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SOUTH BUCKS
District Council

Cabinet

Wednesday, 12 December 2018 at 6.00 pm

Room 6, Capswood, Oxford Road, Denham

A G E N D A

Item

8. Policy Advisory Group Minutes (available in supplement pack) *(Pages 3 - 12)*

Customer Services and Business Support PAG – 19 November 2018

Environment PAG – 20 November 2018 (to follow)

Healthy Communities PAG – 21 November 2018

Planning and Economic Development PAG – 29 November 2018 (to follow)

Resources PAG – 6 December 2018

Note: All reports will be updated orally at the meeting if appropriate and may be supplemented by additional reports at the Chairman's discretion.

Membership: Cabinet

Councillors: N Naylor

J Read

B Gibbs

P Hogan

D Smith

L Sullivan

Date of next meeting – Wednesday, 6 February 2019

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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

Customer Services and Business Support Policy Advisory Group- 19 November 2018

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.

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

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HEALTHY COMMUNITIES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 21 November 2018

Present: P Hogan (Chairman)
D Anthony, P Bastiman, Dr W Matthews and D Pepler

Apologies for absence: M Bezzant

81. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

82. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Healthy Communities PAG held on 2 October 2018 were approved.

It was noted that information on Heart of Bucks and SBDC grant funding allocations had now been provided to Councillor Dr Matthews.

83. **REPORTS FROM MEMBERS**

The Group received a written report from Councillor D Pepler on the meeting of the Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust held on 26 September 2018.

84. **COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE**

The PAG received a report which updated Members on the work being carried out by the Community Safety team. The report highlighted some of the recent projects and activities which the team had been involved with, focusing on the Council's aims of reducing crime, reducing the fear of crime and tackling anti-social behaviour. The Chairman asked that consideration be given to how the various initiatives could be evaluated, to gauge levels of success.

A question was raised regarding rural crime, relating to recent incidents which had occurred in Iver. It was advised in response that Thames Valley Police had previously organised events focusing on rural crime but more specific information would be requested.

Regarding Modern Slavery, officers advised that there was a "Safe Car Wash" app which could be used to report concerns regarding exploitation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

85. **COMMUNITY WELLBEING PLANS ANNUAL REVIEW**

A report was presented which set out the projects that had been delivered in the first year of the South Bucks Community and Wellbeing Plan. Members were taken through the objectives and key outcomes of the Plan as listed in the report.

A question was raised regarding the closure of the Citizens' Advice Bureau service in Iver. It was advised that this would be investigated and a response would be communicated to Councillor Matthews.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

86. **PORTFOLIO BUDGETS 2019/20**

Members received a report which provided information on the draft revenue budget and the draft fees and charges for 2019/20. The PAG were advised that, despite the decision to create a unitary council in Buckinghamshire from April 2020, the Council was still required to set a balanced budget for 2019/20.

Paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 of the report showed the net budget figures for the portfolio and the key changes from the current year. It was advised that the transfers to Customer Services were part of the Customer Experience Strategy where it was proposed that two staff members be moved across from Environmental Health and Licensing. The main risk for the portfolio was still the cost around homelessness, although savings would be made with the delivery of temporary accommodation at the Bath Road Depot site and other temporary housing schemes. The recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the actions taken in response to these were detailed in paragraph 5.7 of the report.

In the discussion which followed, the below key points were raised:

- There would not be a significant change to the fees and charges for 2019/20. Revised charges not included in the appendix to the report had been set but these had not yet been received by finance.
- Officers would be working to improve communications between the Planning and Licensing teams focused on identifying new mobile homes which would require Licences.
- It was hoped that initiatives such as the private sector leasing scheme would address any potential overspend on homelessness.
- The homelessness prevention budget would be used for one-off payments, such as clearing small rent arrears, which would contribute towards the Council's duty to prevent homelessness, and to fund services delivered by partner agencies such as Citizens Advice and Connection Support.
- Officers advised that Universal Credit had been introduced in South Bucks earlier in 2018 and work had been undertaken to ensure the Housing team was prepared for any impacts.
- Two temporary officer posts in the Housing team had been introduced to increase capacity in the team following the introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Act which had placed more pressure on the Council's Housing services. Members

requested that a report be brought to the PAG after April 2019 to assess the impact of the new Act on the workload of the Housing team.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that the 2019/20 revenue budget and 2019/20 fees and charges be approved.

87. **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES UPDATE**

The PAG received an update report from the Head of Healthy Communities which covered the ongoing work within the service. Further to the report, Members were advised that the consultation on the Bucks Home Choice Allocation Policy had opened and would close on 7 January 2019.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

88. **ACQUISITION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY**

A report was presented which updated Members on the position regarding the proposed acquisition of residential properties by the Council and the overall programme of projects aimed at reducing the use of nightly booked temporary accommodation.

The PAG were advised that a number of projects had been taken forward to reduce the use of nightly booked temporary accommodation, including:

- Private Sector Leasing Scheme with Paradigm Housing
- Property Acquisitions by Bucks Housing Association
- Bath Road temporary accommodation scheme

These projects, along with work on homelessness case management, had represented a 45% reduction overall in the use of nightly booked accommodation. Therefore, the Council had not yet taken forward any direct acquisitions of residential properties, although this would be kept open as a possibility to deliver temporary accommodation going forward. Members were pleased to note the progress that had been made on reducing the cost of temporary accommodation.

A question was raised regarding the impact of the decision to create a single unitary council for Buckinghamshire on homelessness applicants. Officers advised that the duty to house was with the Local Housing Authority (LHA) however it was not yet clear whether a single LHA would be created for the whole of Buckinghamshire or whether the existing District LHAs would remain.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

89. **EXEMPT INFORMATION**

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the following item(s) of business is not for publication to the press or public on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

90. **UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS**

The PAG received a confidential report which updated Members on the position regarding Unauthorised Encampments. Members discussed the report and recommended to the Portfolio Holder that the Council undertakes a risk assessment of sites and considers adopting Open Space new model bylaws as the next steps to be taken.

Members also requested that the Environment team be asked to explore measures that could be taken to protect Council owned land, with the prevention of car park incursions being a priority.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet the next steps to be taken regarding Unauthorised Encampments.

The meeting terminated at 7.29 pm

RESOURCES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 6 December 2018

Present: B Gibbs (Chairman)
D Dhillon

Apologies for J Jordan and P Kelly
absence:

52. MINUTES

The minutes of the Resources PAG held on 25 September 2018 were approved.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

54. PORTFOLIO BUDGETS 2019/20

Members received a report which provided information on the draft revenue budget for 2019/20, and included the context of the overall financial position facing the Council for the coming year. The report further provided summary information on the budgets and highlighted issues for consideration. Detailed information was made available in the accompanying booklet.

During the discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Regardless of the decision to create a new district 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 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.
- The draft budget had been subject to a detailed review by the Portfolio Holder.
- Election costs had been included in the budget, although the likelihood was that there would be neither District nor Parish elections in 2019 following the

Modernising Local Government announcement. Members were advised that when the final PAG budget was set in February 2019, the Parliamentary Orders would have been laid and necessary amendments subsequently made to the draft budget.

- A number of insurance policies were due to be centralised during the next financial year. Fixed electricity contracts would require renewing and based on market assumptions a 6.5% increase had been factored in to the draft budget.
- The ground floor of the Capswood 1 building was expected to be let in early 2019 and as such this assumption had been included within the draft budget.

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

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

55. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT - QUARTERLY REPORT QUARTER 2 2018/19**

Members received a report on the Treasury Management operation of the Council for July to September 2018. The Director of Resources summarised the positions as set out in pages 41 to 44 of the reports pack.

The PAG was advised that the recent base rate increase would likely produce a modest interest rate increase in the medium term and that any variations caused by the modernising local government decision would not be significant at this time.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members noted the Treasury Management performance for Quarter 2 2018/19.

The meeting terminated at 6.16 pm