

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

19 March 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
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 will meet for the first time on 25th March. The meeting will be used as an initial scoping meeting for members to consider areas of possible concern or investigation in line with the terms of reference prior to meeting with officers.

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

13 November meeting

The task group met on 13 November to discuss the 'Value Added' initiative associated with the Microsoft Navigator contract. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, ICT and Operational Assets stressed that he wanted the task group to be one of the driving forces behind how the 'Value Added' initiative functions.

The task group were concerned that they had not been involved in the initial three 'Focus Group' meetings; where priorities for 'Value Added' had been discussed. However, a separate briefing was subsequently arranged to bring members up to speed and there was agreement that the task group would become more involved in the detail of this initiative going forwards.

The task group also learnt that a 'Microsoft Operational Board' had been created to sit under the Digital Board. The Operational Board sits at Head of Service level and is intended to highlight whether there is duplication of business application functionality across the organisation. The task group were pleased to hear about the establishment of the Operational Board, as they had previously questioned whether savings could be achieved if business application functionality was no longer duplicated.

4 December meeting

The task group also met on 4 December 2018 to agree a way forward with their scrutiny engagement into the Value Added initiative and to receive a briefing on the Council's draft ICT Strategy.

The task group highlighted that in the Value Added initiative focus groups, frontline service users should be included going forwards in the Children and Veteran groups and local level charities ought to be included in the Voluntary Sector focus group; as these would be the charities without the support of an ICT department.

12 February meeting

The Task Group met on 12 February to consider the Council's draft ICT Strategy. They were also informed that as Windows7 is no longer going to be in use from 2020, this meant that the Council had to conduct an investigation to determine how many of its applications would not be compatible with Windows10. This process had allowed ICT to accurately record how many applications it has on its database. The Task Group were pleased to hear about this work.

However, they were concerned that this audit would only conclude at the end of 2019. They were also alarmed to hear that the Council's ICT is currently at a high-risk level and it would take two years for ICT to be in a medium-low risk category. The members were concerned at the pace of work to improve ICT.

Additionally, the Task Group agreed that an 'us versus them' culture was beginning to emerge and they were conscious of how this could be hampering the value that scrutiny could bring. The Task Group Chairman has asked to meet with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, ICT and Operational Assets to discuss these concerns and agree a way forward.

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 held meetings on the following dates:

5 December 2018

- Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Report
- Draft Waste budgets 2019-20
- Council Tax Base 2019/2020
- Performance Management and Risk Outturn Report: Q2 2018/19

6 December 2018

- **Adult Social Care budgets - 2018/19 and 2019/20**

7 January 2019

- Draft Children's Safeguarding and SEND budgets 2019/20

8 January 2019

- Establishing a Local Housing company and local development company

29 January 2019

- Draft Wiltshire Council Financial Plan 2019-20
- Capital Strategy

The Task Group will next meet on 21 March 2019 and will consider the following:

- Approach to Disposal of Assets and Property Acquisitions
- New Performance and Risk Management Policy
- Scrutiny of Commercialism and Income generation
- Review of Budget Scrutiny process 2019-20

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 be provided.

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 will meet next on 2 April to receive updates on the updated SWLEP governance framework and Chippenham Station Hub.

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 had their first meeting on 21 January 2019, where they received an overview briefing on the council's consultation process and the statutory duties that the council must abide by when conducting a public consultation.

The meeting discussed the complexities involved in the decision for when/when not to consult and the Task Group will next discuss the legal framework for public consultations. The Task Group also intends to consider examples of flawed consultations, for example, where a Local Authority has been challenged in the courts for not undertaking a consultation properly.

The Task Group also reviewed the Council's Consultation Strategy and advised on how this could be updated. The main points of discussion centred on differentiating between 'engagement' and 'consultation'. The Cabinet Member for Communications, Communities, Leisure and Libraries stated that the Consultation Strategy could be updated once the Task Group has concluded their work; as their research could help to provide valuable input into an updated Strategy document.

7. Commercialism Task Group (proposed)

Membership

To be confirmed following establishment.

Background

In March 2018 Full Council adopted the [Wiltshire Council Commercial Policy and Approach document 2018-27](#). This set out an approach through which the council will be 'commercial' in order to deliver savings over the next decade. The Financial Planning Task Group assisted in the development of the Policy by considering and making [comments](#) on a draft version.

The Policy is built on four pillars:

1. **Improving our data and management information** to make intelligent decisions that enable risk to be balanced with return and our public fiduciary duties;
2. **Improving the skills of our staff** to ensure they can act and behave in ways that seek and deliver financial opportunities that benefit our financial sustainability;
3. **Using our assets and resources to make financial returns**, and disinvest where that is no longer possible;
4. **Reviewing and revising our models of delivery** that provide the best opportunity, outcome and financial return for our residents and businesses.

Since then the Financial Planning Task Group has received regular updates on the development of the council's commercial plans.

In February 2019, Full Council approved a Financial Plan 2019-20 for the council containing £3.773M of savings to be achieved through commercial activity.

Following discussion between the Chairman and Vice-chair of OS Management Committee, the Chairman of Financial Planning Task Group, the Chairman of the Third Party Advertising Task Group and the Cabinet Member for Finance and ICT, it is

proposed that the time is now right to form a task group dedicated to supporting the development of the council's commercial agenda. A dedicated task group will,

- a) Enable in-depth scrutiny work, such as engaging with other local authorities to explore lessons learned and successful commercial approaches.
- b) Create capacity within the Financial Planning Task Group's work programme to tackle other priorities, such as supporting the delivery of major savings proposals such as those within adult social care.

In November 2018 Committee received an update on the council's income generation through advertising and sponsorship. The Third Party Advertising Task Group had supported the development of this work and was scheduled to receive an update in January 2019. However, on consideration of the council's plans for 2019-20 it is suggested that the Third Party Advertising Task Group be disbanded and its work be subsumed within the broader remit of the proposed Commercialism Task Group.

The terms of reference proposed below have been discussed with the Cabinet Member for Finance and ICT and the relevant directors. If the task group is established all councillors will be invited to participate, with the Chairman and Vice-chair of OS Management Committee making the final decision regarding membership.

Terms of Reference (proposed)

- 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.

Proposal

OS Management Committee to,

- 1. Note the update on Task Group activity.**
- 2. Endorse the membership of the Communications with Councillors Task Group as:**

**Cllr Graham Wright
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson
Cllr Gavin Grant
Cllr Allison Bucknell
Cllr Trevor Carbin**

Cllr Jose Green

- 3. Endorse the membership of the Public Consultations Task Group as:**

**Cllr Gavin Grant
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson
Cllr Jim Lynch
Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Fred Westmoreland
Cllr Stuart Wheeler**

- 4. Establish the Commercialism Task Group with the following terms of reference, and with its membership to be determined by the Chairma and Vice-chairman:**

- 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.**

- 5. Disband the Third Party Advertising Task Group, with its remit now covered by the Commercialism Task Group proposed above.**