



Minutes

FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2017, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL,
AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.09 PM.**

This meeting was webcast. To review the detailed discussions that took place please see the webcast which can be found at: <http://www.buckscc.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>
The webcasts are retained on this website for 6 months. Recordings of any previous meetings beyond this can be requested (contact: democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr T Butcher, Mr C Clare (Vice-Chairman), Mr M Farrow, Mr D Martin, Ms J Ward and Mr D Watson (Chairman)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr R Ambrose, Milligan, Mr J Noble, Mr S Rawlinson, Mr R Schmidt and Mrs K Sutherland

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

The Members noted the appointment of a new member, Ms Anita Cranmer.

Apologies were received from Mr Bill Bendyshe-Brown and Ms Cranmer.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Martin Farrow declared an interest in relation to the last item, as his company was doing some work on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions.

3 MINUTES

A Member noted a typographical error in the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2017. The penultimate paragraph of item seven reads as follows:

‘The Head of ICT and Digital explained that as the Council had decentralised the technology budget it was not possible *to* for him to provide a figure on the percentage of the Council’s funding spent on legacy rather than Cloud-based systems.’

Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the meetings held on 12 September 2017 and 26 September 2017 were agreed as an accurate record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman advised Members that he had met with the Director of Finance and Assets to discuss the preparation for the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry in January.

6 PROJECT AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, Mr Stephen Rawlinson, Programme Management Officer and Mr Richard Schmidt, Head of Strategic Finance to the meeting. Mr Rawlinson highlighted the key areas of his report on Project and Programme Management across the Council.

During the discussion and in answer to Member’s questions, the following points were noted:

- Each Business Unit organised their own projects and the Programme Management Officer focussed on providing tools and training to help develop skills to ensure the effective delivery of projects. To this end, a Project Management toolkit was developed which was available online and this had been refreshed this year. This is supported by an organisational-wide Lessons Learned Log, a Community of Practice and a new two day Project Management Enhanced Skills training course.
- Now that these resources were in place and had been promoted across the Council, the next step would be to evaluate their use and assess if improvements had been seen in Project Management as a result.
- Mr Schmidt commented that there were a variety Project Management models and the Council had adopted a ‘hub and spoke’ model due to the diverse nature of its business. Each Business Unit would manage their projects, with Mr Rawlinson setting out the corporate best practice framework which should be used.
- Members were keen to understand if Business Units (BUs) were adopting a consistent approach to project management in line with the corporate toolkit. The Programme Management Officer explained that this year he hoped to conduct a more formal quality assurance approach, which would help to evidence if the toolkit and the Community of Practice, where representatives from each BU shared their learning and promoted the training and toolkit to other staff in their own BU, were making an impact on the quality of projects.
- A Member asked if the toolkit was being effective and whether the staff using it found it helpful or bureaucratic. It was suggested that it would be useful to survey staff to ascertain how the toolkit and lessons learned log were being used and how this had informed practice and improved the quality of project outcomes. Mr Rawlinson welcomed this suggestion.

ACTION: Mr S Rawlinson

- A Member noted that the report commented on a reduction in capital slippage, whilst at Regulatory and Audit Committee the previous week, it had been noted that there was currently significant slippage. The Cabinet Member assured the Committee that whilst slippage had been reported to Regulatory and Audit, this was mainly due to the Orchard House project which was no longer going ahead and on the whole, capital slippage had been much reduced in recent years, due to improved gateway processes at Asset Strategy Board.
- Mr Rawlinson was trying to establish how many Prince 2 qualified practitioners were currently employed by the Council. A Member commented that it was important to know this information as qualified practitioners would be crucial in driving the framework into the culture of the organisation.
- There was a discussion about the pros and cons of Waterfall vs Agile project approaches.
- The Chairman asked if business cases include project methodologies as standard. Mr Schmidt advised that this should be included as part of the drive to improve business cases.
- It was noted that large change projects with significant savings attached to them, such as Change for Children, were regularly reviewed by Senior Managers and delivery of financial savings was closely monitored, as was the delivery of any income targets.
- A Member noted that there had been an increase in visits to the Project Management Toolkit pages on the Intranet but asked if the specific figures were available. Mr Rawlinson advised that the number of page views have increased to nearly 8,000 by the end of September, which represented a threefold increase since the introduction of the revised toolkit.
- External contractors are expected to adhere to the organisational standards and follow the guidance in the Toolkit.
- With regards to monitoring the effectiveness of the training provided, Mr Rawlinson confirmed that initial course evaluations had been positive and he would now utilise the Community of Practice to ask those who had attended the revamped two day course for feedback focussing on what they had been able to implement practically in the work place.

The Chairman thanked Mr Chilver, Mr Rawlinson and Mr Schmidt for attending the meeting.

7 BUDGET SCRUTINY 2018 - SCOPE

Mrs Kelly Sutherland took Members through the draft scoping document for Budget Scrutiny 2018. It was noted that the inquiry would follow the same methodology as the 2017 inquiry.

The Members received information on key dates, noting in particular the Budget Briefing on 19th December with Richard Ambrose, Director of Finance and Assets and the Budget Scrutiny meetings with individual Cabinet Members which would take place on 9th-11th January 2018. The final Inquiry report would be considered at Cabinet on 12th February 2018, ahead of the final budget being agreed at Council on 22nd February 2018.

Mrs Sutherland advised Members that the public would be invited to submit questions via social media and noted the ongoing consultation on budget proposals which would inform the draft budget.

The Chairman noted that this would be a challenging time as there would be a large amount of preparation work required.

The Committee agreed the draft scope. It was also agreed that the Chairman would approve any final changes to the report on the Committee's behalf, in order to meet the Budget timescales.

8 INCOME GENERATION - 12 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Mr Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources and Mr Jonathan Noble, Commercial Director. Mr Noble took Members through the progress report. During the discussion and in answer to Members' questions, the following main points were noted:

- Business Unit Plans for this year included a chapter on Commercial Activity which specifically addressed contract management and how income would be generated. Forecasts at the half year point suggested that the Council will exceed its Income Generations targets by £195,000. It was agreed that a report on Income Generation which would be presented to the next Cabinet would be circulated to the Committee.

ACTION: Head of Strategic Finance

- A Member asked how closely the cost of sales and margins were monitored and whether a Business Units(BUs) 'profits' remained in the BU or had to be returned to the corporate centre. In response, Mr Noble explained that as a public sector organisation and Council cannot make a 'profit', but income was used to offset savings. The Council manages its budget as a whole, so if one BU is underspent monies can be moved to another BU.
- It was noted that the Resources BU generated almost a third of its budget through income.
- Mr Noble believed that the Council had sufficient expertise and capacity to identify additional income opportunities. It was important to collaborate across BUs to share expertise and resources.
- A Member asked if income generation opportunities were implemented quickly enough. Pre-application advice for Development Control was also seen as an area where the Council could generate an income, as other Councils already charged for this. It was agreed that Mr Noble would investigate this opportunity.

ACTION: Commercial Director

- Some of the surplus income generated by Adult Social Care was achieved by re-assessing clients' financial circumstances more regularly to identify whether clients could pay more towards services.
- Mr Noble confirmed that he would supply Members with a list of the live bids held on the central funding register.

ACTION: Commercial Director

- Mr Schmidt advised Members that fees and charges would routinely be uplifted by inflation, currently estimated at 3%.
- Mr Chilver concluded the report by commending the work of Mr Noble and the Commercial Team who had driven improvements in income generation.

It was agreed that the Chairman and the Committee and Governance Adviser would assign a Red Amber Green Status against the recommendations following the meeting and circulate to members for comment.

ACTION: Chairman and Committee & Governance Adviser

9 LASR PROPERTY REVIEW AND ONE PUBLIC ESTATE UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed back Mr Chilver, Mr Donald Milligan, Programme Manager, and Mr Richard Ambrose, Director of Finance and Assets.

The Committee received an update with regards to the LASR Property review and One Public Estate projects in exempt session.

10 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded for the following item which is exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

11 LASR PROPERTY REVIEW UPDATE

12 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 19 December, 10:00, Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury

CHAIRMAN