

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
20 SEPTEMBER 2016
7.30 - 9.25 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Chairman), Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Mrs Ingham, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, Mrs Mattick and Virgo (Substitute)

Apologies for Absence were received from:

Councillors Brossard and Finnie

Executive Members Present:

Councillors McCracken and Turrell

In Attendance:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Andrew Hunter, Chief Officer: Planning, Transport & Countryside
Damian James, Head of Performance and Resources
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

118. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 5 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

119. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest.

120. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

121. Public Participation

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

122. Food Law Enforcement Plan 2016/17

The Panel received a report that invited them to respond to the consultation relating to the attached draft Food Law Enforcement Plan 2016-17, which addressed all matters relating to food hygiene, food standards and the sale of animal foodstuff, prior to its adoption.

The Panel made the following points:

- It was noted that this report had been submitted to full Council in the previous week.
- It was confirmed that the Plan included schools and kebab vans.
- The Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection reported that establishments would be targeted in accordance with intelligence. Officers worked over weekends to ensure that those establishments that only opened at the weekend were covered.
- The Chief Officer also reported that local food shows presented an opportunity for the local authority to sell their services. Reciprocal arrangements for officer support were also in place with neighbouring local authorities.
- The Chief Officer reported that a shared regulatory service could potentially strengthen the service and make it more resilient and responsive.

123. Coral Reef Update

The Head of Performance & Resources (Environment, Culture & Communities) delivered a presentation and made the following points:

- Site mobilisation had started on 16 May 2016 and the contract was currently on time and within budget.
- The budget pressure had been reduced by circa £226k via secondments and there had been cost avoidance of £25k through reduced redundancies.
- The scheduled completion date was 18 August 2017.
- Current construction work included: complete drainage diversion works to the rear of the site, demolition of the splash pool enclosure and walls. Commencement of first fix mechanical and electrical works to the new Reception area. Excavation had begun for the new flume tower basement. First fix plumbing to toilet areas. Commencement of replacement ceiling to Coconut Grove.
- The next phase of work would include: starting to remove the main pool roof, construction of ground floor flume tower, flume manufacturing, commencement of reception area and entrance ceilings, changing Village ceiling work and constructing the foundations for the new splash pool area.

The Panel made the following points:

- The water in the main swimming pool had not been removed as the water helped to retain the structure of the swimming pool surround.
- Members expressed concern that large articulated lorries were using the Bagshot Road junction to reverse on to the site and creating traffic/safety issues. The Head of Performance stated that he was not aware of this and would look into it.
- The Panel agreed that they would like to see a regular update on the project plan for this work. The Chairman suggested that this become a standing item on the agenda for Panel meetings. Members were particularly interested to see progress towards the completion date, the project plan document and that the site would be cleared after work was completed.
- The Director reported that the project had now reached an interesting phase, all the strip out work had now been completed. The roof had been badly designed originally and this would be rectified.
- Members queried why the roof survey carried out by Atkins had not identified that the roof needed maintenance work. The Director stated that this was as a result of the limitations of the survey work. The survey did not carry out any invasive work as the facility was still open to the public at that time. In

addition, scaffolding was needed to access some parts of the roof and other parts of the roof could only be accessed through the saunas, as a result the extent of the poor condition of the roof had not been identified by the initial survey work carried out by Atkins.

- The Head of Performance reported that there were some complexities around ensuring that the Dutch manufactured flumes fitted within the flume tower and ensuring these two elements integrated but that he hoped that this would not delay the completion date.
- The Head of Performance reported that he was working with the Communications team to ensure the project was publicised and that a short video clip was being worked on for the BBC website.
- The Head of Performance reported that there was a significant amount of design work within the project. As the flumes would be transported from Holland a great deal of work had been based on computer images.
- The Head of Performance confirmed that the risk register for the project currently contained 45 risks and one of these was red.

124. **Review of the Council's Pre-Application Planning Advice Service**

The Chief Officer: Planning, Transport and Countryside introduced a report informing the Panel of recently agreed changes to the Planning Pre-Application Advice Service provided by the Council. It had been considered appropriate to make changes to the service, which was the subject of an Executive Member decision dated 10 August 2016, in order to make it more responsive to the needs of applicants and to ensure that it covered costs and provided good value for money.

The service was introduced in 2007 and following the receipt of feedback, the need to make changes had been recognised. Attention was drawn to some of the key findings of the related consultation exercise. The Panel was advised that the service related to all types of planning applications and advised on the suitability of development. In-principle advice was usually provided within seven to eight weeks. The revised service would become operational from November 2016 onwards and a bespoke service including consultee responses would be available if required. The service had generated income of approximately £85k in 2015/16 and it was expected that this level would continue. Fee comparisons with other Berkshire unitary authorities had been made to identify a mid point to apply in Bracknell Forest.

In response to members' queries, the Chief Officer made the following points:

- Whilst the service could incur charges, a profit could not be made. Charges were therefore determined by the cost of the service.
- The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead local authority had used consultants to carry out this service whereas the council had been keen to use and invest in staff and achieve cost effectiveness as a result.
- Whilst fees and charges were reviewed annually, the service itself may be reviewed in a few years if deemed necessary.

125. **Bracknell Forest Local Plan Update**

The Panel considered this report which summarised the position on the Local Plan and provided an update following the previous report in July 2016.

The Chief Officer: Planning, Transport & Countryside reported that 80 responses had been received to the consultation and that these would be used to feed into the preferred options detailed at paragraph 5.6 of the report. This work was on target with the dates detailed in paragraph 5.6.

A broad assessment was being undertaken at this stage, the Green Belt review was now completed as well as the Joint Mineral & Waste Plan. Subject to the decision of the Executive, a consultation exercise would commence on the Supplementary Planning Documents.

126. Quarterly Service Report (QSR)

The Panel noted the quarterly service report for Environment, Culture and Communities for the quarter ending June 2016.

The Director reported that these figures were the latest available figures. He stated that he would look into when the Met Office roundabout traffic lights would be operational again and inform Members.

The Director reported that the budget for e+ cards had been reduced last year and reduced further this year. These cards were widely used at leisure facilities, libraries and as part of the mandatory bus concessionary bus fare scheme. The Director and the Head of Performance agreed to brief the chairman on this scheme and its corresponding budget.

127. Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions

The Panel noted the scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key decisions relating to Environment, Culture & Communities.

128. Regulatory Services - Joint Services Proposal

The Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection reported that this report was due to be considered by the Executive on 27 September 2016. He stated that the proposals had been put forward from the perspective of looking forward and finding savings. The service was already in the bottom quartile in terms of funding and was delivered by a small team.

The proposals were estimated to create £151,000 of direct cost savings. Significant savings would be achieved from reducing the number of managers needed. Governance would need to be carefully considered, if the re3 governance model was adopted this would place Executive Members and senior officers at the centre of all key decisions relating to budgets, savings and potential savings. The potential to expand the service was also feasible within these proposals.

The alternative to these proposals would be to outsource the service to an external provider, this would inevitably mean a loss of control of the service.

The implications of the proposals were significant for staff, given that there would be a number of posts that would need to be lost and a number of redundancies. Staff had now been consulted on the proposals and feedback from staff had generally been positively.

The start date for the joint service if the proposals were to be adopted would be 13 January 2017. At this point a joint committee would take on the role of governing the service.

The most notable change as a result of these proposals would be that the pest control service would no longer be delivered, these needs would be picked up in a different way.

The following points were made:

- These proposals had been driven by the current financial situation and had not been driven through the Council's transformation process. The Director reported that the majority of staff were supportive and the proposals would mean that the majority of services could be continued and that the service would be more resilient.
- Members' commented that a significant amount of funding had been committed to the transformation process and that proposals that came from in-house could be just as viable and more cost effective.
- The Chief Officer reported that the Joint Committee would be responsible for setting and delivering the service plan. This committee would consist of six voting members and would establish their terms of reference..
- The cemetery and crematorium were firmly not within the scope of these proposals and would not be part of a shared service.
- One of the challenges of the proposed shared service would be integrating the three Council IT systems so that they can be accessed throughout the shared service.
- It was confirmed that there would be a client-officer role, so that Members could secure contact as they needed.
- The Chief Officer reported that a number of other local authorities had adopted a shared service. He added that two other local authorities had already expressed interest in joining this proposed joint service but that the addition of other authorities would not be considered until the service had been sufficiently embedded and established.

CHAIRMAN