

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

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### DRAFT MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2011 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM.

#### **Present:**

Cllr Peter Colmer (Substitute), Cllr Tony Deane (Vice Chairman), Cllr Peter Doyle, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Jeff Osborn (Chairman), Cllr Bill Roberts, Cllr Ricky Rogers and Cllr Judy Rooke

#### **Also Present:**

Ian Brown, Andrew Kerr, Cllr John Noeken, Barry Pirie, Cllr Pip Ridout, Matthew Tiller and Cllr Dick Tonge

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#### 169. **Apologies and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nigel Carter, Christopher Devine, Nick Fogg, Charles Howard, Mark Packard and Jonathon Seed.

Cllr Peter Colmer substituted for Cllr Mark Packard.

#### 170. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

#### 171. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 172. **Chairman's Announcement**

The Chairman expressed concern over the poor attendance at the meeting. Analysis of attendance over the past 3 months would be undertaken. Group leaders would be contacted to encourage better attendance and to ensure that relevant substitutions were provided where possible.

173. **Public Participation and Councillors Questions**

There was no public participation.

174. **Service Realignment and Associated Matters**

The Chief Executive was in attendance to update the Committee on the recent realignment of services and associated matters.

Confirmation was provided that a review of the management structures throughout the organisation had been conducted to ensure the authority was fit to deliver the business and financial plans.

A copy of the revised structure in relation to the Chief Executive's area was circulated for Committee members' consideration where the following was highlighted:

- The realignment incorporated the preference for the Director of Finance, Section 151 Officer and Governance Officer to report directly to the Chief Executive to ensure the authority remained fit for purpose whilst the significant changes taking place over the life of the business plan were underway.
- The Corporate Director for Community Services would take responsibility for housing to ensure symmetry of housing services with adult social care.
- The Service Director for Policy, Performance and Partnerships would now report directly to the Corporate Director for Children & Education and form part of an expanded Corporate Leadership Team.
- The Neighbourhood and Planning directorate had been renamed Operations as this provided better clarity on the Corporate Director's responsibility.
- The Resources directorate had been renamed Transformation and Resources. As a result the Transformation Programme Director would report directly to the Corporate Director within this directorate.

In addition clarification was provided that the contract for the Chief Finance Officer, had been revised and extended to March 2012 to ensure continuity of service during the budget setting process in February 2012.

The realignment of service as detailed had been agreed at the Officer Appointments Committee which took place on the morning of 14 July. Acknowledgement was given to the Service Director for HR and Organisational Development who had worked tirelessly to ensure as smooth as possible

process had been undertaken whilst adhering to the legal requirements to inform those posts affected which had been the case throughout all of the harmonisation and review period.

Members expressed concern as to whether the realigned service was resilient as further resources had been removed from the authority and this could impact on the services provided. The Chief Executive clarified that for the most part, the service delivery should remain as already set but that reviews would continue during the next 2 to 3 years to ensure the service provision remained fit for purpose as further details emerged in relation to central government plans, including the Localism Bill and Health and Social Care Bill.

A Transformation Programme Working Committee, chaired by the Corporate Director Transformation & Resources, would manage the 8 identified transformation programmes within the Corporate Programme. The finalised programmes would include measurements to monitor their effectiveness.

In terms of Public Health and Protection, a joint strategy meeting with hospital providers and GPs was to take place which would include discussion on Health and Wellbeing Boards. Although delays had occurred due to the listening exercise undertaken by central government, budgets continued to be developed until further clarity on the Bills became available.

A management programme outlining the principal purposes of each of the 12 programmes would be provided by the Chief Executive following the meeting. This would assist the individual select committees in highlighting further areas for potential scrutiny alongside the resulting implementation plans and scorecards arising thereafter.

The Chief Executive confirmed the importance of scrutiny engagement to ensure the Council remained open, honest and transparent with policy development and acknowledged that top performing Councils across the country had strong scrutiny involvement.

The Scrutiny Manager confirmed that a discussion document on reviewing scrutiny arrangements had been drafted and would be circulated to the Liaison Board prior to wider circulation and comment by Group Leaders and CLT. Comments received from the Committee would be taken into consideration within the discussion paper.

**Resolved:**

**To thank the Chief Executive for his attendance and note the comments received and await further details of each of the aforementioned 12 programmes, including implementation plans and score cards, so that an effective scrutiny exercise can be devised and applied to the Business Plan.**

175. **People Strategy**

The Service Director for HR and Organisational Development was in attendance to present the Committee with an update report on the People Strategy 2008-2012 which had been implemented to support the transition to Wiltshire Council in 2009.

Clarification was provided that the current strategy was in place until 2012 but that in light of the release of the Council's business plan earlier in the year a review of the priorities and a realignment of the strategy was required which would incorporate workforce planning.

The information contained within the update report highlighted the intentions and plans for the revised strategy, a draft copy of which could be submitted to the Committee for further consideration if required.

There would be two aspects of the resulting strategy the first of which would be a 4 year aspirational strategy document which would identify areas of work, the second would include targets and delivery items and actions to ensure the strategy remained focused and fit for purpose over the next 4 years and in line with the business plan.

**Resolved:**

- 1) **To thank the Service Director for his attendance.**
- 2) **That a copy of the revised strategy once available would be provided to the Scrutiny Manager and Cllr Ricky Rogers, scrutiny representative on the Staffing Management Executive Board for initial consideration.**

176. **Benefit Service Inspection**

A report outlining the Audit Commission's findings following an in depth inspection of the Council's benefit service together with the Council's Implementation Service Plan were provided for consideration.

The Head of Revenue and Benefits was in attendance to present the report and answer questions arising.

Members were also asked to note that the Revenue and Benefits Project Board update to be provided under Item 182 which would also be given by the scrutiny representative within this item.

Clarification was provided that the Audit Commission had undertaken a review on a number of unitary authorities all of which had reached a similar scoring. Four key recommendations were made within the review and these had been incorporated within the Council's ensuing Service Plan.

Other key areas for further development identified by the audit commission included customer satisfaction where confirmation was provided that there were plans for a survey to be issued to a number of customers within the next 4 weeks.

The issue of overpayments was also being addressed although it was recognised that caseloads had an impact on the ability to address this area with an increase of approximately 200 cases within the last month alone. However the Committee were asked to note that the rate of recovery of overpayments had increased in line with this. Members of the Committee also noted the importance of a more joined up approach between revenue and benefits teams and those working within the housing sector to address issues.

The impact that proposed Welfare Reforms could have on the way in which revenue and benefits were run and the difficulties this could cause for local authorities was also noted and further guidance was awaited from central government in this area.

In addition to the report provided, the scrutiny representative on the Revenue and Benefits Project Board confirmed that several meetings had taken place in relation to implementation of the new software platform for the revenue and benefits system. The Head of Revenue and Benefits confirmed that a meeting was to be held on 17 August following which further clarity on its implementation would be available although the system was still currently expected to go live by the middle of December.

**Resolved:**

- 1) **To note the update provided; and**
- 2) **That an update on the implementation of the new Revenue and Benefits System is provided to the scrutiny representative of the Revenue and Benefits Project Board following the meeting to be held on 17 August 2011 and that the scrutiny representative update the Committee accordingly.**
- 3) **The Chairman and Scrutiny Manager to consider how a 'more joined up approach' between Revenue and Benefits and Housing could be best achieved in order to deal with the issues of concern that members had raised.**

177. **Revenue Outturn Report**

The final revenue outturn report 2010/11 as submitted to Cabinet on 14 June 2011 was presented for the Committee's consideration.

The Chief Accountant, in attendance to present the report, confirmed that taking into consideration the current economic situation, the underspend achieved was positive with the Council achieving a significant improvement since the forecast made in month 10. A final audit was to be undertaken by KPMG with the findings submitted to the Audit Committee in September.

Members of the Committee noted that the Community Services budget had accrued an overspend of approximately £4.5 million despite the fact that the budget for the current year being increased by about that amount. This would need to be carefully monitored throughout the year.

Ensuing discussion included concern over the length of time taken to receive budgetary figures. With this in mind a request was made that a timetable be provided to allow scrutiny to consider the process currently in place.

Clarification was requested on the specific areas that had resulted in additional developer income received.

Members requested details of the specific areas that had resulted in additional developer income and details on the financial pressures in relation to the interim staffing measures. The Chief Accountant confirmed that these would be provided following the meeting.

Members also noted within the Housing Revenue Account an underspend of approximately £1m which they were informed was largely due to the removal of staff and areas of service provision. Concern was expressed as to the impact this would have on the quality of the service.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To thank the Chief Accountant for the report;**
- 2) That a timetable be provided to allow scrutiny to monitor the process currently in place in relation to financial reporting;**
- 3) That further clarity would be provided on the areas of additional revenue within developer income; and**
- 4) That further details on the financial pressures in relation to the interim staffing measures be provided.**

**178. Capital Outturn Report**

The Capital Outturn Report which reflected the final position of the capital budget for 2010/11 was presented for consideration following its submission to Cabinet on 14 June 2011.

The Chief Accountant in attendance to present the report, provided clarification that some of the underspend had resulted from slippages in projects, some of which were planned, and also took into account an underspend by the area boards, details of which would be provided following the meeting.

**Resolved:**

- 1) **To note the report provided; and**
- 2) **That details of the underspend by area boards would be circulated following the meeting.**

179. **Procurement & Commissioning Task Group**

The Agenda item as circulated provided clarification on the formation of the Procurement and Commissioning Task Group the first meeting of which would take place on Thursday 28 July 2011.

180. **Member Support in the Locality Task Group**

As provided in the Agenda item, the Councillor Development Group was re-drafting the Councillors' Handbook and requested that the Member Support in the Locality Task Group consider the draft version once available for comment.

The lead member of the Task Group provided confirmation that he was happy to continue in his role and would arrange for the Task Group to scrutinise the Handbook once available referring any suggestions back to the Councillor Development Group directly.

**Resolved:**

**That the Member Support in the Locality Task Group would meet to consider the draft version of the Councillors' Handbook once available and refer any suggestions for improvement back to the Councillor Development Group. These should also be reported back to this Committee.**

181. **Task Group Update**

An update on Task Group activity was circulated with the agenda for the Committee's consideration with the following additional information provided.

**Campus and Operational Delivery Programme (CAOD) Task Group**

The Task Group would meet again once Delivery Plans and related scorecards had been received for the Project.

The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Scrutiny Officer for the Task Group and Scrutiny Manager would discuss at that time whether further scrutiny representation was required on the Task Group taking into consideration the size of the CAOD Programme and its relationship with the overarching Transformation Programme.

#### S106 Task Group

The Task Group would meet again in September where details on the operational process to ensure monitoring of the database would be received in addition to further information on the accessibility of the database by the public.

Due to concerns raised in relation to the completion of the database a site visit would also be arranged prior to the next meeting of the Task Group to assess its current status.

#### Partnerships

The work undertaken on Community Safety had now been completed and a report presented at the Committee's previous meeting. Although community safety had been identified as a priority for the public it was noted that this had not been reflected within the Council's Business Plan and was thus highlighted as an area of concern within the final report.

The Task Group would now commence scrutiny work on the Wiltshire Housing Partnership with its next meeting scheduled to take place at the end of July. The Chairman of the Housing Commissioning Board would be asked to attend.

#### **Resolved:**

**To note the updates provided.**

### 182. **Scrutiny Representation on Project Boards**

#### Staffing Management Executive Board

The scrutiny representative confirmed that details of proposed revisions to terms and conditions had been relayed to staff.

The Service Director for HR and Organisation Development was praised for the communications undertaken to ensure staff were kept fully updated.

#### Revenue and Benefits Project Board

This update was provided within Item 176 above.



183. **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme provided which would be amended to reflect the recent changes to cabinet and portfolio holder responsibilities.

184. **Date of next Meeting**

15 September 2011.

185. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for consideration.

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 4.15 pm)

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