

CUSTOMER SERVICES AND BUSINESS SUPPORT POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 19 November 2018

Present: D Smith (Chairman)
M Bezzant

Apologies for D Saunders and R Reed
absence:

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors R Reed and D Saunders.

27. MINUTES

The minutes of the Customer Services and Business Support PAG held on 17 September 2018 were approved.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29. PORTFOLIO BUDGET REPORT 2019/20

Members considered the Portfolio Budgets 2019/20 report which provided information on the draft revenue budget for 2019/20, including the context of the overall financial position facing the Council for the coming year, and the implications of the establishment of a unitary authority 2020/21. The report further provided summary information on the budgets and highlighted issues for consideration. Detailed information could be seen in the accompanying booklet.

During the discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Regardless of the decision to create a new unitary authority in Buckinghamshire from 2020/21 this did not affect the requirement the Council had to set a legal and prudent budget for 2019/20 that addressed the Council's aims and objectives, which were set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. It would be necessary at a corporate level to make provision for the initial transition costs to the new unitary authority that would be incurred in 2019/20, this would be done when setting the final budget in February 2019 when there was more clarity around the transition process.
- The final settlement from Central Government would be announced on 6 December and the final draft budgets would be consolidated for consideration by the Cabinet in February in consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The following items included in the report were highlighted to the PAG: Budget assumptions; summary revenue budgets and movements alongside the current year's

budget; risks; task and finish group recommendations and opportunities and plans for improvement.

- IT systems would still need to be up to date and functioning regardless of the structure of a new authority. A number of software contracts and product licenses ran until 2020 and it was said that there would be costs involved in potentially extending these or making changes which could not be avoided. Details would be included in the IT Strategy report which would be going to February's meeting of the Joint Committee. The move to cloud would make any potential geographical move smoother and was a common theme in each authority's ICT Strategy.
- Knowledge from other authorities who had experienced re-organisation had shown that not a great deal of changes to systems had been made at the date of commencement of the new authority. It was said that it was likely each authority's respective IT systems would still be running in April 2020 whilst work on integration, interfacing and aligning systems was taking place.
- The staff salary inflation of 2% had been agreed by the Council and was built in to the draft budgets. Gas inflation had been factored in at 0% based on the number of fixed period contracts which remained valid for the coming year.
- The cancellation of the Customer Experience Programme would not be cost effective at this stage. The contract was now in place with the software providers and the implementation team were in post. The solution would be scalable to be delivered across the County and each authority was looking at similar programmes to enable more digital service delivery. The breakeven point of the programme was planned to occur prior to the commencement of the new unitary authority.

Having considered the advice of the Policy Advisory Group, the Portfolio Holder agreed to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet to approve the following items:

1. The 2019/20 revenue budget.
2. The 2019/20 fees and charges.

30. **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Head of Customer Services reported that the Customer Experience Programme had continued to progress positively. Service areas had worked well with the implementation team to assist with the design of process workflows and the creation of online forms. For the service areas included in phase 1 of the programme (waste, environmental health and licensing) the system was ready to be built and the implementation team was waiting for the test environment to be released.

Work had been completed with Business Support on system integrations and progress was being made on integrating the systems used by waste with the new software. A project was also ongoing to address channel shift with different persona groups having been created to establish how best to help customers.

The complaints procedure was to be reviewed and Member feedback would be sought on this. The design and content of the website was also being looked at and GOSS would be holding a workshop, which all Members were welcome to attend at 5.30 p.m. on Monday 26 November at the Chiltern District Council offices. It was further clarified that news stories and the website front page had remained the responsibility of the communications team however technical issues and electronic forms were now dealt with by the implementation team.

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The PAG was advised that the timetable for the programme had been readjusted, however remained on schedule to meet the end dates for phase 1 as initially set out.

An update was also provided on the transition of Northgate staff to the Council's Revenues team. This was completed successfully with no impact to customers, and only minor issues had been identified during the transition and these were being addressed.

The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm