

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

25 January 2022

Task Group Update

1. Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) Joint Scrutiny Panel

Membership

Wiltshire Councillors:

Cllr Richard Britton (Chairman)
Cllr George Jeans
Cllr Ian Thorn

Swindon Borough Councillors:

Cllr Junab Ali (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Burn-Howell
Cllr Oladapo Ibitoye

Business Representatives

Craig Holmes
Andrew Hogben

Supporting officer: Ceri Williams

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Joint Scrutiny Panel are quite lengthy and therefore not included in full here, however, an extract detailing the purpose of the panel is included below (*paragraph numbering from the terms of reference*):

(9.) This Panel will act as a critical friend, developing an overview of strategies and plans and providing independent scrutiny of the work of the LEP Board. It is an essential element of assuring democratic accountability for the use of public funds.

(10.) The objective is to make constructive recommendations for how future decisions of the LEP can be effectively implemented.

(11.) The Panel will not have the power to delay the SWLEP's decisions but it will be able to make recommendations for improvement to the SWLEP's decision making process and will be able to make its conclusions public.

Recent activity

- The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) in November requested that the Chair write to the SWLEP Chair to outline the Committee's concerns and to report back. A letter was sent, and a subsequent meeting took place on 7 December between the Chairs of the OSMC and Scrutiny panel together with the Chair of the SWLEP Board and the SWLEP's Chief Executive Officer. Discussions were constructive and positive. The SWLEP leads acknowledged the importance of the scrutiny panel within their governance framework and welcomed its ongoing input. A commitment was given to share evidence with the panel to enable the panel to also fulfil its overview function. The council Chairs also noted that the panel did not fall under the powers of the Local Government Act 2000 and that the governance framework operated by the LEP meant that the panel reported to the LEP Board. The meeting concluded with agreement that the panel continued to offer a valuable critical friend challenge, subject to any changes instigated as part of the government's national review of LEPs.
- The panel met on 13 December 2021. The substantive item considered was the SWLEP's response to the UK Plan Growth, published by the Treasury in March 2021. This had superseded the LEP's Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), published in March 2020. The panel was introduced to the three economic priorities underpinning the Plan for Growth – Net Zero, Global Britain and Levelling Up and how the LIS was being refined to reflect the revised direction. The aspiration was to take a draft plan to the LEP Board in January 2022, which would be followed by a public consultation. The panel agreed to monitor these developments.
- The future of LEPs were currently being considered within a national review, with findings anticipated to be published within the government's 'Levelling Up' White Paper, expected in early 2022. Any changes instigated by the review would be considered by the panel and it was recognised that potential changes maybe necessitated depending on the review outcome.

2. Evolve Programme Task Group

Supporting officer: Ceri Williams

Membership

Cllr Joh Hubbard (Chair)
Cllr Dr Monica Devendran
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson
Cllr Horace Prickett
Cllr Mark Verbinnen
Cllr Mary Webb

Purpose

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) is asked to approve the establishment of a new task group to consider the council's Evolve programme.

Background

The Evolve programme will involve the procurement and implementation of a new Cloud-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system for the council. The programme will impact on the work of all staff at the council in respect of HR, finance, procurement and payroll processes. It will look to modernise technology and standardise business processes, improving efficiencies for core activities that are undertaken across the council, supporting their adoption through a comprehensive in-house business change and training effort, and will deliver improved data, insights and reporting capabilities.

Terms of Reference (TOR)

1. The following TOR are proposed to underpin the work of the new task group:
 - a) To provide efficient, effective scrutiny engagement on the council's Evolve programme under the direction of OS Management Committee.
 - b) To receive periodic updates on the Evolve programme and scrutinise delivery of its key three objectives for the council, covering:
 - Organisational insight
 - Developing a flexible high-performance culture
 - Transforming business processes and digital technology
 - c) To meet quarterly as standard, unless there is a temporary need to meet more frequently or at a specific project milestone
 - d) To report findings and recommendations as appropriate to OS Management Committee following each task group meeting.

Recent activity

- The Task Group met for the first time on Friday 14 January, where Cllr Jon Hubbard was elected as Chair for the review.
- Members noted that the Evolve Programme 'go-live' date was 5 April 2023, a compact but achievable timeline. Insight UK had been awarded the contract and were responsible for contract outcomes through their delivery partners Evosys and Oracle. The contract was awarded on a 5+2 arrangement, which included the implementation phase. The programme was scheduled to deliver savings over this 7-year period of £17.439m. To be prudent these figures had not yet been incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) being considered at February's (2022) Full Council but were expected to be added from 2023/24.

- In recognition of the importance of data migration, the Evolve Team was exploring bringing external support for this activity, which was a movement on the position approved by Cabinet in September. The task group was reassured that costs for this change could be met within the programme budget.
- The Evolve ERP system would need to interface with other systems across the council, for example the Leisure public booking system, supported by Microsoft Power-bi. In future meetings the task group agreed to review this area in more detail, particularly when the cloud based Evolve system was updated to ensure it continued to interface with other systems.
- Evolve was underpinned by a need for staff to 'adopt not adapt' to the new software processes. The task group identified this as key initial risk to monitor. The cultural change element of the programme was fundamental to its success. Teams would be required to provide officers to support workshops designing the model during implementation and then staff would need to operate the new system from April 2023. In a period of officers working remotely, within a challenging budget environment the members recognised the potential difficulty of delivering 'business as usual' in parallel to the volume of change required to ready by April 2023. Cultural change and the programme's plans for this area will be the focus of the task group's next meeting.

3. Asset Transfer Rapid Scrutiny Exercise

Supporting officer: TBC

Membership

TBC

Background

In September 2021, then Committee received an update on implementation of the Policy, which was considered by overview and scrutiny prior to its adoption in 2017. It was resolved:

1. To note the update on the Asset Transfer Policy, which will now be reviewed, and ask Cabinet to note the points raised by the Committee.
2. To note the reported intention for a consultation on the Policy in November 2021 and a report to Cabinet in early 2022 to reset the policy and programme, taking into account resource requirements and town/parish council appetite.
3. To establish a rapid scrutiny exercise to provide Overview and Scrutiny input on the Policy review process following completion of the Consultation

process, with arrangements to be agreed by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member and reported back to Committee.

In November 2021, an update was requested by members of Management Committee and it was reported that the planned consultation with town/parish councils on the Policy would now be replaced with a town/parish council conference to be held in January 2022.

A further, verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

4. Area Boards Task Group (proposed)

The meeting will receive a proposal that the Committee establish a new exercise to provide Scrutiny input into the council's Area Boards arrangements.

Proposals

- 1. To note the update on task group and panel activity provided.**

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