

CHILTERN AND SOUTH BUCKS JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting - 18 April 2012

Present:

Mr Busby, Mrs Darby, Mrs Harker, Mr Martin, Mr Reed, Mr Rose, Mr D Smith, Mr M Smith, Mr Stannard and Mrs Woolveridge

Also Present:

Mr D Phillips (CDC)

Apologies for absence:

Mrs Cranmer and Mr Lidgate

19. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 15 March 2012 were agreed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Note: Councillor Mrs J Woolveridge entered the meeting at 5.02pm.

20. PROGRAMME REPORT

The Joint Committee received the latest Programme Report. After noting the progress on completing the milestones, the latest budget position, and the risk report, the Joint Committee

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

21. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED -

That under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

22. INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH ANDY HOLDER

The Chairman welcomed Andy Holder from aha Consultancy Limited - who were supporting the first phase of the programme for shared management and services.

Andy Holder advised that in his experience of working with local authorities to develop shared management and services, the key challenges included:

- Officers at each authority favouring their own way of working and being resistant to doing things in different ways, particularly where that might involve taking on the other authority's way of working;
- Politicians at each authority protecting their own political interests at the expense of shared services - hard decisions and co-operation across the authorities was required; and
- The level of ambition and clear success factors - nothing should be ruled out if big savings were to be achieved.

The importance of maintaining momentum and support from non-Cabinet Members and Officers was emphasised. It was noted that so far the process had been relatively straightforward due to existing vacancies at both authorities. However, momentum needed to continue once more difficult decisions around appointing Heads of Service and shared services needed to be made.

Those areas selected for shared services needed to be economically viable and politically acceptable, and needed to deliver improved service delivery and resilience. It was suggested that areas with existing joint working initiatives could be looked at, and the need for Heads of Service to drive this review process was noted. Back-office services were also proposed as an area to start. However, Andy Holder noted that whilst shared back-office services could produce savings, it was shared front-line services that would produce the significant savings.

South Bucks Members noted that their Policy Advisory Group (PAG) model worked well, enabling non-Cabinet Members to be involved in policy development. There were still issues around keeping members of one PAG informed of the activities of other PAGs. The fact that non-Cabinet Members had already been involved in policy development also impacted on the role of Council meetings. However, Chiltern Members were of the opinion that a similar approach could be explored at Chiltern. A PAG system could help involve non-Cabinet Members - particularly those only recently elected - who tended to feel that they were outside the decision-making structure. It was also noted that the PAG system at South Bucks was facilitated by individual decision-making which was not presently permitted at Chiltern. The Leader at Chiltern said he would be asking for proposals for the PAG system to be brought forward.

The Joint Committee acknowledged that there was a need to take the best elements from each authority's structure. It was considered that aligning the policy development structure would send a positive message to all involved that processes between the two authorities were being aligned.

It was suggested that the dates of PAG meetings at South Bucks, and the dates of Overview Committee meetings at Chiltern, be circulated to allow Members from each authority to attend the meetings. It was also suggested that there were already areas where both authorities could benefit from a joint approach being taken. For example, the new National Planning Policy Framework, and the need to accommodate gypsies and travellers.

Andy Holder highlighted two key questions for the Joint Committee to address:

- i) What were the ambitions for the programme of shared management and services - where was it intended to be in two years?
- ii) What actions by Members, Managers, or others could prevent this happening?

The Joint Committee acknowledged that a key obstacle could be entrenched views of Members and Officers that their own authority's method of service delivery should not be changed. Although both authorities would be maintaining their sovereignty, there would need to be compromise. Leadership and maintaining trust would be vital, particularly once shared services were being developed. The Joint Committee would have a key role in controlling promoting, and presenting the changes to non-Cabinet Members. The importance of ensuring that Officers were also positively engaged in the process was noted. The importance of maintaining momentum was again emphasised.

In response to the first question, the Joint Committee agreed that residents should not see any difference in the level of services, but that these services should be delivered in a more cost effective way with resources better utilised.

The Chairman and Joint Committee thanked Andy Holder. After acknowledging that the programme of shared management and services would be challenging, but noting the goodwill from Officers and Members, the Chairman drew the discussion to a close.

23. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- Thursday 17 May 2012 at 5pm, South Bucks District Council
- Monday 25 June at 5pm, Chiltern District Council (Note: it was agreed that this meeting would be rescheduled since it clashed with another event - dates would be circulated in due course)
- Thursday 19 July at 5pm, at South Bucks District Council

The meeting terminated at 6.12 pm