

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 24 January 2019

Time: 7.00 - 8.37 pm

PRESENT: Councillor D Knights (in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, M C Appleyard, H Bull, A D Collingwood, A E Hill, Mrs W J Mallen, H L McCarthy, Ms C J Oliver, D A C Shakespeare OBE, P R Turner and C Whitehead,

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs L M Clarke OBE, R Newman, R Raja, J A Savage and R Wilson

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Regarding Minute 22, the Chairman confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Leader expressing the Commission's disappointment in the responses to the ASB in the District Task and Finish Group recommendations. The Chairman noted that the Leader had responded and read the letter out to the Commission.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Improvement and Review Commission held on 28 November 2018 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

30. DEPUTY CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY - UPDATE ON THE CABINET RESPONSES TO THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE DISTRICT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor Suzanne Brown, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community, provided an update on the status of the work being undertaken as a result of the recommendations of the Anti-Social Behaviour in the District Task and Finish Group.

It was noted that in the Cabinet response a Cabinet Member had not been solely appointed with specific responsibility for ASB. However the Deputy Cabinet Member confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Community, Councillor Peart, was responsible for the anti-social behaviour service.

Regarding the Community Safety Partnership it was noted that the Partnership were in agreement to meet on a bi-monthly basis.

Members were concerned that the data provided by Thames Valley Police regarding anti-social behaviour was not robust and the Council should create its own database. The Deputy Cabinet Member informed the Commission that the database held by Thames Valley Police provided the best information and the number of non TVP incidents would be too small for the Council to need its own database.

Regarding the closure of public toilets the Commission requested further details of when, how and what would be undertaken with regards to this recommendation. It was noted that Cabinet Member for Environment was investigating this matter and the Head of Community informed the Commission that she would find out further details and report back.

There had been problems with staffing levels at TVP and it was reported that new cadets had been recruited. All police officers now dealt with ASB, rather than one designated officer. Problems getting through on the 101 number had been raised and it was recognised that the Police needed to do more to deal with the long waiting times. The police were offered leased car parking spaces for their staff however this offer had not been taken up. It was also noted that access to the TVP computer system in the Council offices was not possible due to network security concerns.

Members were concerned that the direct request for free parking had come from the Chief Constable and had not been considered fully; the Deputy Cabinet Member agreed that this issue would be revisited.

The job description for the Street Warden had been completed and posts would be advertised in February with an expectation that staff would be in place for April 2019. If the work was successful then an early review would be undertaken, which may lead to requests for funding for further Street Wardens. The performance monitoring framework would be reported back to the Commission.

PCSOs needed to be authorised by the Chief Constable before they could issue Fixed Penalty Notices to enforce the Public Space Protection Order. The matter was with TVP's legal department; the Deputy Cabinet Member confirmed that the Chief Constable would be contacted directly so that this matter could be resolved.

There were difficulties in referring beggars to mental health services due to addiction problems as people could only be assessed if they were not using drink or drugs. A copy of the TFGs observations has been shared with the Director of Public Health at Buckinghamshire County Council.

The Wycombe Street Support Partnership had launched a campaign to provide members of the public with information on begging and how to help rather than giving money which may be used for drugs or alcohol. Leaflets and posters were being distributed across the town via the HWBIDCo town ranger.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Cabinet Member and the Head of Community for their update.

31. CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING - UPDATE ON THE LICENSING OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Councillor Mrs Langley, Cabinet Member for Housing, Brian Daly, Housing Service Manager, and Amy Starsmore, Private Sector Housing Team Leader, updated the Commission on the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). It was noted that a report had been circulated in advance of the meeting outlining some of the work that had been undertaken. The following was noted:

- Ward Members had been contacted regarding areas being effected by HMOs and the visits being carried out in their Wards.
- Since the 1 October 2018 there had been 96 applications for HMOs of 5 or more persons.
- Operation REVEAL included visits to 162 properties; with 134 properties accessed.
- Some properties would face potential legal action.
- 30 potential HMOs had been reported directly to the team.
- Good partnership working was being carried out with the police and immigration.
- 35 improvement notices had been issued.
- One property had been closed by Prohibition Order.

Members raised a number of points and received responses in respect of various questions. Main points were as follows:

- Officers were working with landlords to make them fully aware of the new legislation and to guide them through the process.
- A desktop exercise had been undertaken before the legislation had come into place. This had dealt with approximately 1500 properties across the District. The exercise included checking the electoral roll, using officer's knowledge, knocking on doors and using information from partner agencies.
- Two streets visited during Operation REVEAL were in Abbey Ward; areas of focus were mainly in High Wycombe.
- It was suggested that a database be compiled of all HMOs in the District. However due to the numbers involved this would be a significant piece of work and there were issues regarding the resources required.
- Members were concerned that the number of people living in HMOs could be around 7,500.
- Data was being collected on unlicensed HMOs.
- Recruitment of staff had been difficult due to the uncertainty regarding employment and the new unitary council.
- It was noted that the Budget Task and Finish Group supported additional funding being allocated to the Cabinet Member for additional resources to deal with HMOs.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing and the officers for the update, and all the work being undertaken.

32. REPORT OF THE BUDGET TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Commission considered and discussed the report and draft recommendations of the Budget Task and Finish Group for onward referral to Cabinet. The Task and Finish Group was set up by the Improvement and Review Commission in order to consider the capital and revenue budget for the financial year 2019/20 leading into the new unitary Council.

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group: Councillor Alex Collingwood guided members through the report.

The draft recommendations were outlined as follows:

Planning

- 1) That £500k reduction be achieved in 2019/20 however it was recognised that year 2 and 3 were aspirational and the medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) needs to be updated and reflected, and the new unitary needs to be informed. Planning to revisit their budget and discuss alternatives with the Head of Finance and Cabinet Member for Finance.
- 2) That Cabinet provide proposals to deliver the Princes Risborough relief road and Phase 7 of the Town Centre Masterplan, and to report progress within the next six months.

Community

- 3) To use the best procurement route to promote delivery and this can include the suspension of contract standing orders.
- 4) That the procurement team be provided with funds for additional resources.
- 5) If the Modernising Local Government process is delayed then the Council revisit the procurement thresholds.
- 6) It be noted that the Budget TFG support the waiver of Contract Standing Orders for the proposed works at Court Garden.
- 7) That a review of Street Wardens be undertaken within 3 months and additional resource be provided if the project is successful (6 street wardens).

Economic Development & Regeneration

- 8) That additional revenue funds be made available for the feasibility work to facilitate the continuity and delivery of Capital Projects. Including, but not exclusively car parks, regeneration and the Local Plan.
- 9) To accelerate and expedite all regeneration projects to that they can be delivered ahead or on schedule.

10) That a Project Manager be appointed to oversee delivery and to support the Deputy Leader with implementation plans.

(a) The Deputy leader be given the additional role to oversee the delivery of all projects both revenue and capital.

11) To identify the land acquisition and car parking capacity across the District.

12) That Cabinet note that a Task and Finish Group will be undertaken to consider Parking in the District.

13) To note that the Budget Task and Finish Group support the implementation of an increase in parking charges.

Housing

14) To note that the Budget TFG supports the funding for the delivery of HMO licensing.

15) That the Council enter into a Service Level Agreement with Wycombe Homeless Connections on a 3-5 year basis.

Environment

16) That £150k be provided for a new recycling collection vehicle.

17) To note that a Task and Finish Group would be undertaken to consider the new Joint Waste Contract.

ICT

18) That contingency of £100,000 be considered for funding to support the delivery of the Digital First Programme if required.

Community Support Grants

19) That Community Grants be continued and provided to Parish and Town Councils as previously agreed.

The Commission considered and discussed the recommendations. A number of points and suggestions were made, as follows:

- Information regarding the delayed HIF Bid funding should be added to recommendation two and to note that the Abbey Barn Lane work was not as critical at this time.
- Regarding the recommendation to support the contract standing order suspension, this was so that the Community department could deliver cost and time effective contracts. This was supported within the Council's constitution.

- It was suggested that a recommendation be added to investigate a residents parking scheme so that residents could receive discounts at Wycombe District Council car parks.
- To support to economy in the town centre a recommendation be added requesting short term free or low cost parking in the town centre.
- Due to the significant cost to house homeless people in bed and breakfast accommodation it was suggested that funding be provided to the Cabinet Member for Housing for cost effective temporary accommodation.
- It was noted that the existing waste contract ends in 2020 and there was a statutory duty to collect waste. A task and finish group would support work being undertaken by officers on a new contract.
- Regarding ICT funding this amount should be increased to £235,000k.

The Chairman and the Commission thanked Councillor Collingwood and the members of the Task and Finish Group for their report. Comments would be taken into consideration and recommendations amended to reflect the discussion. The final recommendations would then be submitted to Cabinet and their response would be included in the Budget item at the meeting on the 4 February 2019.

33. COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

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

Waste Contract Task and Finish Group

The Commission agreed to set up a Waste Contract Task and Finish Group. The TFG would meet when required and support officers in working towards a new contract as the current contract expires in 2020. A suggestion form would be completed and once membership had been confirmed a scoping meeting arranged to consider next steps.

Parking Task and Finish Group

The Chairman informed the Commission that a suggestion form had been submitted to set up a parking task and finish group.

Councillor Chris Whitehead informed the Commission the he had attended a meeting with the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Interim Head of Regeneration and Investment regarding the proposed parking task and finish group. Discussions included the consideration of a strategic review of transport across the District; this could include air quality management areas, park and ride, and public transport. However the Commission were concerned that this would be too large a scope for a TFG to scrutinise effectively within a short timescale. Therefore the Commission agreed that a parking TFG would be set up to consider

only parking in a strategic way however this would have regard to current work being undertaken. The aim was for the TFG to be completed by the end of April 2019.

The following Members volunteered for the parking TFG, Councillors Mrs Mallen, H McCarthy, P Turner and C Whitehead. Once membership had been confirmed a scoping meeting would be arranged.

An email would be sent to all members of the Commission requesting volunteers for both task and finish groups.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Members be invited to volunteer for the Parking Task and Finish Group and the Waste Contract Task and Finish Group
- ii) The Commission Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

34. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

35. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

There were no supplementary items.

36. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Brian Daly	- Housing Services Manager
Jemma Durkan	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Elaine Jewell	- Head of Community
Amy Starsmore	- Private Sector Housing Team Leader