

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 14 December 2017 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 2.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair

Councillor Jenny Hannaby (Deputy Chairman)

Councillor Nick Carter

Councillor Mike Fox-Davies

Councillor Liz Leffman

Councillor Charles Mathew

Councillor Glynis Phillips

Councillor Emily Smith

Councillor Michael Waine

Councillor Liam Walker

Officers:

Whole of meeting Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance; Bev Hindle, Strategic Director for Communities; Katie Read (Policy & Partnership Officer); Peter Clark (Chief Executive); Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

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Officer Attending

Peter Clark, Chief Executive; Jonathan McWilliam, Strategic Director for People; Lucy Butler, Director for Children's Services; Kate Terroni, Director for Adult Services; Benedict Leigh, Deputy Director for Joint Commissioning; Val Messenger, Deputy Director for Public Health; John McLauchlan, Service Manager Community Assets; Susan Halliwell, Director for Planning and Place; Owen Jenkins, Director for Infrastructure Delivery; Simon Furlong, Chief Fire Officer and Director for Community Safety.

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Ian Dyson, Assistance Chief Finance Officer (Assurance); Steven Jones, Corporate Performance and Risk Manager.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda, reports and additional documents are attached to the signed Minutes.

46/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Tony Ilott.

47/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - GUIDANCE NOTE ON BACK PAGE OF THE AGENDA

(Agenda No. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

48/17 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 September 2017 and 5 October 2017 were approved and signed as correct records.

49/17 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2018/19 - 2021/22

(Agenda No. 5)

Mr Clark introduced the discussion and paid tribute to officers who had overseen the savings made by the council over the last few years. With the current transformation programme there is still work to do to improve services.

Ms Baxter gave a presentation on Service and Resource Planning and drew particular attention to a slide with a visual representation of the risks associated with the budget which showed a downside risk of +£7m and an upside risk of -£2m.

Officers responded to Members' questions as follows:

- The figure of £15m in savings referred to under Critical Element for Delivery 3 is the Council's own figure for the funding gap that needs to be bridged by the transformation programme.
- The inflation increases for contracts are based on the September Retail Price Index each year. Pay inflation is dependent on a number of factors and inflation is never included for general spending.
- While there are many variables, such as government funding decisions, officers are generally confident that the Medium Term Plan funding figures will be broadly accurate at the latter end of the plan.

Children's Services

Ms Butler identified Looked After Children and SEN Transport as the two main pressures in her area. The lack of availability of welfare beds is an issue across the whole South East of England and could be tackled by taking a regional approach to take more control of the issue.

Ms Butler drew attention to the importance of reducing demand and reported that early assessments were up 100% and referrals to MASH were down 20%. Also, the proportion of referrals that resulted in no further action dropped from 59% to 30%. An increase of just 10% in the numbers of children reconnected with families would give a saving of £1.2m.

Further points were addressed in response to Members' questions:

- The savings in SEN Transport would be achieved by aligning council policy with best practice in other Local Authorities. The policy takes into account the greater distances involved in rural areas.
- Personal budgets are agreed by sitting down with families and offering them the choice.
- It is difficult to predict future trends in the field of disability as new medical conditions become recognised and inflation in medical technology exceeds general inflation.
- The saving proposed in placements is based on an achievable target of one referral less each week – currently there are 6 or 7.
- The number of children with mental health issues being placed outside the county has been picked up as something to minimise by developing new resources with schools.
- The council needs to get more robust in dealing with commissioning from big organisations and also needs to be more direct with our partners.

Adult services

Ms Terroni summarised the pressures and savings in her directorate. She noted that the Better Care Fund income may have conditions attached. It is proposed to invest in a social care team to support people with learning disabilities who are in long term placements out of county to move to supported living placements in Oxfordshire. About £1m will be saved by 2021/22 for an investment of up to £0.5m in 2018/19.

The proposed changes to charging policy are likely to increase levels of contributions from people with income above the national minimum income guarantee. The changes affect disability related expenditure, arrangement fees, full cost recovery of care and changes to the 12-week disregard for those who may have to sell their home to move into care. The plan is to hold an eight week consultation on these proposals from 12 January 2018.

In response to questions from Members the officers responded as follows:

- Currently when the council arranges home care on behalf of a self-funders, the current policy charges an average hourly rate when the actual cost can vary from £17 to £27 and would generally reflect the cost of care in that area. The proposal is that the customer will be charged the actual cost. There is no reason why the council should subsidise those who request care to be arranged.
- The proposed new approach to disability related expenditure will make the largest saving as it affects a lot of people.

Public Health

The whole thrust of Public Health is towards prevention. The effects are long term and less visible but the result is to reduce health costs. The reduction in the public health grant at source will be managed through reserves.

Resources

Mr Clark invited questions from Members and responded as follows:

- The Council is tackling hiring difficulties by encouraging promotion within and smarter use of technology to increase efficiency.

- The Council is not a 'soft touch' on procurement but there are some issues around contract management. Being too robust could cause contractors to fail as has actually happened several times this year.

Communities

The following issues were raised with officers responsible for the directorates for Planning and Place; Property Assets & Investments; Infrastructure Delivery and Fire & Rescue and Community Safety:

- A new team is being established to rationalise estate and create capital comprising 10-12 staff in addition to those brought over from Carillion.
- There is a need to ensure that quality and speed are maintained while handling the three-fold increase in planning applications. There is potential for more income generation at pre-application stage.
- Councillor input could be particularly useful in regard to asset management planning.
- Road signage and cycle lane maintenance, as well tackling the problem of rutting at bus stops will be prioritised on the basis of safety.
- Increased charges at Household Waste Recycling Centres will be minimal to cover costs.
- A new contract for street lighting is being determined. Flexibility will be a key factor to allow for changes in technology.
- The Fire Service will face increased pressure with the impact of Grenfell on regulation and enforcement. Given that neighbouring services have much more experience of high rise, collaboration will be important in this.
- 21 women applied to join the service, mostly in the last three months. Seven are currently in the recruitment process.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for taking a strong corporate approach to the challenges facing the Council and Members applauded the work of the team of directors.

Capital Programme

Ms Baxter outlined a proposed new medium to long term approach. This involves adopting a 10-year plan rather than 4 year as before. For example, it can accommodate a five-year refresh in ICT and help in dealing more effectively with demand pressures in social care.

Members agreed with the adoption of the new approach to the capital programme.

The Committee noted the following items to review:

- Outcomes of recent work on the Fit for the Future Programme supported by PwC and the impact this is likely to have on the council's transformation savings
- CEF's work with regional partners to try and manage the social care market.
- Impact of changes to the council's Adult Social Care Contributions Policy
- Progress with plans to use council owned land for Extra Care Housing and the level of cooperation with the district/ city councils to successfully plan and build these schemes
- Progress identifying a contract for LED street lighting that is future proofed for integration with new technologies.

50/17 SCRUTINY OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

(Agenda No. 6)

Mr Dyson opened a discussion about the role of the Committee in monitoring the budget throughout the year and how financial and business management reporting can be aligned.

Members made a number of suggestions:

- They need to be able to see if savings are being made during the year.
- It would be useful to include headcounts and demand growth.
- Dashboards and other graphical displays of information are useful to identify areas to seek more detailed information.
- A separate section on income generation would be helpful.
- Where there is a problem, there should be a description of what is being done to tackle it.

Mr Dyson stated that he will bring a suggested approach to the January meeting for comment with a view to commencing from the March meeting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 20