

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Minutes of 21 June 2017

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet 3 July 2017

Council 11 July 2017

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Report on the Draft Business Plan 2017-2027

Purpose of report

1. To report to Cabinet and Full Council a summary of the main issues discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 21 June 2017.

Background

2. The Business Plan is a policy framework document which sets the council's strategic direction, priorities and key actions.
3. The meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee provided an opportunity for non-executive councillors to question the Leader of the Council and senior officers on the draft Business Plan 2017-2027 ahead of final consideration by Cabinet on 3 July 2017 and Full Council on 11 July 2017.
4. The Leader of the Council, Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE, supported by Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director, and other members of the Executive, was in attendance to present the draft Business Plan and to provide clarification and answers to issues and queries raised by the Committee.
5. Details included in the introduction from the Leader and the Corporate Director had included but were not limited to:
 - That the draft Business Plan built upon and extended previous versions, reflecting on priority areas following the recent election
 - That significant external challenges, particularly in relation to reduced funding and increased pressures in key areas, required changes to the way the council operated and the draft plan reflected this.
 - The key priorities of creating stronger communities, a growing economy and protecting the vulnerable remained, with corporate planning cycles for service plans and reviews to ensure these were delivered.

Main issues raised during questioning and debate

6. The Chairman invited the Chairmen of the Select Committees to lead off discussion, before opening to general queries. Points raised together with any responses are provided in the following paragraphs.
7. Details were sought on the intention to integrate health and social care, in particular the emphasis on personalisation of care and safeguarding services. It was stated some people would always have difficulty accessing services they needed, and an adult care transformation programme had begun to identify how resources could be

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focused best on those who need them while still being affordable. It was also noted that it was intended for there to be a joint Corporate Director between Wiltshire Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group, and that at lower levels there needed to be further partnerships to deliver integrated services.

8. Questions were raised relating to the transfer of assets to town and parish councils, and it was stated that in the financial climate it was the case that if towns and parishes chose or were unable to take on management of some assets, some services would need to cease. It was argued that towns and parishes were better able to identify local needs for particular services and assets, and better able to justify precept rises to pay for those local services and assets, and manage them efficiently.
9. It was noted that the process of transferring assets, as for example with the Salisbury City Council CCTV, had been very expensive and time-consuming, and work was taking place to attempt to simplify the process considerably, with a revised asset transfer policy to be presented to Cabinet later in the year. Additionally, some members considered it would be beneficial if a template financial model or best practice guide between Wiltshire Council and towns and parishes were produced, giving all parties a clearer view of what was considered to be an appropriate level of assets or services to be managed or paid for at town and parish level. This was also raised in relation to area board grants, and the expectations that towns and parish contribute to projects within their area rather than rely on the area board and focus purely on keeping precepts low, rather than on delivering services for their areas, and that application forms for grants should further emphasise towns and parishes.
10. The lack of any specific comment on carbon emission reduction and other environmental issues was raised during debate. In response it was stated that it was already council policy to make its buildings environmentally friendly, there was a carbon management plan in place, all Cabinet reports had sections for environmental sustainability and the Core Strategy had policies in relation to environmental issues.
11. The ongoing financial situation was discussed and how well the Business Plan could deliver on its aims and priorities as a result, with some members feeling that Wiltshire had not historically received a good deal from central government. In response it was stated lobbying on Wiltshire's behalf always took place, and the principal issue was the assessment of needs, and that Wiltshire believed a greater emphasis should be placed on rurality and associated costs, and the increase in elderly population and attendant increase on specific services.
12. The need to work in partnership with other bodies in order to deliver the aims and priorities was raised, and potential difficulties for example with increasing numbers of individual academies.
13. Other issues included whether youth services had a high enough priority, rail strategies as part of stronger communities, whether the council's prioritisation of key services had been appropriately communicated, housing strategies for Looked After Children as part of protecting the vulnerable, and whether the council could lead the way with even more apprenticeships especially for former children in care.

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14. In summary, it was felt that the Business Plan was an aspirational document with appropriate priorities and themes, and that it would be necessary to monitor progress in its delivery by all Select Committees.

Conclusion

15. That the Committee is satisfied with the time and opportunity it has had to scrutinise the draft Business Plan 2017-21 and notes that the Plan will now go forward to Cabinet and Council for approval.

16. That Cabinet be asked to take note of the comments of the Committee as detailed in this report.

Councillor Graham Wright

Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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27 June 2017