



Minutes

FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 18 JUNE 2019, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL,
AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.32 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 5.00 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 D Martin, Mr D Shakespeare OBE, Ms J Ward and Mr D Watson (Chairman)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr J Chilver, Mr T Ellis, Mr M Preston, Mr J Reed, Mrs K Sutherland and Ms J West

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Mr David Watson be elected as Chairman of the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee for the ensuing year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED

That Mr Charlie Clare be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Finance, Performance and Resources Committee for the ensuing year.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Butcher, Mr Christensen and Mr Clare. Members noted that Mr Lambert was substituting for Mr Christensen for the duration of the meeting.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

6 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

7 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman advised that since the last meeting a letter had been sent to the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Resources, detailing the findings of the Committee's Inquiry on Effective Leadership. A copy of the letter is appended to the minutes.

The Committee also noted that the Chairman and Mr Martin had recently attended a meeting alongside members of the Children's Select Committee to discuss placements for looked after children. This meeting had been very informative, but it had been agreed that neither Select Committee would undertake any further detailed investigation into placements at this time.

8 IT UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources and Mr Tony Ellis, Chief Information Officer to the meeting. By way of introduction, the Cabinet Member stated that he was confident in the IT management team and both Capital and Revenue resources had been committed to an improvement programme, which would deliver a more robust and secure IT environment. The Technical and Digital Board provided effective oversight of the improvements and in addition, procurement savings would be delivered through joint purchasing with Health via the Integrated Care System (ICS).

The Chief Information Officer gave an update and during the presentation and in response to Members' subsequent questions, the following main points were noted:

- The ICT Improvement Programme had eight workstreams, with a project manager assigned to each one. The workstreams were designed to tackle critical issues in the IT system and set a good foundation for the transition to the new Unitary Council. The Improvement Plan was on track.
- BCC staff would all be upgraded to Windows 10 and by the Autumn, all staff would be using Skype for Business telephony system.
- The Council took cyber security very seriously and had a managed security partner with forward scanning capability to monitor its environment.
- The upgrade to Windows 10 would improve the user experience, help workforce mobility and enable more robust maintenance of the system. NHS partners were also moving to Windows 10 and a support team for the rollout across the Council and Health would be jointly funded. District council colleagues were also moving to Windows 10 but were at different stages of the journey.
- The centralised procurement process for IT, which had been recommended by Budget Scrutiny in 2018, was working well. Tony Ellis paid tribute to finance and procurement colleagues who supported the centralised process and ensured it worked efficiently.
- In terms of preparation for the new unitary council, the IT workstream had identified priorities for delivery on vesting day, 1st April 2020 – for example, new standard email addresses for all staff - and what could be decided afterwards.

- On the subject of mobile working, the Chief Information Officer asserted that the role of IT was to provide IT equipment that was capable of supporting mobile working but it was a business decision as to who was classified as a mobile worker e.g. who needed 4G capability for their devices.
- In connection with unitary planning, there was concern that other workstreams might add additional lines to their project plans without flagging IT implications with the IT workstream.
- BCC was creating a centralised information governance team – this was a key consideration for the future and it was important that the new unitary council had a robust data strategy.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and the Chief Information Officer for attending the meeting.

9 PROPERTY PROJECTS AND INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO REVIEW

The Chairman welcomed Mr John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, Mr John Reed, Director of Property and Assets and Miss Jo West, Asset Manager – Strategy and Major Projects to the meeting. The Cabinet Member reported that Property and Assets were performing very well – delivering all their income targets, progressing with the first nine projects approved under the Local Asset Strategy Review (LASR) and contributing to the unitary property workstream. Improved governance arrangements were also now in place following the establishment of the Property Board.

The Committee received a presentation and in answer to Members' subsequent questions and during discussions, the following main points were noted:

- The Council undertakes a robust due diligence process when assessing the purchase of potential investment properties. The Property Board review all this information before deciding whether to proceed and a key decision is taken, usually by Cabinet as a whole, to authorise the purchase.
- The Council has adopted a 'corporate landlord' approach which in practice means that all business units must consult with Property to ensure that 'good' decisions are made with regards to all property resources. This means that Property have a holistic oversight over the Council's property portfolio.
- Government funding for One Public Estate (OPE) was to enable pump-priming of projects e.g. to cover feasibility or planning costs. Some of the OPE projects, such as Winslow and Buckingham, were focussed on creating community hubs.
- The Council was required to submit key performance indicators around its investment properties each quarter. The Chairman requested that Committee Members should receive a copy of this return for information.

ACTION: Mark Preston

- The level of investment in property varied across local authorities, e.g. Surrey County Council had spent more than BCC to date. The Director of Property explained that whilst the Investment Strategy had detailed a target for the investment portfolio, if there were still acquisitions on offer which made business sense he would recommend going above that figure.
- In response to a Member's query as to how assets were identified for disposal, rather than reuse or to be offered for rental, the Director of Property and Assets reassured that his approach was always to leverage assets to raise income where possible or generate capital receipts. It was also noted that data from external consultants was interrogated by the Property team to check that proposals would work from a political, as well as a business perspective and local members would be involved in discussions.
- The property market was very dynamic. Risks could be minimised by focussing on prime stock and if sites were well-located then it was easier to attract and retain

tenants. A switch in direction could also be considered in response to emerging trends, e.g. change of use.

- Risk monitoring was very robust and 5% contingency was held to cover any voids.
- The unitary council would hold a large portfolio of property which require careful management, but the Council had a strong team and the district councils also had expertise. A new Strategic Asset Management Plan was being developed by the property workstream and John Reed reported that working with district colleagues had been a very positive experience.

The Chairman thanked Mr John Chilver, Mr John Reed and Miss Jo West for attending the meeting.

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 REVIEW OF INVESTMENT PROPERTY PORTFOLIO

12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

13 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 10th September 2019 at 2.30pm in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury

CHAIRMAN