

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

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 30 January 2020 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.30 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Nick Carter (Deputy Chairman in the Chair)
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Buckley
Councillor Nick Carter (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Liz Leffman
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor Glynis Phillips

Officers:

Whole of meeting Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive; Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers and Organisational Development; Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance; Phil Dart, Transformation Programme Director; Tim Spiers, Director Digital and ICT; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer

The 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 decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

1/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Mike Fox-Davies.

2/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE
(Agenda Item. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3/20 MINUTES
(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting on 17 October 2019 were approved and signed with one amendment:

Item 26/19: on Page 3, sixth bullet point 'or' replaced with 'and/or'

4/20 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2019)

(Agenda Item. 5)

Phil Dart introduced the quarterly report and highlighted where significant progress had been made.

Officers responded to questions from Members are follows:

- At the beginning of the programme, it was necessary to 'badge' the change programme emerging from the PwC work as 'transformation'. The original business case for transformation did not include other major changes such as Family Safeguarding, Fostering or redesign of Adult Social Care. The organisation is always evolving, and as national policy changes, new initiatives and activities will need to be planned and delivered. As such, transformation is now being embedded in the Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP). There will no longer be a Cabinet post for Transformation and major change projects will be delivered across the Council, with relevant project, programme and performance management rather than bundled together in one large programme.
- Performance monitoring will show how investment in change is being delivered. For example, there will be a monthly report for ICT and in the 'front office project' there are 15 areas that will be tracked in the first phase. Furthermore, the Director for Finance is working closely with regards to monitoring the financial impact of all major change programmes.
- The Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive have discussed, and support, the idea of the scrutiny and audit functions of this Sub-committee returning to the parent committees. Chairs should coordinate and arrange joint meetings when needed. It was noted that projects and programmes are also subject to the internal audit process.
- Performance and progress reports can go to the Performance Scrutiny Committee while the Audit & Governance Committee will have an important role in ICT – for example the implementation of the new data centre has been audited.
- With regard to the Transformation CAG, its role has been helpful. It is for the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder to consider the best way to include Member guidance with regards to organisational change and the future role of the CAG.
- A funding reserve was set aside for the implementation of the original transformation business case proposals. Funding for the new ICT Strategy is provided in the Council's Capital Programme and this has been developed as part of the budget setting process. There is still remaining reserve for other major change projects / improvements. A business case would be drawn up for any proposed additional ICT investment and if it were required, this would be addressed through the annual budget setting process.
- With regard to the customer service centre, performance statistics are kept daily on waiting times and abandonment rates for example, and

team meetings are held every day as part of developing a performance culture in the service.

- In the longer term it may be possible to have joint call centres with district councils, work is currently underway to explore options with Cherwell District Council with the aim of preventing customers having to make more than one call to each council.
- Officers recognised that information can be difficult to find on the Council website and that work was underway to improve how local residents can access our services.
- A customer satisfaction survey has been carried out for the first time (in the contact centre) and the feedback has helped to drive improved performance, these surveys will now become a routine part of continuous improvement.
- Following the restructuring of the Finance function, finance business partners will be located within directorates so that they are part of development and design of initiatives. They still report to the Director of Finance.
- There were limited redundancies as a result of the finance restructure. The projected savings have been achieved and staff in the new service are focussed on the delivery of its service development plan.
- With the redesign of the Strategic Capability function (communications, policy and performance services), the new structure is being implemented. There have been a limited number of redundancies, most of which have been voluntary. The service is now shared with Cherwell District Council and there are a number of vacancies and development opportunities for staff in the newly designed function.
- Colleagues from the Health Sector have been involved in the work being undertaken on the Provision Cycle (including commissioning, procurement, and contract management). The proposed new service design is focussed on developing the right expertise at the centre then being used to support good practice in hubs across all directorates within the Council. The aim is to deliver this in collaboration with partners.
- There is a development plan focussed on effective contract management, procurement and working with partners to get the best value outcomes for residents and communities.
- Staff get regular bulletins from the Chief Executive on change and confidentiality is respected in regard to all Human Resources matters.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse expressed concern about the capacity of the Performance Scrutiny Committee to deal with all of the business that it needs to do. She emphasised the need for officer support. She would like to see the committee devoting more time to policy development.

Councillor Glynis Phillips noted that many Council contracts are with voluntary organisations and then there are other specific funds available, for example, the Youth Opportunities Fund. She asked that more contracts should mesh with Council objectives to ensure they are closer to the community.

The Chairman suggested holding an all-Member briefing – possibly at the end of the financial year – to update them on the change agenda and projects underway.

5/20 ICT STRATEGY

(Agenda Item. 6)

Claire Taylor introduced the new Director Digital and ICT, Tim Spiers. He has been a professional IT consultant working with public sector organisations and local authorities for 16 years, and prior to that worked in the private sector.

Tim Spiers gave an update on the ICT Strategy by means of a presentation included in the Agenda Pack.

Members raised various questions and Officers responded as follows:

- The Council is increasing its use of the Cloud – for example, there were two data centres, one of which has now moved to the Cloud. Not all business applications are ready to move and as such the strategy is ‘Cloud first’, not ‘Cloud only’.
- In using the Cloud, the Council has the potential to save money, reduce carbon emissions and benefit from the greater resilience.
- One of the commitments is to be secure and aligned enough for working with the NHS and health partners. So focussing on aligning cyber security remains important.
- The ICT Strategy is about getting the basics right, a high quality and reliable ICT infrastructure. The Digital Framework is about ensuring that service users, customers and local residents can access services using systems that work for all, including online transactions. The Local Digital Declaration involves an aspiration to have shared digital design principles for local public services.
- In relation to cyber security, success requires both a secure infrastructure, (for which work is on-going) and the bigger risk is the human factor which involves educating and supporting people to be secure online.
- This ICT work is aligned with what’s happening in Cherwell District Council.

Councillor Liz Leffman asked for project milestones to be provided to aid Members in monitoring progress.

Yvonne Rees asked Members to let officers know immediately about any issues arising or challenges relating to change – and not to wait until the next meeting.

The Chairman noted that great progress has been made with ICT systems and thanked officers for very thorough reports.

6/20 WORK PROGRAMME

(Agenda Item. 7)

The Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman of the Audit & Government Committee will meet with officers to recommend how change issues are dealt with going forward.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

DRAFT