small amounts of money were needed in the capital programme to keep it running, with the vast majority coming from other projects.

Councillor Sharpe pointed out that there were a number of items listed in the report that were due for completion in September 2020. He asked if these had now been completed or if they had been delayed.

Adele Taylor explained that work was currently underway on a number of these actions, the date was to start in September 2020 and was ongoing rather than completed for some of them.

Councillor Sharpe suggested that it might be better to put the estimated completion date next to the action instead of the start date, which officers agreed to do.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel reviewed the report and:

- i) **Noted the actions already taken in respect of the objectives set out and those planned for the next quarter.**

MAIDENHEAD UNITED - REQUEST FOR RELOCATION

Barbara Richardson, Managing Director of RBWM Property Company Ltd, explained that the report was being brought to the Panel at their request and that they were able to provide any comments or questions before it was considered by Cabinet on Thursday 26th November 2020. The report originally went to Cabinet in December 2019, where the request for Maidenhead United Football Club (MUFC) to relocate was approved subject to a valuation of

the proposed new site. The S123 report had now been completed and the report was coming to Cabinet this week, with the recommendation to approve the lease of the land for a set value. MUFC would need to seek planning for the stadium through the usual planning process. The recommendation included a 999 lease so that if MUFC ever ceased to exist, then the land would come back to RBWM for £1.

Councillor L Jones commented on the report summary saying that the football club 'had worked hard to engage with local stakeholders' but questioned if that was the responsibility of RBWM rather than MUFC, to hold a public consultation on the proposals. She also expressed a concern that should the plans go ahead, there would be a lot of sports clubs in one place, with Maidenhead Athletic Club and Maidenhead Rugby Club already at the site in Braywick.

Barbara Richardson explained that MUFC undertook an initial assessment of consultation with stakeholders like Sportsable. They also engaged with Maidenhead Athletics Club as the running track was an issue but it was agreed that a new running track would be created which the athletics club would be able to use. The rugby club had also been in discussions with MUFC but were less supportive of the proposals at this stage, as the plans would impact on their use of the area. Barbara Richardson said that there would be an engagement process as part of the planning application. Transport was also an important consideration, the new location would be easier to access being just outside Maidenhead Town Centre, whereas the current stadium in York Road was harder to access. The new site was also still relatively close to Maidenhead Train Station, providing good access for fans arriving by train.

Councillor L Jones said that RBWM had a social responsibility to ensure that stakeholders had been consulted and it was disappointing that no consultation had taken place with those that would be affected. She explained that she was not against the proposals in the report but felt like it was an omission by RBWM to not hold the consultation before now.

Barbara Richardson said that the consultation would be done separately to the planning process but this had not yet started yet.

Councillor Sharpe noted that the decision on the relocation had been taken last year and wondered whether the same decision would have been made now in the 'Covid world'. He raised caution with the plans and felt that RBWM needed to be careful with this and questioned if it was the right thing to do in the current financial situation. Councillor Sharpe believed that MUFC were getting a good deal on the land.

Barbara Richardson informed Councillor Sharpe that the cost of the new stadium was entirely covered by MUFC and no funding was coming from RBWM. MUFC were purchasing the land at market value, based on the S123 valuation report.

Councillor L Jones commented on the recommendations in the report going to Cabinet and asked for reassurance that the consultation would be done before the lease was agreed. Barbara Richardson said that should the report be approved by Cabinet, the Heads of Terms would then be drawn up and the consultation process would start. The process would be subject to planning permission being agreed. The Panel noted that the comments from the meeting would be passed to Cabinet for consideration.

WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor L Jones said that she was concerned that the Budget report would need a full meeting to consider due to its size and the importance of the report. She raised concerns about the Task and Finish group on Highways contract outsourcing, with the last planned meeting needing to be rescheduled. Councillor L Jones said that the RBWM Property Company review and major capital projects could be two items that the Panel could look at.

Councillor Sharpe said that another meeting may be needed around January time to manage the Work Programme effectively. He said it was unfortunate that the Task and Finish group did not meet last week.

The Panel agreed that the Corporate Transformation Strategy and action plan should be added to the Work Programme to be considered at a future meeting.

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 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 6.15 pm, finished at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....