

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
20 SEPTEMBER 2018  
7.30 - 9.45 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Finnie, Harrison, Mrs McCracken, Peacey, Mrs Temperton and Tullett

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Porter and Virgo

**Executive Members in attendance:**

Councillors Heydon and McCracken

**Also present:**

Gill Vickers, Executive Director: Delivery

Stuart McKellar, Director: Finance

Steve Bruce, Assistant Director: ICT

Kellie Williams, Deputy Transformation Programme Manager

**13. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 5 July 2018 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that there were outstanding actions from previous meetings and these would be followed up at a future meeting.

**14. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Councillor Mrs Birch declared a personal interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing.

Councillor Mrs McCracken declared a personal interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Culture, Resources and Public Protection.

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

**15. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**16. Public Participation**

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

## 17. Update on the Council's Financial Position

Stuart McKellar, Director: Finance updated the meeting on the Council's financial position since the Council set its budget in February 2018. He reminded Members that in order to bridge the 2018/19 budget gap 1% had been added to Council Tax and an additional £0.5m was taken from the General Reserves.

The latest reported position was that there had been significant increases in demand for social care services with a potential overspend of £0.5m in Adult Social care and £1.5m in Children's Social Care. He advised that other potential variances would broadly balance. There was an expected underspend on Treasury Management due to additional income from capital receipts, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy moneys. The Council would also benefit from a successful £2m VAT claim for leisure sites, that would provide additional one-off funds to support future budgets. The corporate contingency of £2.5m remained and Corporate Management Team (CMT) would keep spend under close review for the rest of the year.

The Director: Finance explained that the new Fair Funding review reset would recalibrate the distribution of funding across local authorities. There was therefore a risk that this would have a significant impact although it was anticipated that some dampening mechanism would be used to reduce the impact in the short term.

He explained the assumptions which had been made in order to start the budget planning process.

He reminded Members that the successful bid to establish a Business Rates Pool across all Berkshire Authorities as a pilot would both inform the new system in 2020/21 and had been financially beneficial for Berkshire as a whole and Bracknell Forest specifically.

He explained that CMT were in the process of re-assessing the assumptions used to calculate the predicted gap and that the gap in 2020/21 was large due to the impact of the new funding arrangements coupled with no significant transformation savings currently projected beyond 2019/20. The financial strategy was to use the Future Funding Reserve to manage the transition to the new funding system over time.

The Director: Finance advised the meeting that the original target of £11m of on-going savings had been achieved by the transformation programme. He reiterated that both Children's and Adult Social Care were experiencing significant increases in demand which were impacting on the delivery of transformation projects. It was noted that CMT were considering how to balance a whole systems approach with targeted interventions.

In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- Financial assumptions were being tested and pressures were currently at £3m and anticipated efficiencies would be proposed at £2m subject to Members' agreement.
- It was anticipated that there would be a loss of £4m business rate income in 2020 and it would be challenging to build this up again.
- It was recognised that strategic discussions were ongoing to address the potential 'cliff edge' for local authority finances in 2020 and it was noted that areas in the south who had experienced growth would see a reduction whereas northern areas were expected to see a slight improvement in funding, in relative terms.
- It was acknowledged that business rate appeals were the most challenging issue in the changing funding structure as no appeals had yet been heard

against the 2017 ratings list so there was a level of uncertainty. This was a risk element of the transition to central arrangements and the changing the appeals process was particularly complex.

- The Council had previously used all of the flexibility offered by the Adult Social Care precept and therefore the maximum increase to Council tax in 2019/20 would be 2.99%.
- Multiple data sources were used by Adult Social Care to anticipate demand however the response to healthcare and prevention work meant that it was hard to predict when and at what level individuals would require support in the future. Longitudinal studies were not yet available to inform this process.
- It was recognised that there should be closer working with Education due to some specific cases of children who had transitioned into Adult Social Care who required support and could have been identified earlier through their SEN support.
- There was currently £8m in General Reserves and £8.6m in Business Rate Fair Funding Reserve.
- **Action: The Director: Finance agreed to circulate a response to the query regarding how much had been written off in the previous year for Council Tax arrears.**
- Monthly monitoring of accounts was used to test the financial assumptions. As highlighted at recent Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, this process had identified £300k income shortage for car parking in the town centre. This was due to the new Avenue car park drawing customers away from Braccon Walk which would create a future budget pressure.
- Though Brexit would have a potential impact on the Council's finances no direct financial assumptions had been made. In particular, Members queried the potential impact on business rates due to vacancies if companies left the area and were reassured that there was a year's lag before a vacancy affected the budget and this would give the Council time to respond.

The Director: Finance explained that until the Executive approved the draft budget proposals it would be difficult to provide a further update. The Chairman of the Commission stated that the Commission should be able to comment on the draft budget before it went to the Executive.

## 18. Transformation Programme Update

Kellie Williams, Deputy Transformation Programme Manager updated the Commission on the progress of the Transformation Programme since the last update in March 2018. The programme's original savings target of £11m on-going savings had now been delivered, with one-off programme costs totalling £2.2m. Although there remained significant momentum across the programme the Adults and Children's programmes were the key focus due to the significant increases in demand for services.

She advised that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) were looking at prioritisation of 'sub-projects' to focus on greatest financial and strategic gain. It was explained that internal capacity to deliver the programme remained a challenge which made prioritisation of projects crucial.

Additional recognised achievements included excellent non-executive member engagement in the programme and that there had been no significant opposition or challenge to the changes from residents and very limited adverse press/reputational

damage. It was noted that four projects were due to close shortly and two have already been closed.

The Deputy Transformation Programme Manager highlighted features within a selection of projects:

- Within the Libraries project there had been technical issues but the team were working closely with ICT and the external provider so that the Council could be confident in the service being offered. Self-service kiosks were now installed and in use at Binfield, Birch Hill and Harmans Water branches. The remaining libraries would go live by October/November.
- Within the Adults programme the increasing demand was a challenge but there were positive indicators. A projected overspend of £0.5m was lower than previously experienced. The change in practice was driving savings and targeted demand profiling was helping the service identify and prevent demand that has not yet happened.
- Within the Children's programme there was a potential overspend of £1.5m and demand was difficult to predict. £400K of savings had been achieved and this was due to increase to £880k by the end of the financial year. The updated position on Edge of Care was that nine young people were being supported and eight remained at home with one was in respite care. Of six young people with the potential to move out of residential care: one had moved out, two would move imminently and three were planned for before Christmas. The restructure to the Early Help team was due at the start of the financial year but was not implemented until December and therefore savings were delayed. The Family Safeguarding Model was not delivering the anticipated savings. There had been significant senior leadership changes and it was recognised that unrealistic targets had been set given the current social worker caseloads.

In response to questions raised by Members the following points were made:

- Transformational projects were spread across the Council and could be delivered quicker if centralised and reprioritised to achieve more financial and strategic gains.
- It was clarified that the figures related to what the transformation team could deliver by the end of the financial year and other projects with savings attached to them would deliver savings earlier if were delivered sooner.
- The resources references related to having people with the skills and knowledge to deliver the projects. The initial discussions by CMT were about focussing the resources available onto projects with the most financial and strategic gain when considered against the time, resources and political impact. It was not yet possible to put a value on the cost of delivering all of the proposed programme.
- Social worker caseloads had been reduced to 15 cases but not to the ideal level of 13 cases. Recruitment had been successful but now retaining staff had become an issue.
- It was clarified that the resources issues for social work was about the capacity to commission services to the correct placements rather than Social worker caseload.
- In relation to the property review update the future use of Easthampstead House had been reconsidered and the Council was pursuing 'meanwhile use' rather than demolition.
- **Action: Steve Bruce, Assistant Director: ICT agreed to circulate a response to the query of the cost of relocating ICT training facilities (Education Centre/Stables/Commercial Centre) to go to the Ground Floor Library.**

- **Action: Kellie Williams, Deputy Transformation Programme Manager agreed to follow up with Councillor Mrs Temperton regarding the response to a planning enquiry she had made which was delayed due to 'lack of resources'.**
- There had been improvements seen in Planning and Building Control with cashable savings and positive feedback.

The Chairman thanked Kellie Williams, Deputy Transformation Programme Manager for the update.

#### 19. **Centre for Public Scrutiny - Health Check**

Kirsty Hunt, Governance and Scrutiny Manager updated the Commission on the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Health Check which had been commissioned to be delivered in November. The external and independent audit would be undertaken as a short and focused process looking at the factors that affect scrutiny performance and would conclude with recommendations on delivering effective scrutiny.

In response to a query about why CfPS had been chosen to deliver this and it was explained that a number of providers had been approached but CfPS were recognised as experts in the field of Scrutiny. It was confirmed that part of the research process would be to review best practice nationally and that Bracknell Forest Governance and Scrutiny officers would be facilitating the audit by providing requested information and scheduling appointments and meetings. It was raised whether consideration would be given to further joint scrutiny work and whilst it was anticipated that this may be addressed it was important not to pre-empt the proposals from CfPS.

The Chairman confirmed that he had requested the review was carried out as he considered it was essential to review the delivery of scrutiny as the current practices had been in place for a significant time with little change apart from the recent merger of two Panels.

#### 20. **Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs)**

The Commission noted the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the QSRs for the first quarter of 2018/19 (April to June 2018) relating to the Resources Directorate.

As a result of Members' comments and questions, the following points were made:

- In relation to 1.4.17 – *Implement the Council's strategy to maximise the apprenticeship levy* it was confirmed that the update related to both existing staff and new apprentices joining the Council.
- In relation to sub-action 5.2 – *The right levels and type of housing are both approved and delivered* it was raised that the Council was working on the basis of an annual need to build 670 new houses annually. New data from the Office of National Statistics indicated a 25 year (2016-2041) need for 8737 houses which equated to approximately 350 new houses per annum. It was queried how this new data would be factored into the targets that the Council was working towards.  
**Action: Executive Director: Delivery agreed to follow up how the current targets were set and whether they would be affected by the new data.**
- In relation to 7.2.03 - *Involve a wide range of people to sit on a range of Council bodies including the Education Appeals Panel, the Independent Review Panel and Overview & Scrutiny Panels* it was clarified that the

Governance and Scrutiny team were running a campaign to attract parent governors to fill the current vacancies. The Chairman added that personal approaches had been made to individuals for the vacancies relating to church representatives but that it was difficult to demonstrate the impact they could make. Research had shown that both types of vacancies were tricky to recruit and retain volunteers for.

## 21. **ICT and Digital Infrastructure Strategy**

Steve Bruce, Assistant Director: ICT presented the meeting with an overview of the current ICT Strategy explaining that in his first six months with the Council he had concentrated on key activities such as creating a workbook programme, gathering service metrics, embedding resource management and planning, improving the governance model, delivering a communications and engagement plan, developing a service catalogue, and a first draft of performance metrics, Service Level Expectations.

He explained that the use of TOTO, the new online query request system, had increased from 40% to 73% in its first few months. The migration to the Microsoft's Office 365 cloud solution was now 35% complete but required a better internet connection to complete this. Microsoft were providing free consultancy many of the solutions that the Council are planning to roll out. Steve also talked about a 6 month 'Proof of Value' programme that will be looking at multiple business drivers and their potential technology solutions,

In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- The Assistant Director: ICT proposed to reframe the strategy to work to a longer timeframe which would have less in focus the further away the timescale was.
- Two business partners were amongst staff leading an improved communications agenda, IT newsletters were created each week and proving popular and members of the team were sitting in Departmental management team (DMT) meetings so that ICT was aware of activities and could feed in ideas/support.
- It was reported that central to delivery was seeing the issue from the users point of view including Councillors and ICT engaged with their concerns and resolved issues.
- The Assistant Director: ICT identified that the majority of what the Council used ICT for was within 'normal' activity therefore 80% could be anticipated i.e. ICT could focus on common solutions for common needs (without huge internal customer input) and 20% should be focused on design/development of more bespoke and BFC focussed needs/solutions.
- It was discussed that the strategy should never be completed and it should be rolled forward within its final three years on a perpetual basis.
- It was confirmed that many applications were housed in the basement (the ICT data centre at Time Square). Although each supplier offered an individual cloud-based solution it might not make sense to take up each individual offering and not build a cohesive and inter-connected cloud infrastructure. Consideration was being given to using a private cloud as a solution part of the overall solution.
- It was confirmed that moving from capital to subscription based model would have an impact on revenue costs but after an initial 12 month pressure there would then be a 5 to 10% increase each year in the move from a capital to

revenue model. Further decisions would need to be made on how to fund ICT long term.

- ICT Service was moving from being a historical back office function to being a transformation partner and potentially touching all areas of the Council, for example, exploring the use of automation to replace repetitive actions.
- Members were reassured that work was ongoing to protect the Council from cyber attacks and it was noted that all organisations with ICT on their own premises were vulnerable. More sensitive data was being transferred to a secure server/secure cloud services over coming months and years.
- Although multi-factor authentication (MFA) was possible for devices it was acknowledged that organisations had to secure themselves against user behaviour.
- Consideration was being given to how information was filed and it was noted that the current structure relied upon knowledge of meeting dates to retrieve information on previous decisions.
- **Action: Assistant Director: ICT to meet with Councillor Peacey to discuss her concerns around file structure and retrieving data.**
- The Head of Business Intelligence was working with the technical lead to develop links into services so that key data sources were included in the use of data dashboards. Information would be accessed before it was out of date and methods of collecting data would need to be co-ordinated across teams. It was noted that Members found not being able to access 'fresh' data frustrating and would like to participate in the development of the dashboard.
- A pilot group of 50 members of staff were trialling bring your own device to work. It would be possible in the future to use non-Council mobile phones and smart phones, but, the ICT would continue to provide the current hardware as the main, supported, technology.
- When there were issues with applications on 'bring your own device' ICT support would not be provided on the individual device support but instructions for how to reinstall the relevant application which was not working, in line with the now common approach to 'BYOD' across industry.

The Chairman thanked Steve Bruce, Assistant Director: ICT for his presentation.

## 22. **Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions**

Members received and noted the scheduled Key and Non-Key Executive Decisions of a corporate nature. It was noted that items entered multiple times would only be presented once on future reports.

### **1074132: Easthampstead House – Demolition Project Award of the Works Contract which was due for decision on 10 August 2018**

It was clarified that at the time of the agenda production the decision was outstanding from 10 August but as announced earlier in the meeting discussions regarding the future of Easthampstead House had moved on and the Council was pursuing 'meanwhile use'. Members queried why this was outstanding and not updated on the work programme but no officers were present during this item to respond and a response was requested to be sought outside of the meeting.

***Action: Decision to be updated and published on the work programme.***

**1078796: Sale of Land – Winkfield which was due for decision on 16 October 2018**

Members queried whether the proposed sale of Winkfield Manor could be considered as a joint venture rather than a disposal. There was uncertainty about Silva Homes' role in the sale. The Members present expressed the view that the Council should develop the land jointly with the partner, whoever it was and not sell the land. No officers were present during this item to respond and a response was requested to be sought outside of the meeting.

***Action: Clarification sought on the proposed disposal.***

**23. Work Programme and Panel Activity Update**

The Commission noted the update in respect of the developing Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Work Programme for 2018-19 and Panel activity.

**CHAIRMAN**