

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

4 June 2019

Task Group Update

1. Communications with Councillors Task Group

Membership

Cllr Graham Wright
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson
Cllr Gavin Grant
Cllr Allison Bucknell
Cllr Trevor Carbin (Chairman)
Cllr Jose Green

Supporting officer: Adam Brown

Terms of Reference

1. To review Wiltshire councillors' experience and expectation of internal communications from the council across its service areas.
2. To contribute to the work already underway to develop a new online information portal for Wiltshire councillors.
3. To make recommendations to ensure that the communications received by Wiltshire councillors take into account their expectations to assist them in undertaking their role as effectively as possible.

Recent activity

The task group first met on 25 March 2019 to consider their terms of reference and to scope their future investigation. Cllr Trevor Carbin was elected as chairman. The task group agreed to produce a survey which would be distributed to all Wiltshire Councillors for response. The survey would cover a range of internal communication topics and allow members to respond based on their experience with them.

The task group last met on 8 April 2019. At the meeting the task group considered the early draft of their survey. This draft survey is in the process of being finalised before being circulated to all members for response.

The next scheduled meeting of the task group is 1 July 2019.

2. Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group

Membership

Cllr Howard Greenman
Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)
Cllr Bob Jones OBE
Cllr Stuart Wheeler
Cllr Gordon King

Supporting Officer: Natalie Heritage

Terms of Reference:

1. Explore the options of the Microsoft Exercise and look at learning from other councils on how to potentially use those solutions
2. Look at the list of projects and how things become projects - explore how these can be better vetted in future to ensure project meet best needs
3. Look at audit of existing software and how much we are/are not duplicating systems and costs
4. How we interface between service users/residents and the council and its digital systems

Recent Activity

The Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group met on 26 March 2019 and received a presentation on the progress of work with the Digital Programme, as well as a presentation on how best to engage members in the Council's digital transformation.

The members were concerned about a conflict that had arisen between the Digital Platform (MyWiltshire) and the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management (HIAMS) system. The conflict occurred between the front-end facing aspect of the Digital Platform and HIAMS. The Task Group were updated that the Strategic Board were considering options about how to resolve this issue, however, it was probable that the Council would incur an additional financial impact.

In regard to the engagement of members, the Task Group supported and endorsed the creation of an Executive Group, who would focus on how to engage and upskill members on digital matters. It was felt that this Group could help encourage the wider Council membership to engage fully in the Council's digital transformation.

The Task Group are next due to meet on 11 June, where they will receive a presentation from the Director for Digital Transformation and ICT on the 'Get Well' Programme and Citizen Engagement.

3. Financial Planning Task Group

Membership

Cllr George Jeans
Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Ian Thorn (Chairman)
Cllr Stuart Wheeler
Cllr Roy While
Cllr Richard Britton
Cllr Gavin Grant

Supporting officer: Henry Powell

Terms of Reference:

1. To understand and review the Medium Term Financial Strategy (4 year financial model)
2. To understand and review the approach and robustness of the financial planning regime within the Council
3. To understand and help develop the approach to the annual budget setting cycle
4. To review the specific contribution of overview and scrutiny in the annual budget setting cycle with a focus on outcomes
5. To undertake periodic budget monitoring including reviews of key midyear trends and developments and to ensure that these are taken into account when updating the Financial Plan
6. To work under the direction and guidance of the Management Committee and report regularly to the Cabinet Member, Management Committee and select committees (as appropriate) on its work and findings and to make any necessary referrals

Recent activity

The Task Group met on 21 March 2019 and considered the following:

Approach to Disposal of Assets and Property Acquisitions

The Task Group made the following suggestions, subsequently reported to Cabinet:

- Clarify the final decision makers within the large membership of the Asset Gateway Group listed.
- Recognise the significant experience and expertise of the inhouse Assets team more (though supporting the use of external input when appropriate).
- Be mindful of the council's reputation (and values) when setting parameters for who and what we will invest in.
- Clarify that the minimum 3% yield is after *all* costs rather than just borrowing costs.
- When considering opportunities be aware of shifting markets and growth areas, as fast changes to these can present risk e.g. recent demise of high street outlets.

New Performance and Risk Management Policy

The Task Group recommended the following:

- Provide a member briefing on the new Business Intelligence.
- Clarify that the Financial Planning Task Group has the opportunity to comment on the quarterly performance and risk reports.
- Consider introducing control measures into the 'comments' column of the Risk Register.

The Task Group will next meet on 6 June 2019 and will consider the following items:

- Presentation on the [Avon Mutual Bank](#) from Jules Peck, Founding Director
- New approach to budget and performance reporting
- Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 4 and Outturn 2018-19
- Performance and risk monitoring report
- Budget process review and forward look
- Non-executive Councillor Budget Suggestion Facility
- Asset Disposal Programme

4. Military and Civilian Integration Partnership Task Group

Membership

Cllr Richard Britton (chairman)
Cllr Gordon King
Cllr Mollie Groom
Cllr Alan Hill
Cllr Tony Jackson
Cllr Graham Wright

Supporting officer: Toby Eliot

Terms of Reference

1. To identify any risks and opportunities presented by the MCIP that are relevant to Wiltshire Council services and priorities, focusing on the following themes:
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Infrastructure
 - Budget
 - Schools
 - Employment (leavers and dependents)

2. To make workable recommendations on how any identified risks could be mitigated and opportunities exploited to support delivery of the MCIP and of relevant priorities within the Council's Business Plan.

Recent activity

An update will follow.

5. Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Task Group

Membership

Wiltshire Councillors:

Cllr Trevor Carbin
Cllr Christine Crisp
Cllr Alan Hill (Chairman)
Cllr Nick Murry

Swindon Borough Councillors:

Cllr Maureen Penny
Cllr Des Moffatt
Cllr Chris Watts
Cllr Rahul Tarar

Supporting officer: Adam Brown

Terms of Reference

1. Develop an overview and scrutiny framework and operational protocols which meet the requirements of democratic accountability for the use of public funds by a partnership body which is led by the business community under a mandate from the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.
2. Whilst developing the framework, the Task Group will carry out trial activities to scrutinise the outcomes and work of the SWLEP. In fulfilling this role the task group will:
 - a) Perform all overview and scrutiny functions on behalf of both Councils in respect of the SWLEP and JSEC
 - b) Appoint such sub-groups as it consider appropriate to fulfil those functions.
 - c) Review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge or any of the SWLEP and JSEC functions.
 - d) Make reports and recommendations to the Councils relevant partner in connection with the discharge of any functions.
 - e) Approve a forward work programme, including the programme of any sub-groups it appoints so as to ensure that the Task Group and sub-groups' time is effectively and efficiently utilised.

- f) Foster and encourage an inclusive, structured, non-partisan and non-adversarial approach to overview and scrutiny which is reliant on evidence rather than anecdote.

Recent activity

The task group last met on 2 April to receive updates on the updated SWLEP governance framework and Chippenham Station Hub.

The meeting included the attendance of Francis McGarry, Business Development Director for Network Rail (Western Route), who provided information regarding the Chippenham Station Hub. The task group began their process of evaluating the Chippenham Station Hub project, which will continue.

The next meeting of the task group is scheduled for 13 June 2019.

6. Public Consultations Task Group

Membership:

Cllr Gavin Grant
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson
Cllr Jim Lynch
Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Fred Westmoreland
Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman)

Supporting Officer: Natalie Heritage

Terms of Reference

1. To investigate:
 - a. The quantity and scope of council consultations and the level of response
 - b. How the council determines when, and when not, to consult the public on proposals or potential service changes
 - c. How the council determines the best design and format for each consultation
 - d. The public's perception and experience of council consultations
2. To make constructive recommendations for improvement if appropriate.

Recent Activity

The Task Group last met on 18 March and discussed the consultations that the Council had conducted in the previous 18 months. The meeting also touched on the 'Business Intelligence Hub' and how this body would manage the Council's consultations going forward.

Members also received evidence from Legal Services around the advice that legal provide to Officers/Members, when the Council is making a decision about whether to/not consult. The Task Group analysed the importance of the correct use of terminology, specifically the use of the word 'consultation' and the public's perception, when participating in a something defined as a 'consultation'.

The Task Group are next meeting on 17 June, where they will be further discussing the past 18 months' consultations with Legal Services, along with the Wiltshire Compact and the role of Impact and Equality Assessments in the consultation process.

7. Commercialism Task Group

Membership

Cllr Richard Britton
Cllr Tony Deane
Cllr Gordon King
Cllr Ian Thorn
Cllr Stuart Wheeler (Chairman)
Cllr Roy While

Supporting officer: Marie Gondlach

Terms of Reference

- a) To support implementation of the council's commercialism agenda, by considering and making recommendations regarding,
 - Developing existing income streams
 - Developing new commercial opportunities, either through existing assets or developing or acquiring new ones
 - Councillor and officer expertise in this area
 - The experiences of other local authorities
 - Legal and commercial issues
 - The ethos, values and reputation of the council when considering opportunities.
- b) To liaise with the Financial Planning Task Group to ensure the broad financial context is considered.

Recent activity

The task group held its first meeting on 13 May 2019, where Cllr Stuart Wheeler was elected as Chairman. The task group focused on defining "commercialism" for the council and assessing the current situation.

The task group was also aware of a potential cross-over with the Audit Committee, the Financial Planning Task Group (FPTG) and the Traded Services for Schools Task Group. For that reason, it would like to amend term of reference b) as follows:

b) To liaise with the Financial Planning Task Group, Audit Committee and the Traded Services for Schools Task Group to ensure that a holistic approach is taken with regards to commercialism for the council.

It should be noted that the current membership of the Task Group should support this, with 4 members of the FPTG and the chairman of the Audit Committee. It was also noted that the same scrutiny officer supports this task group and the Traded Services for School Task Group.

The task group agreed to hold its next meeting in September 2019 when it will consider:

- An overview of traded services within the council;
- Models available to deliver services (such as wholly owned subsidiary, community interest company, etc.);
- A national overview of Local Authorities' approach to commercialism.

Proposals

- 1. To note the update on Task Group activity provided.**
- 2. To endorse the amended terms of reference for the Commercialism Task Group as set out in the report.**

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