

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
30 JANUARY 2014
7.30 - 8.50 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Baily, Mrs Birch, Gbadebo, Harrison, Heydon, Sargeant and Virgo

Reverend Canon Parish, Church of England Representative
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative

Executive Member:

Councillor Ward

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Ms Brown, Finnie and McLean
Councillors McCracken, Executive Member
Councillor Mrs McCracken

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Ann Moore, Head of Democratic & Registration Services
Alan Nash, Borough Treasurer
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief executive
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services

43. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 21 November 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that all outstanding actions had been completed from the last meeting, as detailed on page seven of the agenda papers.

44. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing.

45. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

46. Public Participation

There were no representations submitted under the public participation scheme.

47. **Review of Seats on Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Panel Membership**

The Head of Democratic and Registration Services reported that on 27 November 2013 Council increased the membership of the O&S Commission as part of a review of the allocation of seats on committees which was triggered by the formation of a third political group on the Council. The previous position had been politically proportionate and following deliberations with Group Leaders it was agreed that political proportionality should be maintained.

She reported that the Minority Groups had agreed between them which Group would take which seat on each overview and scrutiny Panel where there was only one minority seat available. The exception to this was the Environment, Culture and Communities Panel where agreement could not be reached. Therefore as the current allocation of seats of the Panel complied with the proportionality principles set out in the report it was not proposed to recommend any changes to the allocation of seats on this Panel.

The Head of Democratic and Registration Services advised the Commission that revised recommendations had been tabled.

Upon being put to the vote the Commission AGREED that;

- i) the size and allocation of seats on the four overview and scrutiny Panels remains unchanged, as set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report.
- ii) Further to paragraph 6.1 regarding the Conservative vacancy on the Adult Social Care and Housing Panel, to endorse the appointment of Councillor Mrs Phillips.
- iii) That the co-option of Dr David Norman as a non-voting co-optee of the Health O&S Panel for a period expiring on 31 May 2015 be endorsed.

48. **The Council's Budget Consultation**

The Borough Treasurer reported that the end of the consultation period was approaching and that the Executive would be considering all representations made at its meeting on 11 February 2014, before recommending the budget to Council.

The provisional settlement had now been received and although the year ahead would be challenging, the settlement was in line with expectations, overall. The most significant changes since the previous year were around the formula grant.

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

- The Borough Treasurer stated that it was expected that all staff except Chief Officers would receive a 1% pay award.
- The Director of Corporate Services reported that in terms of the Corporate Services department, draft revenue budget pressures were initially £134,000. She reported that glide path savings for the department totalled £610,000. This had been as a result of staff reductions, contract savings and careful use of budgets through the year. The savings target for the facilities category management strategy would be challenging. In addition, she asked that members note that the proposal to charge unions for the space they used at the Commercial Centre may not be realised as Unison had indicated that they would not be able to pay.

- In addition, the Director of Corporate Services reported that the contract for lift maintenance had now been terminated and a more significant programme of work to completely refurbish the lifts was being pursued to assure the reliability and future of the lifts in Easthampstead House.
- The Borough Treasurer reported that two savings had been made in respect of insurance. The first saving arose from a reduction in insurance premiums following a competitive tendering exercise. The second resulted from a cancellation of annual Terrorism and Personal Accident premiums. No claims had been made against the Personal Accident insurance in recent years. It is not a mandatory insurance and as a result, was seen as another low risk saving.
- The Borough Treasurer reported that the level of contingency funding necessary was always a judgement call. Last year there had been three unknown risks which led to contingency funding being higher, these included:
 - i) the localisation of council tax benefit, however take up had been lower than predicted. Therefore this risk was currently non-existent.
 - ii) Localisation of business rates, income had been higher than expected and therefore this risk had also been reduced.
 - iii) The transfer of Public Health responsibilities and the risk as to whether funding would be sufficient. It was now confirmed that this work could be delivered under current grant levels.
- The Borough Treasurer reported that contingency funding had been used in previous years mainly to tackle changes in demand for services. The most significant service area in recent years had been Looked After Children, where the Council could require funding of up to £200,000 a year for a single child.

The Director of Corporate Services thanked Helen Pennington, Group Accountant for working hard to pull together all the savings for the department.

The chairman confirmed that the Commission had noted the minutes of the Panel meetings at which the budget proposals had been considered, and the Commission did not have any comments to make to the Executive at this stage.

49. Recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission From the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Working Group on the Francis Report

Councillor Virgo reported that this working group had sought input from a range of stakeholders and had been able to set out a slightly different way of working as a result. It had been an incredibly worthwhile piece of work, one of the recommendations of the working group was that Members specialise in specific areas, enabling the Panel to cover a lot of ground in greater depth.

The Chairman asked that his thanks be passed on to all of the working group members and that he would watch with interest as this work progressed.

Members queried whether Local Healthwatch was now operational. It was reported that they were operational and had attended one or two Health O&S Panels, however there did seem to be some communication issues and it was hoped that these would be resolved imminently. Healthwatch now had observer status at the Health O&S Panel. It was reported that the Health O&S Panel would continue to support Healthwatch and work with them as fully as possible to ensure that the patient voice was heard.

The Chairman commented that further consideration would be given to enhancing officer resources as referred to in recommendation 2.1 b) of the report. Members of

the Panel felt that whilst this was desirable, they should remain respectful of the Council's priorities in terms of finances. It was agreed that the Chairman would consider paragraph 5.32 relating to officer resources further and report back to the Commission.

In addition, the Chairman asked that each O&S Chairmen consider paragraph 5.32, applying the lessons of Francis to other panels further.

It was confirmed that whilst the Commission and O&S panels had a public participation scheme, it had not been taken up to a great extent by the public.

It was AGREED that;

- i) the Commission had carefully considered the recommendations of the working group on the Francis report
- ii) public engagement mechanisms be kept under review, with the underlying aim of learning about residents' healthcare concerns as directly as possible, in concert with Healthwatch, to ensure the voice of the public was heard.
- iii) recognise that officer resources were fully stretched and to decide in consultation with the Health O&S Panel how to meet the new demands on officer time by considering ceasing lower priority O&S work and divert resources accordingly, or by not implementing all of the Working Group's recommendations. The Chairman to consider this further and report back to the Commission.
- iv) Each O&S chairman should review the scope for replicating the improvements to the Health O&S panel to their respective O&S Panel.

50. Work Programme and Panel Activity Update

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny stated that the report provided an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2013-14 and Panel activity, with particular reference to Working Groups of the O&S Commission.

The Chairman stated that if Members would like to participate in the Re-localisation of Business Rates Working Group which would start in April 2014, they should inform him or the Head of Overview and Scrutiny, if there were not enough volunteers the invitation would be extended to all O&S Members. Councillor Heydon volunteered for this working group.

Councillor Harrison stated that the Adult Social Care and Housing O&S Panel wanted to explore the possibility of running an additional working group in the current year. The Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that this could lead to difficulties, at present each O&S Panel ran one working group and this led to officer resources being fully stretched. All reviews were different in terms of size and complexity, if one Panel ran an additional working group this would slow everything down.

It was agreed that in order to optimise resources, no more than one review per panel should be run at any one time.

51. Overview & Scrutiny Progress Report

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny stated that the report provided an update of all Overview and Scrutiny activity between May and November 2013. He stated that positive feedback had been received on O&S reviews to date as detailed on page 96 of the agenda papers.

In response to Members' queries the Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that the Chief Officer had taken on board the views of the Bus Strategy Working Group in his final report to the Executive. The Executive report had been circulated to the Working Group Members. If there were any further queries, these should be raised with the Director of Environment, Culture and Communities.

52. 2014/15 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that Members' views were sought on what work they wanted to carry out in 2014/15 and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Executive would be consulted on the 2014/15 work programme. It was then due to be submitted at Council in April 2014. A draft would be pulled together and submitted to the O&S Commission before being submitted to CMT and the Executive. Members indicated their support for the future reviews in the current work programme. The Chairman indicated that following the meeting, he would be providing an input to the draft work programme.

53. Executive Key and Non Key Decisions

In response to members' queries about the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System, the Director of Corporate Services reported that feasibility work had now been completed. The current system being used was 6-7 years old and the market had changed dramatically since. The system currently used was relatively expensive and the service had deteriorated. The new CRM would be procured on an invest to save basis from G cloud. The procurement plan had just been signed off. The system would be used across the Council, it would be used to manage waste, health and safety reporting and would include an alert system to alert staff to dangerous people.

In response to members' queries, the Assistant Chief Executive reported that the results of the Bracknell Market consultation had been 4% in favour of option 1 (retain market in current location), 72% in favour of option 2 (outdoor market) and 24% in favour of option 3 (close the market).

54. Corporate Performance Overview Report

The O&S Commission noted the Corporate Performance Overview Report and thanked the Director of Corporate Services and her staff for the ward alerts, they were very useful.

55. Date of Next Meeting

20 March 2014.

CHAIRMAN