

CABINET – 28 JANUARY 2014**Performance Scrutiny
16 December 2013 and 9 January 2014****Service and Resource Planning 2014/15 – 2017/18
Summary of Comments to Cabinet**

At its meetings on 16 December 2013 the Performance Scrutiny Committee considered a report that formed part of a series relating to the Service and Resource Planning process for 2014/15 to 2017/18.

The Committee considered in turn the Directorate Business Strategies and savings proposed for the service areas as well as the service and community impact assessments (SCIAs). They also took into consideration the results from Talking Oxfordshire and councillor comments from briefing sessions.. The Director and relevant cabinet member for each Directorate were available to respond to questions. In addition the Committee heard from a number of speakers including members of the public and representatives of voluntary and community organisations

The Performance Scrutiny Committee held a further meeting on 9th January 2014 where they considered a further report relating to the Service and Resource Planning process for 2014/15 to 2017/18. The Committee considered in turn the capital programme, particularly the property and transport asset management plans and capital proposals, and the Treasury Management Strategy.

The comments below are presented to Cabinet in order that they can take the comments into consideration in proposing their budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Adult Social Care

The majority of the Committee members accepted the overall budget but in line with the comments below welcomed further consultation, further work with agencies and noted that there was still more work needed on fine tuning to numbers and timings to ensure that support is still available to vulnerable people in crisis and that sufficient information and advice is available, especially with regard to people with learning difficulties.

- The committee welcomed the fact that there would be further consultation processes in connection with specific changes and commended further work with agencies so that their views could be worked through.
- The committee noted the role of advice and information services in relation to preventing adult social care needs placing a demand on Council services;
- In relation to the Social Fund, the committee were concerned as to how going forward it can be ensured that people in crisis and in desperate need can get access to help, including a crisis loan.
- The committee identified the need for further work in respect of learning disability services, to ensure people with learning disabilities were not disadvantaged, and that the idea of community networks could be embedded to pick up some of these issues

Economy & Environment

- The committee welcomed the consideration of a wide range of different proposals, including income generation.
- The committee requested the consideration of property portfolios, in connection with the changing environment for schools.
- The committee wished to stress the importance of keeping the savings in relation to the waste recycling centre under review.
- The committee asked that particular note be taken of the outcome of consultations on proposed changes, particularly to ensure that;
 - the proposals with regard to supported transport protect the most vulnerable people, especially those in rural areas.
 - the customer service externalisation approach achieves the required efficiencies.
- The committee also recommended that assurance be sought around councillor engagement in the development and maintenance of highways if the area stewardship model is changed.

Children, Education & Families

- In general, the committee raised concern to maintain locality focus through any change process.
- The committee also wanted to ensure that there was no reduction in service despite the proposed savings in relation to respite care.
- The committee supported the plans to increase looked after placements within Oxfordshire and the plans for a multi-agency safeguarding hub. However, they wanted to ensure that any work falling out of the service review supported safeguarding work.
- The committee were keen to agree with Cabinet appropriate progress monitoring processes regarding the integration of children's services.
- Overall the committee were keen to see that the proposals for integrated work with partners delivered the expected savings.

Chief Executive's Office

- The committee supported the Chief Executive's response to the speaker from Refugee Resource and endorse the proposal to taper funding to the organisation to protect their ability to secure Big Lottery and Comic Relief match funding.
- In relation to all proposals to reduce grant funding the committee were keen to ensure that time was made available, through a phased reduction, to give organisations effected, time to consider alternative funding sources or commissioning work.
- The committee noted that village halls and community centres will still be able to seek grant funding from Parish Councils, District Councils and other funding sources.
- The committee also noted that recent success in gaining national funding for military bases replaces any proposed reductions in local authority funding.

OFRS & Community Safety

- The committee wished to note that proposals to changes to the way in which the fire service is delivered are based on successful operations elsewhere in the county and the timing is governed by national requirements for consultation.
- Community safety funding proposals reflect the fact that this area is now funded by the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC). The committee wished to explore the possibility of this funding continuing to be routed via the upper tier local authority to reflect the work of the community safety units and broader partnership.

Public Health

- The committee welcomed the fact that contracts were being revisited to seek efficiencies and noted that the phased 10% savings were intended to ensure that efficiencies could be identified without cutting front line service delivery.
- The committee also wanted to ensure that the opportunity to improve the alignment of public health services and council services to support local communities was fully explored.

Overall Statement

- The committee wanted to note that the current proposals are in response to a restrictive financial settlement from central government, which means that further change is being proposed in areas of work where services are already stretched and recognised that this was a difficult situation for all.
- The committee wished to be involved in monitoring the progress and performance of big change programmes, in partnership with Cabinet.
- The committee further acknowledged the risks of change and the need to monitor the mitigation and ensure that action plans are implemented.
- The committee also queried how the Council is assured about the application of effective change management during the implementation of proposals.
- The Committee drew attention to Annex 5 containing councillors' comments as a result of the briefings for Councillors.

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