

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
28 JANUARY 2016
7.30 - 9.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Mrs Angell, Brossard, Finnie, Harrison, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Mattick, Phillips, Porter and Mrs Temperton

Parent Governor Representative:

Mr R Briscoe

Executive Members:

Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation & Finance

Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services & Public Protection

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Birch

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny

Pat Keane, Chief Officer: Information Services

Alan Nash, Borough Treasurer

Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive

Helen Pennington, Group Accountant

Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services

38. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 19 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

40. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

41. Public Participation

There were no submissions from the public in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

42. The Council's Budget Consultation

The Commission considered a report that set out draft budget proposals for 2016/17. It was reported that the Executive would be considering all representations made at its meeting on 9 February 2016, before recommending the budget to Council.

The Borough Treasurer delivered a presentation and made the following points:

- He reported that the provisional local government settlement had been surprising and caught many local authorities off guard and was set to change the landscape of local government over the next four years. Whilst the Council had been told to expect a 25 to 40% cut in central government funding over the next four years, the ensuing cut in funding had been closer to 80%. Representations were being made to the Government both by officers and politically.
- Unlike previous years the Council's budget setting process would need to continue over a longer period to deal with this late addition to budget pressures.
- He stated that the draft budget proposals before Members would be important to deliver the Council's medium term financial plan.
- Capping of Council tax increases still applied.
- Resource allocation was now central to all Government decisions; in particular affluent areas would be expected to find more of their own resources. This contained some unrealistic assumptions, for example on the level of new house building.
- £2.4m additional savings would need to be made by the Council in the first year, followed by £1.7m in the following year.
- A precedent had been set by the Government as there had been no precursors to indicate that funding would be slashed this significantly. The Council would now need to develop a set of additional proposals to make more immediate savings. The Commission would have an opportunity to consider these additional proposals on 10 March 2016.

The Director of Corporate Services reported that her department had worked hard to ensure they did not have any budget pressures. Savings proposed amounted to £750,000, this was on the back of 20% of savings that had already been made by the Corporate Services Department and the Chief Executive's Office. This had been achieved through a combination of staff reductions and efficiencies.

In response to Members queries it was reported that:

- Home to School transport included the funding of adults who accompanied each young child to school.
- There may be opportunities where Business Rates could be increased and this would be considered where appropriate.
- The Assistant Chief Executive reported that the budget pressure in the Chief Executive's Office would be reduced as a result of additional budget proposals.
- The Borough Treasurer reported that National Insurance contributions had increased for both employees and employers.
- The Director of Corporate Services reported that the culture and climate of the organisation was currently one of austerity and reducing costs and making savings wherever possible.
- It was reported that printing leaflets externally had not been explored as the shared printing service had been working well and had reduced costs significantly across the Council. This service would be reviewed after a year.

- Building maintenance surveying work had been externalised as this was more cost-effective, but the alternative of in-house surveyers was kept under review.

The Chairman stated that he was surprised by the low rates charged by the Council's legal services team for their services and that this was in need of review as higher rates should be pursued. He stated that other charges should also be considered as well as those services that the Council did not currently charge for. The Borough Treasurer reported that the Transformation Programme would be considering all of these issues and income generation more generally. This would include a variety of options, such as, for example, investing in property to generate income.

In response to Members queries, it was reported that the Agresso system was coming to the end of its life and a new version would need to be installed.

The Commission endorsed the comments made in the minute extracts from Overview & Scrutiny Panels and the draft budget proposals before them with the caveat that further draft budget proposals would be put before them on 10 March 2016 for consideration.

43. **Information and Communications Technology Update**

The Chief Officer: Information Services delivered a presentation and covered the following areas:

- Corporate ICT Responsibilities
- Council-wide ICT Spend 2014/15
- Corporate ICT Budget 2015/16
- 2015 ICT Work Programme
- ICT Survey – satisfaction levels
- Socitm Benchmarking Summary – Key Performance Indicators
- ICT Strategy/Internal Digital Strategy

In response to members queries, it was reported:

- The ICT Helpdesk had received 21,000 calls in 2015, ICT services undertook trend analysis and considered emerging patterns of calls to decipher if training in any particular area may be required or beneficial to staff. It was reported that around 4,000 calls were around things that were not working properly, the remainder of the calls were for other services eg, access to various technology/services.
- It was reported that multi agency safeguarding used highly secure technology to carry out their work, in addition Forest Care were able to also use this technology.
- It was reported it wasn't seen as absolutely necessary to upgrade from Windows 7 to 10 at this time.
- The Chairman requested that the log/analysis of calls received by the ICT help desk be provided for him. The Chief Officer Information Services agreed to provide this.

44. **Corporate Performance Overview Report (CPOR) 2015/16**

The Commission noted the Chief Executive's Corporate Performance Overview Report for the second quarter of 2015/16.

45. Executive Forward Plan

The Commission noted the forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan of a corporate nature.

In response to Members queries, it was reported that the potential acquisition of the former Magistrates Court had not been included in the Capital budget, as it was at this stage still a proposal and no decisions had yet been taken.

46. Work Programme and Panel Activity Update

The Commission noted the progress against the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2015-16 and the reports from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen on each Panel's progress against the work programme.

The Chairman of the Adult Social Care & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel reported that the Panel had agreed at their meeting on 19 January, to include in their work programme the successfulness of housing delivery in the borough.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission reported that the amber status on the Commission's work programme were due to financial information not being ready at the point the agenda was published.

Councillor Brossard agreed to consult the Chairman of the Children, Young People & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Panel on the amber status included in the Panel's work programme and to report back to the Commission.

47. Overview and Scrutiny Progress Report

The Commission noted the Overview and Scrutiny activity and developments over the period June to November 2015, set out in the report.

48. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Annual Report

The Chairman reported that all Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Commission would need to consider their work programmes for 2016/17. A proposed work programme for Overview and Scrutiny for 2016/17 would then be annexed to a report for the April 2016 Council meeting.

The Chairman also reported that it would be crucial to incorporate the Council's transformation process into the Overview & Scrutiny work programme and that he would discuss this with the Vice-Chairman and report back to the Commission on how best to achieve this.

CHAIRMAN