

JOINT AUDIT & GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY (TRANSFORMATION) SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 18 April 2019 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Nick Carter (Deputy Chairman - in the Chair)
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Buckley
Councillor Mike Fox-Davies
Councillor Tony Ilott
Councillor Liz Leffman
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor Glynis Phillips

Officers:

Whole of meeting Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive; Claire Taylor, Interim Assistant Chief Executive; Nick Graham, Strategic Director Resources; Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer.

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

9/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were no apologies for absence from Members of the Committee. Philip Dart, Interim Transformation Programme Director, sent apologies as he was on annual leave.

10/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

11/19 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting on 17 January 2019 were approved and signed.

Councillor Mike Fox-Davies asked what the procedure would be for the election of a Chairman and Deputy Chairman for the new Council Year. It was confirmed that this will take place at the start of the next meeting of the Sub-committee.

12/19 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (JANUARY - MARCH 2019)

(Agenda Item. 5)

Claire Taylor summarised the report and presented slides on the governance and themes. She drew particular attention to paragraph 2.3 which outlines some refinements to the implementation strategy. It has been decided that a more incremental approach to new technology is more appropriate to underpin the new operating model. Any decision to adopt a whole new platform, for example, will be a longer term project.

Members raised the following issues:

- Who is on the Transformation Cabinet Advisory Group and when do they meet?
- What kind of issues are escalated to the Programme Board?
- Is there a mechanism to deal with opportunities that arise requiring a quick decision?
- Can communications to all Members be improved to ensure that nothing comes at them 'out of the blue'?
- Where does PwC sit in the structure?
- Some of the transformation terminology is odd for example would "pre-front door" be better described as "community engagement"?
- What has led to the change of mind on technology?
- Are the partnership arrangements with Cherwell District Council flexible enough to include other councils if they should decide to go in that direction?

- Where indirect savings from transformation or partnership working arise, such as an impact of housing on social care, where will they be recorded?
- Given that capacity is an issue why is it still foreseen to reduce the number of staff?

Officers responded as follows:

- The membership and meeting dates of the Transformation CAG will be circulated. Each meeting focuses on the next tranche of work. The Chief Executive also has regular meetings with the Cabinet Member for Transformation.
- For example, issues regarding family safeguarding have been escalated to the Programme Board and it would also deal with anything affecting the business case.
- Any new opportunities will be subject to the same governance.
- The peer review drew attention to weaknesses in internal communications and that has been taken as an action to improve.
- PwC help out on some elements and other consultants are used where appropriate. When this happens, the Council ensures that expertise is shared with staff.
- While officers may dislike some of the terminology used, the terms need to be retained for continuity of reporting.
- The thinking on technology is shifting from having one big system for everything towards getting separate systems to 'talk' to each other. There is a danger that, in some areas, centralising can result in losing the link to the front line.
- Partnership working has been tried in the past with little success but the difference this time is that it is fully backed-up at a political level. It needs to deliver with Cherwell first – there currently isn't capacity to involve others – but the Council is definitely open to that in the longer term.
- It may be difficult to specifically identify which savings arise as an indirect result of transformation or partnership working. However, the savings will benefit the Council's financial position as a whole.
- Capacity can be a matter of getting the right people as much as the number of people. The Council is currently too lean in some places but savings are linked to a reduction in overall staff numbers in the long-term.

13/19 INTERFACE BETWEEN THE CHERWELL PARTNERSHIP AND TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

(Agenda Item. 6)

Claire Taylor gave a presentation on how the Cherwell Partnership and the Transformation Programme are linked.

Members were enthusiastic about how the partnership had been working so far. They felt that Transformation had changed the mindset and there were a number of good news stories emerging from the partnership and the Growth Board, especially in the area of housing.

The Chief Executive stated that, contrary to what some believe, the partnership was not forced on Cherwell when it became clear that their partnership with South Northamptonshire Council had to end. They had a number of options but there was full support to pursue the arrangement with the County Council. Cherwell's separation from SNC is not complete yet so people need to be patient regarding developments with the County Council.

Councillor Tony Ilott confirmed that partnership working is regarded as normal at CDC. It was unfortunate that the arrangement with SNC had to end but it is happening with good grace.

Councillor Liz Leffman welcomed the developments but expressed concern that West Oxfordshire District Council may be left out on a limb to some extent as the other councils develop partnerships.

Councillor Glynis Phillips asked that public health issues be included in the housing agenda and that the aim should be to create healthy communities. The Chief Executive agreed and pointed to progress in Bicester.

Members thanked officers for their work with the transformation and partnership programmes.

14/19 WORK PROGRAMME

(Agenda Item. 7)

It was agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 13 June 2019 so that the next meeting will be on 25 July 2019.

Claire Taylor stated that they would have the base-line document on ICT for that meeting. The Chairman asked that the issues of capacity and dashboards be addressed at that meeting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing