

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
9 JANUARY 2020
7.30 - 9.45 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Chairman), Virgo (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Brossard, Gbadebo, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Porter, Temperton and Tullett Tracey Wright, Parent Governor representative
Mark Glanville, Parent Governor representative

Executive Member Present:

Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance

Also Present:

Councillor Atkinson
Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive
Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery
Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People
Andrew Hunter, Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration
Stuart McKellar, Director: Finance
Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services
Kamay Toor, Acting Assistant Director: Property Services

24. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 5 November 2019 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

25. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Gbadebo declared an affected interest as he is an observer on the board of South Hill Park for Bracknell Town Council.

Councillor Mrs McKenzie-Boyle declared an affected interest as her husband is on the board of South Hill Park.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

26. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

27. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

28. Holding Executive to account: Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance

Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance had been invited to attend the meeting. He explained the breadth of his portfolio responsibilities and that many areas within the Council were affected by either transformation activity or budget impact.

The Commission was advised that an indication of the financial settlement was announced on 20 December 2019 and there was one unexpected change which would bring £1million back into the 2020/21 budget as a one-off. The final settlement was expected at the end of the month and the budget could not be finalised until then.

In response to a question regarding how planning is undertaken for contingency and unknown demand Councillor Heydon stated that the Council had no real control on some of these pressures. In particular, he added that nationally there was an ageing population and they were identifying more vulnerable children and adults. The Council's strategies and objectives were cascaded by the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team. Corporate Management Team meet regularly with Executive Members who based upon the Council Plan which was crafted from the manifesto and its political objectives also attend Departmental Management team meetings to talk to individual officers as well as being briefed on pressures and changes in risks. He advised that reviewing strategic risk was a regular part of the Executive meeting and meetings with Departmental Management Teams.

Clarification was sought on trend analysis undertaken on data to identify other pressures in the system and plan for the future. Councillor Heydon advised that there was a large contingency budget and the professional officers identify, react and respond to issues.

When asked who was responsible for setting the savings targets for each directorate and how this was done, Councillor Heydon replied that the budget was built on the previous year's spend as the baseline and then consideration of the anticipated pressures and potential areas for savings within each Directorate

In response to a question about how the Executive Member had confidence that the officers were looking at the right area within their department to make those savings Councillor Heydon said that he and other Executive Members worked closely with officers. He referred to officers' consistent track record of dealing well with challenges and uncertainties for example not closing libraries but instead increasing opening hours by doing something differently. It was acknowledged that it was not possible to continue to make savings without affecting residents directly.

29. **Budget Consultation**

Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance provided the Commission with a presentation setting the context for budget discussions. He explained the monitoring position in 2019/20 and the areas for focus in the current year.

In explaining the approach for the budget proposals he highlighted the risks and opportunities, the underlying principles and specific measures. He set out the draft budget proposals which had been agreed for consultation by the Executive.

During the discussion on the proposals the following points were raised:

- the level of contingency was arrived at following a prudent assessment of financial risks and Stuart McKellar, Director of Finance considered that £2.5m continued to feel appropriate

- in 2021/22 the Council faces a significant pressure going forward
- the New Homes Bonus reduction was deferred by 12 months which meant that the Council was in receipt of an additional £1 million than anticipated but this was a one off payment
- the Capital programme of £18.7million included schemes funded by S106 and government funding
- clarification was sought on the steps being taken to provide children in care with support in the most affordable manner. Nikki Edwards, Executive Director: People provided an explanation and emphasised that her team had to balance what was right to keep the child or adult safe versus what was commercially best value. She reassured the Commission that the Council has high quality services and the lead member was looking at that on a day to day basis.
- was sought on what the medium-term financial implications would be of the transformation programme being paused in this area. It was explained that the transformation activity was not being paused but that work was being undertaken to analyse the specifics of the system so that the team could focus on the elements that have the most positive service and financial effect
- the Bracknell Town Development Plan had been delayed and no referendum had taken place so this would be carried forward to next year
- the additional financial support referred to in the proposals was being put in place to support new schools whilst they build up their numbers on roll.
- the Director of Finance advised that no decision had yet been taken by Members relating to food waste collection and the final budget proposals would be updated if required to reflect the Executive's decision
- the Chief Executive advised that there was no evidence that the small increase in pricing had impacted on the use of car parks
- the Director of Finance explained that this was the first year that an attempt had been made to identify the specific pressure on the adult social care budget as young people reached 18 and transitioned between services
- the Executive Director: People explained that every authority was being impacted by reviews of individuals with continuing health care needs as to whether there is an ongoing health need versus care needs. This work was ongoing.
- the Executive Director: People was pleased to confirm that the rough sleeper and troubled family's grants had been extended which were achieving effective outcomes
- the Director: Place, Planning and Regeneration advised that the two figures relating to PPR – Development & Adoptions were not duplicates and were both proposed savings from two different pots of money
- the Director: Place, Planning and Regeneration confirmed that the value for money review of supported bus contracts could change how bus services were delivered and therefore impact on the level of service to residents but it would be based on patronage figures, the cost of service and affordability
- the Executive Director: People would circulate a response to the question relating to whether the transfer of aspects of the Early Years support service that relate to supporting providers, in particular Development Workers (- £140,000), to the Schools Budget would be for all Primary Schools or those that use the service
- the Executive Director: People reassured the Commission that significant checks were undertaken to prevent frauds and put safeguarding in place for direct payments to clients. The proposed £100k saving was cumulative across a large number of clients and returning the money to the budget would not affect the service to individuals. She added that the individual, key advocates

and family members were part of the processes to assess need and undertake strength-based assessments.

- it was confirmed by the Executive Director: People that as part of the commercial approach when spaces were available at Waymead, vacant beds were sold to other local authorities. Funding received would be used towards the Council's costs
- it was explained that the budget consultation could be easily found on the public website by typing 'consultation' into the search function

The Chairman thanked everyone for their participation in the scrutiny of budget consultation for 2020/2021.

30. **Corporate Performance Overview Report**

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive presented the highlights from the second quarter of the Council Plan Overview Report and it was hoped that the production timetable would be more closely aligned with the Commission meetings in future. There were no red actions and 80% were indicated as green.

The Council's website had been ranked second nationally as it was designed to work how residents use it. He highlighted two well managed changes during the period. The High Street car park was closed for refurbishment and process of closure had worked well with no complaints. Waste collection had changed for 7,000 residents. Budget preparation is an all year-round activity.

The Chief Executive advised that there had been a small increase in the number of complaints taken up by the Local Government Ombudsman. He reminded the Commission that this was in the context of millions of transactions every year. Of 25 complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman only five had been investigated and the Council was found to be at fault in only one. He concluded that it was nevertheless important to learn from complaints.

In response to a question relating to the original estimates for the demand for the Cemetery and Crematorium leading to a dip in demand and increased pressure of £100k the Chief Executive advised that the anticipated demand had not arisen. He confirmed that at popular times multiple activities were taking place and plans were in place to bring the costs back in balance.

When asked whether any further mitigation was required within the strategic risk register the Chief Executive advised that they believed all the key risks had been mitigated to the right level and that the risk register was reviewed every quarter.

An update was sought regarding the repairs to the High Street lift and the Commission was advised that the new contractor was waiting for parts.

31. **Work Programme Update**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen updated the Overview & Scrutiny Commission on work programme progress to date. The Commission considered proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme such as scope, scheduling or duration and its potential impact on the delivery of the overall programme.

Councillor Porter, Chairman of Community and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel advised that the Panel was meeting on 14 January 2020 to undertake the Burials Review. The session would include a link with Bedford Council after the tour

of the site around the Cemetery and Crematorium. The Panel would meet afterwards to discuss the alternative options for burial space. He clarified that the initial discussion would focus on site options and then potentially site usage following the outcome of the Executive decision. Phase 2 would follow promptly after the Executive decision if required so an extension was not requested.

Councillor Mrs Birch, Chairman of Education, Skills and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel advised the Commission that her Panel was proposing that the SEND and County Lines reviews should be swapped. It was confirmed that this was a direct swap within the schedule so did not impact on the overall programme. She clarified that the new scheduling was more appropriate and officers from the People directorate were happy to support the change. The first review, Care Leavers, was on track and would be undertaken on 22 January 2020.

Councillor Tullet, Chairman of Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel advised the Commission that all his reviews were on schedule and as per the agenda report. The healthy eating, activity and exercise review activity had been set for 20 February 2020.

Councillor Angell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission advised that the activity on Climate Change would be delivered over the four-year programme rather than a single review. He confirmed that representatives from Thames Valley Police would be attending the next Commission meeting on 19 February 2020 to discuss crime data recording.

It was agreed that the Burials review would be split into two phases and scheduling of the SEND and County Lines reviews would be directly switched within the Overview and Scrutiny Work programme.

CHAIRMAN