

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
10 MARCH 2016
7.30 - 8.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, Harrison, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Mattick, Phillips, Porter, Mrs Temperton, King OBE (Substitute) and Thompson (Substitute)

Parent Governor Representative:

Mrs L Wellsted

Executive Members:

Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance
Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services & Public Protection

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Brossard and Finnie and Mr R Briscoe

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Alan Nash, Borough Treasurer
John Nawrockyi, Interim Director of Adult Social Care, Health & Housing
Victor Nicholls, Assistant Chief Executive
Abby Thomas, Transformation Programme Manager
Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive

49. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 28 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

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

51. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

52. Public Participation

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

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

The Borough Treasurer reported that full Council had considered a report that set out budget setting proposals to meet the £11.6m funding gap faced by the Council. It was agreed at this Council meeting that £4.5m of savings would be made, a rise in council tax would raise a further £2.1m and £5.1m of reserves would be utilised.

Following this meeting, it was clear that using reserves in this way was not a sustainable approach and that further savings needed to be identified. Additional budget proposals were subsequently agreed by the Executive on 23 February.

This range of saving proposals were now being put before the O&S Commission for consideration. The Borough Treasurer reported that if these budget proposals were implemented, the Council would have an underspend of approximately £3-4m, this underspend could then be added to reserves to be utilised in future years.

The Transformation Board would be working to identify further savings and undertaking a number of reviews to identify further economies over the next four years. Budget proposals were currently being consulted upon and consultation would take place over a 6-12 week period.

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

- A range of documents had been made available alongside the revenue budget savings proposals to assist understanding of the proposals.
- A proposal to reduce the grant funding to South Hill Park had been made and it was anticipated that South Hill Park would respond to the consultation exercise and this would be taken into account. It was clear that South Hill Park would need to adjust their programme of events to account for a loss of grant of £44,000. The Chief Executive confirmed that he had written to the Chief Executive at South Hill Park and that any detailed proposals would be developed over the next 12 weeks with South Hill Park.
- It was confirmed that youth provision would be considered under the heading of early intervention/prevention heading on page 14 of the agenda papers.
- It was clarified that whilst the Executive work programme detailed in the agenda papers identified a decision on voluntary sector grants decision on 18 March, this would need to be revised to take account of the additional budget proposals.
- It was reported that the parish council tax reduction support detailed on page 15 of the agenda papers was an additional reduction to that already identified in the Commitment Budget 2016/17.
- The budget consultation exercise had been shown on the Council's website and a press release had also been published.
- It was reported that the transitional grant would be paid over a two year period. It had to be taken into the revenue budget and it was viewed as a stop-gap measure to lessen the impact of the funding gap.
- The level of prudent reserves was regarded to be a minimum of £4 million.
- The proposed saving of £200,000 on highway maintenance was a deferral of spending.

Councillor Mrs Temperton reported that she had recently attended a Life Chances Conference which focussed on reducing ill health and improving the emotional resilience of disadvantaged children. The message from the Conference was that early intervention, children's centres, good universal youth provision, programmes like Home Start were all measures that helped children to develop emotional resilience, reduced ill health and reduced the numbers of children being taken into care by local authorities. She felt as a result that the budget proposals relating to young people were short sighted.

The Executive Member for Transformation reported that budget proposals had been put forward by each directorate.

The Chairman stated that there was still opportunity for budget proposals to be removed, amended or replaced.

54. Transformation Programme

The Transformation Programme Manager reported that a Transformation Board was set up in October 2015 to develop and deliver a programme to fulfil the new Council Plan's commitments over the next four years and beyond.

During autumn 2015 the Board moved quickly to develop a work programme comprising both strategic reviews and other projects. The services chosen for review represent some major areas of expenditure. In addition, the Board focussed on the identification of additional savings that could be implemented relatively quickly during 2016/17.

All reviews commenced in January 2016 with the formation of project boards and the production of detailed delivery plans.

The Transformation Programme Manager reported that the Board was keen to secure member engagement at an early stage. Gateway reviews would commence in April 2016. Given the pace at which reviews were being developed it was proposed that O&S Commission Members be invited to a workshop session on 31 March 2016. The session would start with lunch, followed by a workshop between 2pm and 4.30pm.

The Chairman stated that he in principle welcomed this engagement and that O&S Commission members should lead this process and chair each gateway review. It would be important to take a holistic and consistent approach.

The Programme Manager agreed to circulate executive summaries of the programme implementation documents to members. This would provide members with the scope of each review and milestones. Further, at the workshop session members would be briefed on key work strands, progress made and the process for gateway reviews.

A chairman would need to be appointed for each review, there would be an open invitation for all Members to attend reviews.

The Chairman stated that in order to ensure consistency, he and the Vice Chairman should chair all reviews.

The Chief Executive reported that the two overarching principles for this work were that it should be led by Overview and Scrutiny and that reviews would operate broadly on the same basis as portfolio review groups, with all members being invited to attend review meetings.

The Chairman stated that he was disappointed about the low level of member involvement on the Transformation Board itself. The Chief Executive stated that it was a management led Board, reporting to the Executive every four weeks and would drive forward the work. Furthermore, Gateway Reviews would have substantial member involvement.

The Chairman stated that this potentially would be one of the most important pieces of work that he would be involved in during his career as a councillor and that the consequences would be felt for years to come. He agreed to have further discussions with the Chief Executive around process and ensure that all members who were interested in being involved in this process were sent invites to relevant meetings.

55. Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs) 2015/16

The Commission noted the Quarterly Service Reports for the third quarter of 2015/16 (October to December 2015) relating to the Chief Executive's Office and the Corporate Services Department.

56. Executive Forward Plan

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

It was clarified that the decision on voluntary sector grants scheduled to be taken on 18 March would need to be revised to take account of the additional budget proposals.

57. Work Programme and Panel Activity

The Commission noted the progress it had made against its work programme and also the progress made by Overview and Scrutiny Panels against their work programmes. Progress of the work of Overview and Scrutiny working groups was also noted.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny proposed that given the scale of work that potentially lay ahead with the Transformation programme and the level of involvement of Overview and Scrutiny members, it would be prudent to complete those working groups that were currently underway but to not embark on any further working groups and to focus energy on the Transformation work. The Chairman agreed with this approach and stated that overview and scrutiny officer support would also be required for the transformation work.

The Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Housing O&S Panel reported that members had attended a good session on homelessness and a briefing for all members would be beneficial on this.

CHAIRMAN