

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 4 October 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **4 October 2022** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr S A Wilson
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs J E McPherson

Cllr R P Constable
Cllr A H Eves
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon
Cllr J N Gooding
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Cllr R Milne

Cllr G W Myers
Cllr J E Newport
Cllr L J Newport
Cllr D W Sharp
Cllr M G Wilkinson

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs D S Efde, Mrs C E Roe, M J Webb, A L Williams, M J Webb, C M Stanley and S E Wootton.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Lambourne and J R F Mason.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Mrs V A Wilson - for Cllr J R F Mason

OFFICERS PRESENT

G Campbell - Director, Policy & Delivery
M Harwood White - Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial
S Worthington - Principal Democratic and Corporate Services Officer
W Szyszka - Democratic Services Officer

194 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

195 #ONE TEAM TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME – STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL QUARTER 3 UPDATE

Members considered the report of the Director of Policy & Delivery providing an update on the progress of the #OneTeam Transformation Programme.

Members were given an update that the Director of Customer Data & Insight and Director of Assets & Investment roles were filled with two outstanding roles being advertised for recruitment.

A Member observed that it would be beneficial to Members to accommodate a meeting, in consultation with the Chairman, to meet the new members of the Corporate Leadership Team. A Member also suggested that future reports list the name of the lead officer, as well as their title. Officers confirmed that both suggestions would be taken away for action.

In response to a Member query for clarification of paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the report, officers advised that paragraph 3.16 dealt with working with facilities management and Human Resources (HR) directly to discuss practical issues that may fall outside the scope of service reviews and paragraph 3.18 related to IT reviews based on the work carried out by the IT teams across both Councils, i.e., standardising equipment across both authorities. Members were advised that points outlined in both paragraphs ensured that all matters were captured and dealt with.

In response to a Member query as to whether current staff possessed the necessary skill set to complete the objectives of the programme, officers confirmed that the teams were confident in their ability to deliver the necessary outcomes of the programme and that it was an inevitable part of the process for challenges to arise. Merging services going forward would provide its own challenges; however, officers remained confident in the teams' ability to deliver objectives. Service reviews, which were due to commence at the end of the month should assist in identifying any issues. It was difficult to identify all potential risks until the service reviews were completed.

In response to a supplementary concern raised by Cllr J E Newport relating to delays in sharing the calendars of the Corporate Leadership Team with Members, officers confirmed that this would be raised outside the meeting and a response provided to Cllr Newport.

Responding to Member requests for a copy of the S113 agreement, officers advised that a copy would be forwarded to Members outside the meeting..

Concern was raised in respect of the merging and migration plan, particularly as not all risks could have been identified, which could result in significant costs to the Council. A question was raised whether risks would be identified in advance or whether risks would be dealt with as they arose which could result in the Council relying on external consultancy thus incurring further costs.

Officers advised that risks would be identified at the start of Phase 2 and officers would ensure that the resources would be made readily available to overcome any issues. Officers further clarified that should external consultancy be deemed necessary, this would be done in line with the Council's available resources.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member question around risk assessment and whether baselines would be used with objectives set and new performance measures put in place, that it would be possible to put in

place suitable methodology for logging and tracking any potential issues that could pose risks for the Council.

In response to a Member question relating to paragraph 4.1 on page 6.4 of the report on the financial pressures and whether these could be reduced and whether existing staff could be trained and upskilled for the outstanding roles, officers emphasised that they were unable to comment on existing staff, as they had not been involved in the recruitment process; however, there would be further reporting to the Committee on finances and pressures.

In response to a Member question regarding the cost and scale of redundancies and how these would be split, officers advised that the scale of redundancies was unknown; however, redundancy costs would be split 50/50 between BBC and RDC.

Responding to a Member question relating to the budget set out in paragraph 8.1 of the report not being spent and as to whether the programme was behind schedule, officers clarified that there was no slippage with around six months left of the first year of the project. However, a cost pressure was expected from the delay in recruiting to Tier 3 positions.

Officers confirmed, In response to a Member question to the Director as to whether he had received a formal handover for this project, he confirmed that he had met on a number of occasions with the former Strategic Director and had received a handover from her and the Project Consultant.

A motion moved by Cllr Mrs J E McPherson and seconded by Cllr S A Wilson, to investigate if existing staff can be upskilled to take on the outstanding roles, which was unanimously approved.

In response to a question as to whether upskilling staff would impact on budgets already set aside for officer training, officers clarified that there could be some implications with the budget and savings; however, this would be investigated.

Cllr R Milne moved a further motion, seconded by Cllr S A Wilson, to adopt an appropriate methodology to log and track issues that pose risks to the Council, which was unanimously approved.

A Member expressed concern around whether this approach would be feasible as SMART objectives were often associated with setting milestones and objectives for projects rather than tracking issues and risks. Other Members observed, however, that the SMART approach would allow for logging and tracking of issues for officers to resolve as they arose.

Officers commented that in project management work, issues are logged and tracked to monitor how these would be resolved and to also ensure that an audit of this was kept. The suggested methodology would ensure that the process remained transparent and open.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress of the #OneTeam Transformation Programme be noted.
- (2) To investigate if existing staff can be upskilled to take on the outstanding roles.
- (3) To adopt an appropriate methodology to log and track issues that pose risks to the Council. (DPD)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

196 HEALTH CHECK REVIEW OF THE ASSET DELIVERY PROGRAMME

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial setting out a health check review of the Council's Asset Delivery Programme.

A Member questioned whether the review took into consideration the changes for the Mill Arts & Events Centre as well as the Freight House concerning the carbon footprint caused by the refurbishments and whether the policy would be updated accordingly. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure clarified that the Council was striving to be carbon neutral and this objective would continue to be a priority for the Council as the ADP moved forward.

Cllr Mrs J R Gooding moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr Mrs J E McPherson that, going forward with the ADP, consideration of the impact of our carbon footprint be given when buying in services and procuring goods, which was unanimously approved.

A Member expressed concern over the proposed timeframe of a report being presented to Full Council in 3 months' time considering that the ADP had undergone significant changes since its inception.

Members of the Committee raised various questions to which the following responses were noted:-

- The 3 month timescale was challenging; however, officers and Members were committed to work at pace with the programme. Factors such as the current increasing rate of inflation, the strategic partnership with BBC and Covid-related factors further strengthened the strategic case.
- The recast OBC would include indicative costings; the main focus would be that of reviewing strategic factors of the case for change stop
- Officers and Members were in discussions regarding the future of the Freight House and how the space could be utilised going forward.

- No specific date had been set previously for the stop/go decision.
- The recast OBC would consider the efficiencies, costs and risks of not going ahead with the programme in the light of the current economic climate and central government cuts on public spending. Efficiencies would be reviewed, including the costs of continuing to operate the current Council buildings, increased building costs and building materials.. The original aim of the Asset Delivery Programme was to deliver regeneration, transformation and financial efficiencies and that was still the case.
- The Council now has an opportunity to reflect on the programme and the external factors now impacting the programme
- Re-evaluating all previous options that were considered but not taken forward at the OBC stage would compromise the timescale of reporting to Full Council on the OBC by the end of the year. The Health Check report advised a recasting of the OBC considering the changing future operating environment.

In response to a Member question as to whether the Council maintained an issues log, officers advised that there was a risk register that had been appended to earlier reports on the Programme; this would be circulated to Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr Mrs J E McPherson moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr S A Wilson, that a risk register/issues be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, was unanimously approved.

A Member spoke favourably of the report and noted that delaying the ADP could result in higher costs and financial drawdowns in order to maintain the Council's buildings.

A Member observed that, in respect of recommendations 2 and 4 set out in the appendix to the report, the significant changes that had faced the ADP were unforeseeable; it was a potential risk for the project to delay as the report set out a form of ADP was required and doing nothing was not an option.

Cllr S A Wilson proposed a further Motion, seconded by Cllr Mrs J E McPherson, that the Executive ensures that the ADP continues to be vision-led and that all options will be evaluated regardless, whether they were part of the original outline business case, which was carried on a show of hands.

(12 Members voted in favour of the Motion and 2 Members voted against.)

Resolved

- (1) That the health check review of the Asset Delivery Programme and the recommendations contained therein are noted.

- (2) That, going forward with the ADP, consideration of the impact of our carbon footprint be given when buying in services and procuring goods.
- (3) That a risk register/issues log be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (4) That the Executive ensures that the ADP continues to be vision-led and that options will be evaluated, regardless whether they were part of the original outline business case. (ADAC)

197 REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members considered the report of the Task & Finish Group reviewing progress on the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman thanked Cllrs R Milne and A H Eves for their work on the report.

Resolved

That the report of the Task & Finish Group be noted. (ADLD)

198 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee noted the contents of the Key Decisions Document.

199 WORK PLAN

The Committee discussed and noted the Work Plan.

The Chairman reminded Members that if they wished to include an item on the Work Plan which required a Task and Finish group, they should seek nominees to undertake the work.

Cllr J E Newport requested that Gypsy and Travellers Policy and the application of evidence be included on the Work Plan with a report brought to the Committee from the Director of Place.

A further suggestion was made to invite the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) to the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2023. It was also noted that it might also be beneficial to invite representatives from Police and Fire Services individually.

A further suggestion was made to also invite a representative of the local Integrated Care System (ICS) to attend.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Chairman

Date

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