

## Wiltshire Council

### Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

3 December 2019

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#### Task Group Update

##### 1. Communications with Councillors Task Group

###### Membership

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

*Supporting officer: Natalie Heritage*

###### 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 were due to meet on 12 November, to discuss the results of their recent survey. This looked at how the Council's internal service areas communicate with members. The survey was made available to all members and ran from 8 October to 30 October 2019 and received a total of 48 responses. Due to unforeseen last-minute apologies, the Chairman was the only member able to attend and, as a result the meeting has been rescheduled for 9 January 2020.

## **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 Task Group has not met since its last update to committee on [24 September 2019](#). However, the next meeting is scheduled for next week (9 December), where members will be receiving a live demonstration of the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management System (HIAMS), as well as a briefing on the progress of ICT's 'Get-Well Programme'.

A visit has also been scheduled for the Task Group to visit Payroll on 9 January 2020 and understand how the Virtual Assistant is working.

## **3. Financial Planning Task Group**

### Membership

Cllr George Jeans  
Cllr Pip Ridout  
Cllr Ian Thorn (Chairman)  
Cllr Stuart Wheeler  
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
7. To review the council's Performance and Risk monitoring reports and the Corporate Performance Framework.

### Recent activity

On 17 October 2019 the Task Group held a meeting focusing on budgets for children's social care. This covered,

- The difficulty faced by councils nationally in recruiting experienced social workers, leading to greater use of expensive agency social workers. Wiltshire's retention rates are similar to the national average. Efforts to promote the benefits of working in Wiltshire include the support offered to staff and offering a range of exciting and innovative work.
- Children and Young People with Disabilities (up to 25) forecast spend was underbudget due to staff vacancies, which unfortunately was placing pressure on the team. Some children within this service require extremely expensive care and education packages e.g. around £4,000 per week.
- Emerging pressures from areas like County Lines exploitation. Swindon is the largest County Lines area outside of London and may indicate that in approx. 18 months Wiltshire may be facing increased pressures in this area. The team is undertaking mapping activity to RAG-rate the risks of those around young people already involved in County Lines networks to help prevent the issue spreading.
- Older children are harder to place in general and their placements are often more complex. The council is now using a model that works intensively with families to avoid the need for a placement. It is also opening a pop-up residential facility for children 10+ to give families some brief respite and avoid

crisis and a permanent placement being needed. This will help keep placement numbers stable.

- Overall the birth rate in Wiltshire has declined, but the military rebasing project may have countered that trend. Overall the demand on the service is expected to increase due to the growing complexity of cases.
- For Staying Put, IFA providers can be unwilling to accept the local foster placement rates. The council arrives at a reasonable cost of placements post-18 through negotiation with the providers. An independent consultancy is helping review the council's foster care placement system. It holds more complex children in-house and pays them more in comparison with our IFAs. This helps hold foster carers in-house.
- Numbers of care leavers are increasing, 50 leaving care places, which is accommodation with some support, to be commissioned. The council is seeking to drive the cost down by supplying its own support and by stepping down to independent living through support.
- Officers have been looking at the regional picture in terms of independent care price increases and seeing if South West councils can come together as a group of to better manipulate the market.

On 13 November 2019 the Task Group considered the following items, with comments reported to Cabinet on 19 November:

#### Budget Monitoring, Performance & Risk Management 2019/20 Q2

- The Task Group suggested that a summary section indicating movement as compared with last year would be useful. It also noted that the overspend represented growth beyond the demand projections. Unlike last year, budgeted savings are being delivered.

#### Treasury Management Mid-year

- Noted.

#### Proposals to amend the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Post Consultation)

- When it considered the original proposals in July the Task Group supported the reduction in the council's administrative burden (from the numerous re-calculations of people's allowances currently required) without disadvantaging those receiving benefits.
- Having received the revised proposals, the Task Group was reassured by the engagement with the voluntary sector and the liaison with other councils. It also noted a proposed review of how the revised Scheme is going in 6 months.

## **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: Marie Gondlach*

### 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 will hold its final meeting on Thursday 5 December to review its work to date and contribute to the development of the terms of reference and arrangements for future scrutiny of the LEP.

## 7. Commercialism Task Group

### Membership

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

*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, 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.

### Recent activity

There has been no meetings of the task group since the last meeting of this committee.

### Proposals

**To note the update on Task Group activity provided.**

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