

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 10 January 2018

Time: 7.00 - 9.10 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, M C Appleyard, Miss S Brown, H Bull, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, A E Hill, A Hussain, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver and C Whitehead

Standing Deputies: Councillors H L McCarthy

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Etholen, M E Knight, Mrs W J Mallen, R Raja, J A Savage and R Wilson

Also present: Councillors S Broadbent, M Harris, L Wood and Ms K S Wood

31. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman wished all Members a Happy New Year and gave a brief outline of the possible work ahead for the Commission: - Brexit, Unitary Authorities, Local Plan submission to the Government and maybe HS2 – A busy time ahead.

The Chairman also informed the Commission that Cllr Wendy Mallen had been taken ill. No further details were available, but the Commission wished Cllr Mrs Mallen a speedy recovery.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

33. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Regarding Minute 22: Verbal Update on Houses in Multiple Occupation and Saunderton Lodge, it was noted that the word 'light' in the paragraph regarding Saunderton Lodge should be removed. The sentence should read ".....and reported that refurbishment was an option considered, but due to the building's age it was suffering."

Also in the same paragraph a section should be added to the following sentence to read "The number of units could not increase as Bucks County Council would not support any increase due to highways issues."

It was also noted that at the last meeting the Report of the Budget Task and Finish Group had been considered as exempt and no press had been in attendance.

Taking into account the above amendments it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Review Commission held on 8 November 2017 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

34. UPDATE - REMAKING THE RIVER WYE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Hugh McCarthy provided an update on the status of the Remaking the River Wye Task and Finish Group. He noted that the task was bigger than expected and the Chairman of IRC along with the Leader had agreed that the Group be allowed more time to consider the recommendations. Therefore, it was expected that the final report would not come to IRC until its meeting in June 2018.

There has, so far, been five meetings including a visit to Sheffield to consider their de-culverting and regeneration project in the city. It was noted that Neil Marples from MWH Global had also offered his advice free of charge and attended meetings.

The proposal was to return the river between Westbourne Street and the Arch Way roundabout to be 3 metres wide at surface level with landscaping. It was noted that the economic benefits were yet to be proven however all aspects of remaking the River Wye needed to be considered and to consider the future of the town. Cllr McCarthy explained that existing culverts would need to be future proofed and remaking the river would transform the town to a destination town for visitors.

The Chairman, Cllr Gaffney added that the trip to Sheffield had been very informative and highlighted that there were a number of organisations who provided grants for this type of project. Also the Chairman commented there could be the option to open up the Hughenden stream which he believed ran under the Frogmore area in the town centre which could also help this area.

It was noted that the Sheffield City project had been a multimillion pound project and due to the size of the city the cost of this was not comparable to High Wycombe. Also work on the Sheffield project had been undertaken over a number of years.

In response to a query regarding the cost of initial investigations, it was reported that some funds would be required and these would help to understand future works needed and subsequently support invest to save schemes.

It was noted that Councillor Chris Whitehead was a member of the Task and Finish Group, this had been omitted from the report in error.

35. CORPORATE PLAN (2015-19) REFRESH

Catherine Whitehead, Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services, and Councillor Katrina Wood, Leader of the Council, introduced a report on the refresh of the Corporate Plan (2015-2019).

The Commission were required under the Council's Budget and Policy Framework to review the Corporate Plan before consideration by Cabinet on 5 February 2018. A draft version of the Corporate Plan Refresh had been shared previously with members and also at a Members' Training Seminar. Members were able to provide input and receive clarification on any details they may have had in respect of the Plan.

It was noted that the current plan had been in place since December 2015 and this was the first 'refresh' since its publication.

The four delivery programme areas were: Place, Strong Communities, Growth and Prosperity, and Efficient and Effective.

It was noted that some changes had been made to the Corporate Plan refresh following suggestions made by Members. Catherine confirmed that the presentation provided to Members at the seminar included these changes. The presentation would be made available with the report to Cabinet at its meeting on the 5 February 2018.

Catherine confirmed that the delivery programme areas provided areas where the Council has identified the need for change and improvement. The Corporate Plan would set the Council's direction of travel up to 2020. The programme areas would then feed through to the Councils' service plans for officers to action.

The Commission thanked Catherine for her work on the Plan and noted the report.

36. DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Councillor Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration introduced a report on the draft Economic Development Strategy to be reviewed by the Commission before consideration by Cabinet on 5 February 2018.

The Commission were informed that the draft Economic Development Strategy "Wycombe – A Welcome Home for Business" set out the framework for the Council's work with its partners to support the growth of the Districts economy over the next 10 years. The vision was to help Wycombe become a more successful place with a strong economy.

Members made a number of points and received clarification on queries as follow:

- There had been a previous strategy however it was noted that this Economic Development Strategy would look at the next 10 years for a longer term roadmap.
- It was hoped that the Strategy could help and inform decision making processes at the Council.
- The Strategy would feed into the Corporate Plan themes and complement the Local Plan land use framework.

- Members supported an appointment of an Economic Development officer at the earliest opportunity.
- It was requested that the Chilterns AONB be given more consideration in the document. In response it was noted that leisure was included under the objectives.
- Regarding housing the population was expected to increase in Buckinghamshire by 14.2% and in Wycombe by 8%.
- It was noted that a feature of Wycombe was as a dormitory town however infrastructure needs were required to be met.
- It was suggested that the report be provided in a more user friendly format with a few pictures/photographs.

The Commission were also introduced to Jay Wheeler, Interim Economic Development Manager.

The Commission noted the report and thanked the Cabinet Member for attending.

37. DIGITAL FIRST

Councillor Lawrence Wood, Cabinet Member for Digital Development and Customer Services provided the Commission with an update on the Digital First Strategy.

The Digital First Strategy had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 18 December 2017. As the Commission had not had time to scrutinise the Strategy Councillor Wood has set up a Policy Advisory Group (PAG) which included Members of the Commission to provide the opportunity for feedback. This was due to take place just before Christmas however due to the weather conditions this meeting had been cancelled. It was noted that the next meeting would be taking place on Tuesday 23 January and the Cabinet Member encouraged the PAG members to attend the meeting.

The Cabinet Member explained that there were urgent issues that needed to be addressed by 2019 such as the Capita contract and the withdrawal of support for Windows 10 by Microsoft. It was noted that the Digital First Strategy, Roadmap and outline business case had been approved by Cabinet. The transformation budget for the project had been included in the budget but this was yet to be agreed.

Members made a number of queries and responses included the following:

- In response to a query Councillor Wood noted that it was his intention to invite Cllr Marten Clarke and John McMillan to a meeting to discuss Digital First.

- Regarding the Modernising Local Government proposal Councillor Wood explained that the other District councils in the County had not been involved in Digital First. However when future savings were realised then this would be considered.
- It was noted that the development of Digital First had been a coordinated effort between the Cabinet Member and senior officers.
- With the current system there was no test environment available however once the servers had been moved to the public cloud then this would be an option. Also with this option if a user has issues with a system then this could be isolated and should not create a problem for everyone.
- At stakeholder engagement meetings it was agreed that teams should have a digital champion who would be able to help team members with certain issues.
- All users should have access to training and it was suggested that all Members receive training before being offered a new device. This would be discussed at the PAG meeting.
- With regards to the Capita contract the Cabinet Member explained that this would have to be considered and there was the option in the future to bring some services back in house. He noted that the Customer Service contract had been going well.

Councillor Collingwood confirmed that he has worked closely with the Cabinet Member, and provided feedback to him and the Leader on Digital First. He confirmed he would be attending the PAG meeting on the 23 January 2018.

The Chairman commented that not everyone used IT and some people would still require non-digital support. In response Councillor Wood confirmed that savings from infrastructure funds would be reinvested to support non-digital schemes.

The Commission thanked the Councillor Wood for the update.

38. COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME & CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Commission considered the work programme report featured along with the appended Cabinet Forward Plan and Commission Work Programme.

The Chairman requested that Councillor Mrs Julia Langley be invited to the next meeting and provide an update on the situation regarding the government response to Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The Budget Task and Finish Group had completed the 1st phase and responses from Cabinet to the recommendations would be included in the 2018-19 proposed budget. A meeting of the TFG 2nd phase would be taking place before the next Cabinet meeting and would report directly to Cabinet at its meeting on the 5 February.

Following the recent Full Council Motion, a new Task and Finish Group would be undertaken to scrutinise crime and policing in the District. Councillor Whitehead would act as Chairman and it was requested that a Ward Member from Marlow, The Risboroughs and Hazlemere be included in the TFG. A Work Programme Suggestion Form would be completed and invites for volunteers would then be sent out.

39. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

40. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

There were no Supplementary Items.

41. URGENT ITEMS

There were no Urgent Items.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Jemma Durkan - Senior Democratic Services Officer
Catherine Whitehead - Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy.