

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting - 5 October 2015

Present: Mr Hollis (Chairman)
Mr Harding, Mr Bastiman, Mrs Lowen-Cooper, Mr Read,
Mr Sangster, Mr Vincent and Mr Walters MBE

10. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 June 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

11. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Medium Term Financial Strategy that was part of the budget agreed in February identified the potential need to reduce net expenditure by over £1m by the end of the decade. The Committee considered a report setting out the current assessment of the Council's medium term financial position and the key issues facing the Council from the perspective of the Cabinet. There would be a need to consider savings that will as a minimum reduce net expenditure from 2017/18 and meet the objectives set out in paragraph 2.3 one of which will be to eliminate the funding gap.

The report went on to set out a request from the Cabinet for the Committee to undertake a piece of work through a Panel to consider saving proposals put forward by officers to achieve the objectives through reducing expenditure and increasing income having regard to the options set out in paragraph 4.2 and 4.3.

The intention was for the Panel (and all members of the Committee would be invited to attend each meeting) to meet on 3 occasions by mid-November in order to compile a final report for the meeting of Cabinet on 17 December in accordance with the following timetable::

- Panel meeting 1 – 19 October at 6pm
- Panel meeting 2 – 22 October at 6pm
- Panel meeting 3 – 28 October at 6pm
- Meeting of O and S – 11 November at 6pm

During the discussion the Chairman welcomed the request from the Cabinet emphasising that, although the Committee was not responsible for policy it had an important role to play in the development of policy and providing advice to the Cabinet accordingly. The work to be undertaken by the Committee would be in accordance with its policy development role. Following a number of questions it was confirmed that the work would not involve looking at such issues as use of reserves or council tax levels. The Panel would however look at options for investing in projects that created savings and/or generated income.

The Chairman concluded by asking members to let Democratic Services know as a matter of urgency which of the meetings listed above they could attend.

RESOLVED that a Panel be set up (open to all members of the Committee) to consider options to address the medium term financial issues facing the Council and prepare a report for the meeting of Cabinet on 17 December 2015 via a meeting of the Committee on 11 November 2015.

12. **LOCAL PLAN/CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

Following the request made at the last meeting for information on the Local Plan/Core Strategy the Committee received a presentation from the Head of Sustainable Development of the report submitted to the Sustainable Development PAG on 10 September 2015 setting out options and a recommended way forward to produce a new Local Plan by early 2017 through a review of the Council's approved Local Development Scheme in the light of the recent Government announcement to speed up plan making.

The report, after explaining the Government's objectives including the intention to prepare a national league table for local plan making, set out three options for responding to these objectives as follows:

- To continue on the current Local Development Scheme timetable;
- To progress a South Bucks Local Plan to a shorter timetable
- To produce a joint local plan with Chiltern District Council

The report went on to identify reasons for pursuing option 3 including the following:

- A joint plan would make more efficient use of available staff resources and remove duplication of effort; and
- In preparing its own local plan the Council would be grouped together with the Berkshire Unitary Authorities within a Housing Market Authority (HMA) and Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA); by undertaking a joint plan it was anticipated that a joint local plan would form part of a Buckinghamshire HMA and FEMA.

The report explained in paragraph 3.4 that pursuing option 3 was dependent on a number of issues including the need for additional resources and additional meetings of the PAGs and or Cabinets at both authorities.

The Head of Sustainable Development concluded his presentation by saying that the Portfolio Holder having considered the advice of the PAG, which supported the proposals, would be advising the Cabinet/Council to adopt all the recommendations in the report.

During the discussion a number of issues were explained/clarified including the following:

- The function of a Housing Market Area and how they are configured;
- That a joint local plan with Chiltern would result in South Bucks being, as a best fit, within a Bucks HMA rather than a Berkshire HMA and the implications of this;;
- That pursuing a joint local plan would have no impact on the sovereignty of each Council since both Councils would need to agree the contents of a joint local plan and both Councils would retain their Planning Committees to make planning decisions;;
- A local plan (whether joint or not) would supersede the Core Strategy;
- The potential impact on housing development and housing targets for SBDC
- The local plan would be developed having regard to national infrastructure projects and the pressures these are having and will continue to have on the District;
- The possible consequences for the Council of not meeting the timetable triggering government intervention and
- The costs in pursuing the joint local plan were unavoidable and would need to be met from the LDF Reserve into which further contributions would be required.

Following the discussion the Chairman, whilst agreeing that pursuing a joint Local plan is an important issue on which the Committee would want to be kept up to date, recognised that

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 5 October 2015

the tight timetable prevented close scrutiny. To ensure that the Committee was kept abreast of progress the Chairman requested that arrangement be put in place for members of the Committee to be informed (by email) of any significant changes, particularly on housing issues, being proposed by the Member Reference Group, meetings of which would be open for all members to attend.

13. **UPDATE ON HS2/WRATH/HEATHROW**

The Committee received a briefing on the following infrastructure projects and their environmental impact on the District and in particular Iver:

- HS2 and implications for the Colne Valley and the Hillingdon Outdoor Activity Centre;
- Heathrow Express Depot;
- Cross Rail;
- M4 Smart Motorway;
- Western Rail Access; and
- Heathrow Expansion – decision on which due by the end of the year

The Committee noted that the list was not exhaustive and that there were other issues (e.g. changes in flight paths and noise pollution) that would also have an impact on the District.

Following the presentation a discussion ensued during which it was recognised that the pressure on Iver, particularly from HGVs, would intensify as the infrastructure projects were rolled out. The Council had been aware of the issue of HGVs for some time and an option to build a relief road had been proposed but not pursued. Further options were being explored which would be submitted to the Sustainable Development PAG.

With regard to HS2 the Committee was advised of the mitigation being sought including the construction of a relief road which HS2 had indicated they were not prepared to fund. Other sources of funding were being explored (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership) but the issue may become a subject of a Petition to the Select Committee.

Having expressed concern over the environmental impact the projects were having and would continue to have on the District the Committee welcomed the recommendations being made to the Cabinet on 13 October 2015 by the Healthy Communities Portfolio Holder that £20k be set aside from the existing budget to challenge or mitigate against infrastructure projects to commission a piece of work to establish an environmental baseline assessment.

14. **JOINT BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee received a report inviting it to comment on a refresh of the Joint Business Plan 2015-2020 prior to its submission to Cabinet on 13 October 2015.

The report explained that whilst the top level and second level aims and objectives remained the same this year the third level aims and objectives have been refreshed to reflect the Council's changing priorities and the needs of the district as set out in Appendix C.

Following a question in connection with Delivering our Joint Values and in particular the commitment to ensure that staff are trained on all relevant aspects of safeguarding of children and vulnerable people the Committee was advised and noted the training provided.

The Committee asked for information on the extent to which the Council, and in particular the Community Safety and Communications Teams, is aware of social media issues in respect of safeguarding, especially younger people.

Having considered the report the Committee agreed to inform the Cabinet that it had no comments on the refresh of the Joint Business Plan.

15. PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1

The Committee considered a report showing the performance of Council services against performance indicators during the period April to June 2015 and in particular performance in relation to:

- Performance and Service objectives across the Council; and
- The Leader's Portfolio and the Portfolios of other Cabinet Members.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Providing an overview of priority indicators;2014/15; and
- Appendix B – Quarterly corporate performance Indicators 2014/15

Of the 7 PIs which were off target 3 are priority target Of the five PIs which failed to meet targets, four relate to housing and the Committee' attention was drawn to Appendix which provided the reasons The Committee's attention was also drawn to the reasons for the percentage of licences received issued within the deadline not being met due to temporary staffing issues.

In connection with the Pi relating to voluntary leavers the Committee felt that target was too low therefore accounting for the percentage being well above target.

RESOLVED that the Performance Management Quarterly Report for the period April-June2015 be noted.

16. HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meetings of the Select Committee held on 26 May, 30 June and 11 August 2015 were noted.

17. BUCKS CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meetings of the Select Committee held on 7 April and 5 June 2015 were noted.

18. MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

None

19. WORK PROGRAMME

Following a suggestion from a member, receiving a briefing on progress being made on the Safe Place Scheme was added to the Committee's Work Programme along with a presentation on the KPI system both for the meeting in February 2016.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The meeting terminated at 7.35 pm