



Minutes

FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 8 MAY 2018, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY,
COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.30 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 W Bendyshe-Brown, Mr T Butcher, Mr J Chilver, Mr C Clare (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs A Cranmer, Mr S Lambert (In place of Mr M Farrow), Mr D Martin, Ms J Ward and
Mr D Watson (Chairman)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ms S Barnes, Ms F Bashir, Ms C Evans, Mr L Jeffries, Mrs S Murphy-Brookman and
Mrs K Sutherland

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Mr M Farrow. Mr S Lambert substituted for Mr M Farrow.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr S Lambert and Mr T Butcher were both members of the SABPAC committee and declared an interest in Item 6.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- The Chairman met with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills about progress on the home-to-school transport policy. The Chairman would be taking back a Member suggestion that the home-to-school transport policy item be brought before the Committee in September 2018.
- Since the last Committee meeting, a 'minded to' decision was communicated from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, about the unitary status in Buckinghamshire County. The Chairman asked that the Committee focused on business as usual and to not speculate beyond.
- July 2018: The draft new Technology Strategy would be coming to the FPR select committee.
- September 2018: The Director of Assets and Procurement would be presenting an update on the financial survey and providing an in-depth analysis of costings in Children's Services and Adult Social Care. There would also be an update on the impact of modernising local government (should decisions be made).
- Members would like to be copied into information on the headlines, income and expenditure summary at the end of the financial year.

6 HR AND OD UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, Mrs Sarah Murphy-Brookman, (Interim) Director for HR and OD, and Mrs Carly Evans, Business Partner for Transport, Economy and Environment, Resources and ACES to the meeting. Members received a BCC Workforce Review report and asked questions on the report. During the session and in answer to subsequent Members' questions, the following main points were noted:

- In response to a question about increased overtime costs, the Director of HR & OD agreed to provide further information after the meeting.

ACTION: Director of HR and OD

- The Cabinet Member for Resources explained that staff turnover had reduced from 16% to 14% over the past 12 months with fluctuations quarter by quarter, and that the retention rate among the highest performers was 92%.
- Agencies were more expensive to use for employing staff, so BCC would go out to tender for the most competitive rates. If a service area was looking to downsize, it was financially more efficient to employ agency staff. Bucks Care had an average turnover of 25%, and temporary hires were being used to fill gaps in the recruitment of permanent staff. There was a push to reduce the number of agency workers.
- A Member questioned whether the growing agency staff and linked costs were sustainable, and why educational psychologists were not becoming permanent staff. It was agreed that Sarah Murphy-Brookman would come back to the Committee with information on the reasons why there were increasing agency staff and costs, and to confirm whether the Educational Psychology Services had been impacted as a trading arm due to the high turnover in Educational Psychologist positions.

ACTION: Director of HR and OD

- The Chairman asked for information on the appropriate balance between permanent and agency staff, and that the Council's budget should have reflected this. The Director of HR and OD agreed to provide the Committee with the information.

ACTION: Director of HR and OD

- The Director of HR and OD explained that there was no BCC policy stating a limit on the amount of time that an employee could remain interim for.
- A Member inquired about plans to train people in-house rather than rely on recruiting agency staff. The Director of HR and OD agreed to provide information to the Committee.

ACTION: Director of HR and OD

- Members agreed that if temporary staff were being paid more than permanent staff performing the same role, this would be likely to lead to negative feelings of demoralisation among permanent employees.
- It was observed that senior members of staff were not necessarily having exit interviews. The Director of HR and OD explained that exit interviews/ one-to-ones were voluntary. Completing exit interviews was not mandatory practice in BCC. Surveys were more likely to capture honest answers as they were confidential. However these relied on an individual's willingness to respond. Line managers were strongly encouraged to carry out exit interviews.
- Members recommended that exit interviews should be mandatory at senior levels, and that junior members must complete a leaver questionnaire before exiting BCC.
- A programme was being rolled out whereby leavers were interviewed by different managers in BCC as an opportunity to capture more honest feedback.
- The practice of completing exit interviews was communicated to staff through a prompt from the SAP system. For school staff and support staff this process was managed internally.
- Members felt that there was a significant gap in BCC staff retention and understanding the reasons for staff wanting to leave the organisation.
- Scarce skills payments were targeted at qualified children's social workers.
- A benchmarking exercise was conducted yearly to attract and retain staff. The Cabinet Member for Resources explained that external factors including strength of the economy impacted on opportunities available externally.
- A spring clean was required on SAP for vacancies, some should have been deleted – this contributed to the large number of vacant posts.
- The Apprenticeship Levy was an opportunity to grow social worker talent internally, but there was no agreed national standard for this available yet.
- Depression and stress reasons for sickness were persistently high. Primarily these were fuelled by reasons outside of the workplace. To help reduce these levels, employee relations team members underwent mental health training workshops to enable them to have trained conversations with staff. Employees could also contact the Employee Assistance Programme, and one-to-one counselling was available for social workers.
- Members commented that stress was often a reflection of a difficult relationship with their line manager. They added that managerial conversations on a weekly basis might pick up issues early, a good manager would reward and encourage but it should be done regularly. Were employees feeling that they were valued, encouraged, supported in difficult situations before they became depressed and stressed? The Director of HR and Operations added that the single greatest determinant of employee engagement was their relationship with

their line manager. There was a need to remind people how important the line manager was in relationship building with employees.

- The Better Everyday Leadership Programme was running across the Council, highlighting what it meant to be a manager and what the responsibilities were.
- Members suggested that both presenters should be invited to attend a future Committee meeting, or that an inquiry should be set-up to review this issue in more detail. The Chairman thanked Members for their suggestions.

ACTION: Committee and Governance Adviser

7 TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, Mr Lloyd Jeffries, Director of Customer, and Mrs Sarah Barnes, Head of Technology Services Operations to the meeting.

- The County Council and the NHS agreed to recruit a Joint Strategic Director of ICT. This post was designed to enable the team to develop and deliver a joint transformation programme across the Council and the NHS. It will be critical in the delivery of the local Integrated Care System. Benefits would include the opportunity to develop a shared approach to the use of technology and data across the NHS and Adult Social Care to promote prevention and better health outcomes for residents.
- In addition to the Joint Strategic Director of ICT, Paul Golland joined the Information Technology Unit as an interim Operations Director. Ben Unsworth will be joining the Council as the new Head of Digital on 25th June.
- The Digital team joined the Customer team in February 2018.
- “Brilliant at the Basics” was a programme to improve the customer experience at the Council. Webchat was due to be rolled out across the County’s website in the next two weeks. The “Fix My Street” application had been launched.
- The average reading age for the Council’s website was currently too high. Work was in progress to alter the language so that it reached a lower reading age. The recommended reading age was under 15 years old.
- £15 million was allocated from the capital budget for ICT developments in the next 4 years. Savings of £1 million had been made.
- The content of the Adult social care pages on the website was to be upgraded to reflect the integration with health. This was currently being procured. A Member queried how this would work if there was no knowledge of where synergies could be made? The synergies would be established by the incoming Joint ICT and NHS CCGs Director.
- The new Technology Strategy was about stabilising foundations before progressing with other technology.
- Regular problems with the N drive were caused mainly by inadequate data retention and archiving behaviour. As part of the new Technology Strategy, principles on data retention were needed as well as learning around behavioural patterns using meta-compliance.
- Service Level Agreement - Web Key Performance Indicators were reported to the Resources Board on a monthly basis. The Committee would receive these on a regular basis.

ACTION: Director of Customer

- There were ICT workshops ongoing with Members to ensure that Member requirements were specified and that the IT provided met their needs. The Board was working with a Member steering group.

- Governance monitoring needed to be more robust, especially in light of procurement and functionality issues.
- Technology Services played a central role in the rationalisation and coordination of 1400+ applications and 80+ microsites.
- The Customer, Digital and Technology Board fulfilled a similar function to the Asset Strategy Board, reviewing, assessing and appraising business cases for new ICT capital acquisitions and use of capital budget. Funding would be released in instalments as projects proceed.
- Members questioned whether Board members had a suitable level of skill and knowledge to check and challenge appropriately. The Director of Customer believed that the right membership was present.
- In the future, any microsite proposal or change would have to come through the Digital team to be published.
- 4 web editors were now in the Digital team.
- The Council's website was re-launched in 2016 with a faster speed, based on the gov.uk approach.
- A milestone was to achieve Socitm score improvement by September 2018.
- The Digital team would be working with PCG, who hosted the BCC web estate, to understand how to improve customer experience from a look and feel viewpoint. This would include consultation with users and Members to test new ideas.
- The Digital team would be testing the functionality of different elements of the website in development with external users and members.
- The Digital team aimed to create more streamlined and efficient digital processes, from which there would be resulting financial implications.
- Members praised the work of the team in the progress made between January and May 2018.
- The funding priority for the website (digital front door) was to deliver customer improvements which would lead to improved services and efficiencies. Most investment would be resource based.
- An efficient digital front door meant delivering as many services as possible online.
- A written progress update on milestones would be provided to the Committee in September 2018.

ACTION: Director of Customer

8 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members queried whether the draft new Technology Strategy would be ready for the Committee to review in July, as a number of new recruits would be coming into post who may want to input into the strategy. The Committee were advised by Technology Services that the strategy would be ready for July 2018 and should, therefore be added to the work programme.

ACTION: Committee & Governance Adviser

9 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 27th June 2018 at 2pm in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN