

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2023 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Graham Wright (Chairman), Cllr Christopher Williams (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Pip Ridout,
Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Tony Trotman and Cllr Iain Wallis

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer

24 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Tony Pickernell, Cllr Jerry Kunkler and Cllr Jon Hubbard.

25 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 were presented for consideration. Minor amendments were highlighted by the Committee to be corrected before approval.

After which, it was;

Resolved:

To approve and sign as a true and correct record of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 following the completion of the suggested amendments.

26 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

27 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

28 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted by members of the public.

29 **Corporate Peer Challenge 2022**

The Chairman noted that in Agenda Supplement 1, was the action plan produced by the Council in response to the Report of the LGA Peer Challenge that was undertaken last year. The Peer Challenge Report itself was included in the agenda pack and was considered by Full Council in February. The action plan would be considered by Cabinet next week.

The Chairman noted the comments in the Peer Challenge that related to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function, with it suggested that the comments indicated towards a steer towards the Committee getting involved in policy formation at an earlier stage. The Chairman therefore suggested that the Committee consider this when developing forward work plans and discuss future work with the Executive. Additionally, that the Executive consider involving the Committee at an early stage whenever they were planning a policy or strategy.

The Chairman stated his disappointment that the Committee had received the Action Plan late for their consideration.

Perry Holmes, Director for Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the action plan and apologised for the late publication of the report, with it explained that this had been partly due to the way in which the process was structured by the LGA. It was outlined that the report reflected positive comments regarding the way Wiltshire Council performs across a range of topics and areas. It was suggested that the second part of the Challenge was to consider the areas which were suggested that Wiltshire Council could do better and that the Action Plan sought to identify individual leads who could work and collaborate to improve those areas. Suggestions were provided for how the Action Plan could be further developed, including to provide a narrative of place to explain what the Council is attempting to do as well as ensuring that there is also an external focus.

The following comments were received from Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council, which included but were not limited to, that there is an awareness that there can be confusion surrounding the term "place" and that the LGA has a different definition of this which must be reflected. Importance was placed on recognising how positive the feedback from the Peer Challenge was, with it noted that Wiltshire Council is not Member or Officer controlled but rather an environment that challenges through conversation to build and improve. Additionally, the comments received regarding Governance and Scrutiny had been welcomed as previously the LGA had found reasons for concern, which had since been resolved.

Cllr Richard Clewer also made the following comments regarding the recommendations made from the Challenge, with reference made to Area Boards and the need for Place Boards, with Westbury referenced as a positive example of a Market Town working in this way. It was acknowledged that the most challenging recommendation would be for Wiltshire Council to speak positively about itself on a national level, which is an area that had not

previously came naturally. The LGA also stated a desire to learn from work being completed by the Council, such as the Performance and Outcomes Board, with Cllr Clewer set to provide a presentation regarding this area at the LGA Conference later this year. It was also stated that a draft form of the Economic Strategy was currently being worked on and would be ready to be shared soon.

The following comments were received by Members of the Committee including that the report contained jargon, to which it was agreed by the Director for Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer that the report would be provided in a version of plain language with explanations. Reference was also made that it was disappointing that there wasn't an overall time scale for the Action Plan, however this was to be expected with some actions due to take longer than others. It was noted that the LGA are expected to return in the autumn to check on progress with a principal focus on the Action Plan and how Wiltshire Council is achieving. Regarding promoting the positive work of Wiltshire Council, the work completed in Children's Services was referenced as an area of positivity that could be used to influence and have lobbying power.

Further comments were received in relation to the review and the role of the function of Area Boards, with it noted that the Challenge was different to the work that had been completed by the Monitoring Officer and Cllr Ashley O'Neill (Cabinet Member for Area Boards) last year. With the internal review based on process and the Challenge based instead on the impact of Area Boards. The Leader referred to the need for Area Boards to be a place of convening for different elements of communities. Additionally, that the Leader had asked that data and metrics be used to enable Area Boards to be more effective and focused on resources and spending money.

Community Asset Transfers was referenced with it suggested that the report had found no reasonable strategic overview and had not picked it up as an item to be moved forward. The Chairman noted that this would be an item on a future agenda, with there a need for it to have its own item due to the Committee sharing a passion for it. The Leader made reference to the Challenge, which had referred to not only mapping the assets of Wiltshire Council but also the assets of partners, which could potentially be possible in larger urban areas but prove difficult in smaller market towns.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed:

- 1. To note the LGA Peer Challenge 2022 Action Plan and to ask the Select Committee Chairs to consider appropriate Overview and Scrutiny engagement on the actions within their remits.**

2. **To note the positive comments regarding Wiltshire's Overview and Scrutiny function that were included in the LGA Peer Challenge 2022 report.**
3. **To note the Peer Challenge's suggestion that Wiltshire's Overview and Scrutiny continues to develop the value it adds through early engagement in policy development and to ask the select committees and the Executive to take all opportunities for putting this in place.**

30 **Management Committee Task Groups**

A report was received on the Task Groups and Panels established by the Management Committee.

Evolve Programme Task Group

It was noted that the task group had not met since the last meeting of the Committee, it would now meet quarterly until the end of the Evolve programme. The next scheduled meeting of the task group would be 20 April 2023.

In addition, Cllr Ruth Hopkinson provided a further verbal update that there had been ongoing concerns regarding the progress of the implementation of the project and that it was hoped that by the time of the next meeting that there would be a positive update. Additionally, it was noted that implementation had been deferred to November.

Financial Planning Task Group

The Chairman noted that the task group had not met since the last meeting of the Committee and that the task group's forward work plan 2023/24 was attached as Appendix 2, and that the roles and responsibilities for financial scrutiny were set out at Appendix 1.

The Chairman noted that Cllr Bill Parks had stepped down from the group having taken up a position on the Executive. Following a request for expressions of interest, it was proposed that Cllr Richard Britton be appointed to the Task Group.

In addition, Cllr Pip Ridout provided a further verbal update that conversations had taken place with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. It was suggested that the Quarterly Budget Updates be considered by the Financial Planning Task Group the Friday before the Tuesday meeting of Cabinet, followed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and, where appropriate, Select Committees for exploration of any service impacts. It was noted that further discussions would take place regarding contracts and procurement and that the next consideration for the Task Group would be the Quarter 4 report.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed:

- 1. To note the update on the task group activity provided.**
- 2. To note the Financial Planning Task Group's forward work plan.**
- 3. To thank Cllr Bill Parks for his work on the Financial Planning Task Group and to appoint Cllr Richard Britton to the Task Group's membership in his place.**

31 **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the forward work programmes for each select Committee, as well as updates from the Chairman for each Select Committee.

Henry Powell, Democracy and Complaints Manager, provided a verbal update on behalf of the Health Select Committee due to apologies being received from Cllr Johnny Kidney and Cllr Gordon King. Following the verbal update, it was suggested that the forthcoming piece of work looking at access to NHS dental care should include analysis of the impact on military families.

Cllr Bob Jones MBE provided a verbal update on behalf of the Environment Select Committee.

In addition, the Chairman provided an update on the procurement of cleaning contracts, with it noted that next week, Cabinet would be asked to give permission for the procurement of a contract for the cleaning of the council's operational estate. Last week the Chairman and Vice-chair received a briefing on the proposals from Vincent Albano, Asset Manager, and Cllr Ian Blair Pilling, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Operational Assets. Overall, the Chairman and Vice-chair had no concerns about the proposals, which were presented in a report in the agenda for next Tuesday's Cabinet meeting.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed:

To note the updates on select committee activity and approve the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

32 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 23 May 2023.

33 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30am - 11.30am)

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