

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
24 JANUARY 2019
7.30 - 8.54 PM**



Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Allen, Finnie and Porter

Executive Members:

Councillors McCracken and Heydon

Also Present:

Gill Vickers, Interim Executive Director: Delivery
Stuart McKellar, Director Finance
Nikki Gibbons, Director: OD, Transformation and HR
Lisa Hippolyte , HR Business Partner, Transformation

33. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

Councillor Thompson was substituting for Councillor Allen.

34. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 15 November 2018 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman extend his thanks for the extremely comprehensive and well written minutes from the last meeting as it had been a mobile and interactive environment.

Responses to all of the queries and requests for information raised in the meeting had been received or formed part of the agenda.

35. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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.

36. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

37. Public Participation

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

38. **The Councils Budget Consultation**

The Commission considered a report that set out draft budget proposals for 2019/20. It was reported that the Executive would be considering all representations made at its meeting on 12 February 2019, before recommending the budget to Council.

The Director: Finance updated the Commission and made the following points:

- The financial settlement had been received late due to Brexit which had impacted the budget planning as the settlement had not been received when the budget papers were published in December.
- The report highlighted a number of pressures and transformational savings.
- The directorate restructure, which had been undertaken in September 2018, no longer matched the O&S structure, therefore many of budget items that historically would have been reviewed at the Overview and Scrutiny Commission under the old resources directorate had been reviewed at the Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel.
- The report to the Commission covered the whole budget but also specifically looked at items in regards to Finance & OD, Transformation and HR.

In response to the Members' comments and questions, the following points were made:

- The recent announcement made in regards to the relocation of Vodafone was a potential risk to the 2019/20 budget. It had been recorded on the Corporate Risk register as the impact would be high, but the current likelihood was low. The time scales for the relocation were currently unknown however if the relocation happened at the start of the financial year there would be a significant impact on the budget, however if it was a shorter period of the year the financial impact wouldn't be as significant. As the Council was part of the Berkshire Business Rate pilot, the County as whole would receive income from Vodafone as they would be relocating the Newbury area, so this did give a level of protection.
- New homes bonuses was an area that the council should be looking at as a significant number of houses were being built.
- The fees and charges were formulated through a tried and tested process. The aim was to ensure that the charge covered the cost of delivering the service. However some of the fees and charges did have further limitations such as pre-set charges set by the government, or services that could be delivered in the market place, so there was a need for the charge to be competitive. There were yearly increases which were inline with inflation; this could be 3/4/5%, the increase helped with the overall budget.
- Business Partners worked with directorates on a case by case basis to ensure the fees were set at the correct level.
- The setting of some fees were out of the Council's control, such as planning which was prescriptive and social care, as an element was set by Government. The majority however, were at the Council's discretion.
- At Environment, Culture and Communities O&S Panel, held on the 8 January 2019, Members had queried the proposed increase in the charge for transferring a Hackney Carriage vehicle to a new owner. It was queried whether this was a joint discussion as the increase was great. The Director: Finance explained that there was a desire to regularise the joint Public Protection Partnership and to bring the Council's fees inline with West

Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Council's fees. Members raised concerns about the synergy in the partnership and wanted to make sure that the Council didn't lose its ability to set its own fees and charges.

- There was a reduction in the number of internal audit days delivered which had produced a saving. The Council has signed up to the national rate arrangement.
- External audit fees continued to reduce in line with the tendering process undertaken previously.
- The number of internal audit days delivered would be the same as the past three years.
- A request had been made for funding for a full time Apprenticeship Manager to maximise the apprentice levy. An interim had been in place and there was a wish to make this a permanent appointment as it had been successful.
- The apprenticeship levy had been used to support existing apprenticeships at the Council. So far there were sixty five people using the levy.
- In recommendation 2.4 of the Revenue Budget report, the £1m additional funding for schools to be made available from the Council was to help mitigate the financial impact of new schools opening in the Borough. The issue had been raised by the School's Forum in response to the draft budget consultation as existing schools felt that they were being penalised. The Executive had responded to this issue with the additional funding to be allocated through the funding formula. Academies were outside of this arrangement.
- Members were in support of recommendation 2.4 as it was desperately needed to support schools with empty places, however it was felt that the recommendation needed to be more specific as it didn't indicate what the funding was for nor that it had been raised by the Schools Forum.

The Director: Finance stated that the O&S structures needed to link properly to the new directorate structure going forward to ensure that the budget process could be navigated more smoothly in the coming years.

The Commission endorsed the report and the comments made in the minute extracts from Overview & Scrutiny Panels.

The final budget would be going to Executive for endorsement on 12 February 2019 and for approval at Full Council on 27 February 2019. All comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Panels would be annexed to the Executive report.

39. **Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs)**

The Commission considered the latest trends, priorities and pressures in terms of departmental performance as reported in the Quarterly Service Report for the second quarter of 2018/19 (July to September) relating to the Delivery Directorate.

The interim Executive Director: Delivery, commented that her commentary seemed along time ago as considerable changes had occurred since the second quarter, such as the directorate restructure.

Members raised concerns about changes of payment method. The interim Executive Director: Delivery gave reassurance that in circumstances where a resident could only pay by cheque that this would continue. Every resident who had paid for transactions with cash and cheque had been written too regarding the changes and the response so far had been positive.

40. **Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions**

Members received and noted the scheduled Key and Non-Key Executive Decisions of a corporate nature.

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

The Commission noted the progress against the Overview and Scrutiny work programme, and the reports from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen on each Panel's progress against the work programme.

Councillor Harrison, Chairman of the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel commented that an additional panel meeting was being held in February to scrutinise why the local CCG would not be providing an item of equipment for sufferers of diabetes. Flash testing was being undertaken nationally but the equipment was not been made available by the local CCG. As this decision had been taken locally, Members from the CCG would be attending the additional meeting which would allow the panel to investigate and understand the reasoning for why this was not being offered locally.

Councillor Brossard, Chairman of the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Working Group gave an update to the Commission on the progress of the Working Group to date. So far five meetings had been held, however the process had been stop/start due to changes of staff. In the past week a productive meeting had been held with a letting agent from Prospect, as they had a number of HMOs in their portfolio. Prospect had been selective in their approach to attract the best HMOs as some were not well managed. The next meeting would be with an HMO landlord in order to help understand the process for an applicant and how security, fire and health and safety arrangements were provided. Councillor Brossard stated that this was uncharted waters for the Working Group who were learning as the meetings went along. It was estimated that the working group was within one meeting of wrapping up and the final report would be shared with the panel.

Councillor Brossard thanked his fellow Members for their support throughout the Working Group.

42. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

(1) Information relating to any individual (Item 11).

43. **Update on the Outcomes of the Retention and Recruitment Workshop**

Nikki Gibbons, Director: OD, Transformation and HR was invited to the Commission to provide an update on the outcome of the retention and recruitment workshop which had been requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in 2018 in order to review the problems facing the Council in recruitment and retention of staff.

The Director: OD, Transformation and HR gave an overview presentation which focused on a number of issues that had been looked at and the key priority areas.

As the item was heard under the Exclusion of public and press, it was requested that the presentation be circulated to Members of the Commission.

(ACTION: Hannah Stevenson to circulate presentation to Members.)

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

- There was a sense of satisfaction with Members that the issues in the presentation were the ones raised at the workshop which was very gratifying.
- The reasons why staff were leaving had been recorded in data sets. The trends had been identified and the turnover had increased, which was to be expected and not necessarily a bad thing as the percentage was still below the national average and the Council was undergoing a Transformation Programme.
- A staff social club was still in existence, it was so successful that it was self run across the Council. The events were often sold out, with waiting lists to get onto events.
- A healthy turnover was needed for an organisation to prevent the organisation from becoming stagnant and create movement and career opportunities.
- Career pathways across the Council were being created and there was investment being made to develop Managers.
- The employment rate was high in Bracknell, indeed also in the South East and it was a very competitive labour market with some job roles being difficult to fill due to having to compete with the private sector and being located near to London. This was an area which needs to be kept under continuous review to remain competitive.
- Transferable skills were being developed across the Council, an example of this was in the Transformation Team where there was a continuous pool of staff being trained and supported to become project managers on a secondment basis.
- In each staff members annual performance appraisal there was a section about personal development. All staff also had access to the development module and were able to create their own plan. Staff were encouraged to self-serve and take ownership of their own personal development
- There was strong, robust performance management in place.
- There were often secondment opportunities available across the Council.
- There is a continuous risk that staff within the Social Care area could leave. In order to mitigate this a review of some retention payments had been undertaken and agreed by the Employment Committee last year.
- A staff survey was undertaken every three years which was undertaken by an external company and all responses were anonymous. In addition a pulse survey was also being planned to ask specific questions around certain areas from the staff survey, including staff morale.

The Chairman thanked the Director: OD, Transformation and HR for her useful, interactive presentation and requested that the item be on the agenda annually for the January meeting.

(ACTION: Hannah Stevenson to put an update on retention and recruitment on the forward plan.)

CHAIRMAN