

Delivering the new **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL**

Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Date: 4 March 2020

Time: 6.30 - 8.10 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A Collingwood (in the Chair)

Members: Councillors J Gladwin, P Birchley, L Clarke OBE, R Newcombe, M Rand, R Stuchbury, P Turner and J Waters

1. Chairman's Introductions

The Chairman thanked the members and officers for attending the meeting. He also thanked the Task and Finish Groups for all their hard work ahead of vesting day.

The Chairman noted that during the interregnum period the Shadow Executive would continue to meet, therefore he suggested that the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee should also meet to consider items such as the Implementation Plan. It was noted that the existing membership of the Committee would remain the same. He suggested that the Committee meet again on Wednesday 22 April 2020, this would be the day after the Shadow Executive meeting. Members were reminded that this meeting would take place during the purdah period. An email providing the date, time and venue of the meeting would be sent out once this information had been confirmed.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors R Bagge, B Gibbs, G Hall, S Lambert, S Renshell and C Whitehead.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Regarding page 5, Minute 5, a member noted that the response regarding the Parish and Town Charter as noted in the bullet point, was also regarding the Community Boards not just the Charter.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 be **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Spending Protocol

The Chairman confirmed that the Spending Protocol had been requested by the Chairman of the Implementation Plan TFG, Cllr Barbara Gibbs. Due to the large budget programme going forward there was a need for consistency across the whole council regarding project planning for delivery of projects and for decision making processes. The Chairman noted that the projects outlined in the report provided initial information and there would be more detail available in the future.

Mr R Ambrose, Section 151 Officer, explained that the Spending Protocol applied to the transition period and attempted to capture new commitments that the existing authorities were considering or those projects that had significant financial risks. Projects included within the schedule had been reviewed and approved by the Shadow Executive with the aim of protecting the new authority and making sure it would start life in the best possible financial position. It was noted that the report provided information on the Shadow Executive decisions and also included the sovereign council with further details being via the links in the documents.

In response to member queries the following points were noted:

- A member supported the inclusion of the use of S106 affordable housing and the South East Aylesbury Link Road projects as it was understood that substantial work would be required to resolve these matters and commitments would need to be made.
- With regards to the Woodlands and Eastern Link Road South it was reported that the Stakeholder Board for this project and governance arrangements would start once the planning agreements were signed. The Shadow Executive had considered this project due to the additional funding requirements.
- Regarding the South East Aylesbury Link Road Mr Ambrose confirmed this had been included due to the increased funding required. The governance arrangements regarding this would be set up and proper arrangements would be made.
- The Gerrards Cross Car Park project had been deferred to the new council as this was considered a significant financial risk. The business case had been updated and the decision had been delayed until a Parking Strategy for the new authority was in place.
- Regarding the South East Aylesbury Link Road it was requested that this scheme be brought to an early meeting of the new Community Board for Aylesbury so that members could discuss the project ahead of approval. The Chairman noted that critical projects should all be treated in the same way at the new authority and he would expect that local members would be fully involved.
- It was noted that the Budget Task and Finish Group had asked for meaningful Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be used for comparison purposes in relation to the Waste Contract. It was noted that the Shadow Executive had agreed this in principle and would be taking this forward.

Mr Ambrose noted that whilst the Shadow Executive had agreed this recommendation 11, regarding the Capital Programme, it would not be possible to complete this review in time for the next meeting. However these parameters of the review could be shared with members outside of a formal meeting to discuss and agree the approach. The Chairman agreed and noted that members would want the option to comment and provide clarity on the matter.

6. Implementation Plan Update

The Committee were provided with an update on the progress of the implementation programme for the new authority.

Mr R Goodes, Programme Manager, presented the report and noted that there were 27 days until the new council would go live on 1 April. He was confident that all the key work had been undertaken ahead of vesting day.

The following points were noted:

- The Shadow Authority had met on 27 February and agreed the budget and Constitution for the new council; these were major milestones for the programme.
- The Shadow Executive had also made a number of decisions in January on policies to help vulnerable residents, including how Discretionary Housing Payments would be allocated.
- Also the Shadow Executive had approved housing policies which included a new housing enforcement policy and approved a common housing grant policy.
- Strategies for residents had been agreed which included support for residents with learning difficulties and the importance of working with partners had been identified.
- It was noted that grants agreed by the sovereign councils for voluntary groups had been approved for the next two years under the new authority to provide certainty for the groups in the near future.
- It was reported that the Senior Appointments Committee had met to consider the applicants for the position of Corporate Director of Resources and had not been able to make a permanent appointment. However, it was reported that Sarah Murphy-Brookman would move to the role of Corporate Director for Resources on an interim basis and John McMillan would be covering Sarah's post as Service Director for HR & OD.
- Also it was confirmed that Ian Thompson, Corporate Director for Planning Growth and Sustainability had started on 25 January 2020. There was now a full management team at a corporate level for the 1 April.
- Mr Goodes thanked staff and members for all their work and support on the progress made to deliver the programme. It was noted that there were now 114 critical deliverables; one regarding the Town and Parish Charter had been moved into business as usual and this would be launched at a conference in June.
- 50 deliverables had been completed at the time of the meeting and there were 39 to deliver in March. It was noted that 25 would be after 1 April, such as the election in May, closure of the accounts and members induction programme. There was nothing critical outstanding and all remained on track for 1 April.
- The programme's 'critical friend' Ameo had reviewed customer service scenarios and no major issues had been identified. Training would continue with staff and mystery shopping would continue through April.
- It was noted that there was a positive attitude with staff regarding the new council and the can do attitude towards making the new council a success.
- As members and staff had been advised previously most staff would continue in their current roles on the 1 April.
- It was noted that there would be some changes such as the new SAP finance and HR system, and IT for staff. Support staff would be available in all the major offices to help staff and members with any day 1 issues.

- Over the next month awareness of the new council would be raised with updates on social media, posters, adverts, information in local magazines, radio adverts and leaflets would be made available to households across the county.
- A new shared online space for members and staff would go live from 1 April.

Mr Goodes noted that work was on track for 1 April and this was due to the hard work of staff and the support of members. He was confident that the council would be launched successfully on the 1 April.

In response to member queries the following points were noted:

- There had been changes at the senior management level, however the majority of staff would be TUPED across to the new council, and there were no redundancies at this stage. Staff had received a letter from their new service director and where changes had been made staff had been informed.
- The Chairman suggested that clarity was required for staff regarding being transferred across to the new council on their existing terms and conditions on the 1 April. He suggested that the Chief Executive could send a message to staff to reiterate this matter.
- The new policy regarding houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) was based on existing schemes and by harmonising policies to focus on tenant protection. Mr Goodes confirmed that details regarding the policy could be circulated to the Committee and he would be able to provide further detail if requested.
- The policy regarding residents with learning disabilities and mental health reflected the work of partners and this would also be circulated to the Committee.
- Thanks were given to all staff for the progress made with the programme and it was noted that staff had been working hard towards creating the unitary council whilst also undertaking their current roles.
- The information regarding current turnover of staff would be reviewed and shared with the Committee. By the end of December there were no significant peaks in turnover.
- There was concern regarding staff turnover in finance and planning, and it was suggested that the monitoring of staff turnover be reviewed, with a fortnightly report.
- A member raised concern that the new council would not be able to retain staff and it was requested that something be provided to boost staff morale and prevent them from leaving the organisation.
- There was also concern regarding new teams working together for the first time and as there were a lot of changes taking place, it was suggested that this should be monitored carefully. Mr Goodes noted that workshops were being arranged with new teams to meet on an informal basis. Senior officers were committed to enable staff to work together and this would be monitored on a regular basis.
- Concern was raised that communication to the public regarding the new council had so far been low key. Mr Goodes confirmed there was a lot going on including radio adverts, waste collection vehicles had been rebranded and there were now posters in public places, promotion on social media and in local papers. He confirmed that there was a lot to do over the next few weeks and into April.
- It was suggested that members of the public mainly wanted to be able to get in contact with the council and that this was the priority. Mr Goodes confirmed that there would be new ways of contacting the council but the existing contact numbers, email addresses and web links would still be available. The new number and website would be promoted but the current contact links would still be in place.

- A member suggested that councillors would also be able to inform residents of how to contact the council.

7. Budget TFG Update

The Chairman of the Budget Task and Finish Group, Councillor John Gladwin, provided the Committee with the Shadow Executive responses to the 33 recommendations of the Budget TFG.

Councillor Gladwin noted that a majority of the recommendations had been accepted. However, most had been deferred to the new council and there had not been any significant changes made to the Budget. Regarding recommendation 11 and the Capital Programme it was noted that a detailed analysis of capital programme had been made and some projects were committed, some with business cases and others were aspirational. There was evidence that a significant amount of the programme was aspirational and work would be required by the new council to provide further detail and consistency. Councillor Gladwin thanked all the members of the TFG for the contributions made and thanked the officers for their time and effort.

Members discussed the responses and a number of points were noted:

- Concern was raised regarding scrutinising the progress of the recommendations to make sure these were actioned by the new council. It was confirmed that usually recommendations would be brought back to the relevant Scrutiny Select Committee to be reviewed at a 6 and then 12 month stage to track progress.
- The Chairman noted that regarding recommendations 27 and 28 funding of £2.2m had been allocated; this would also need to be monitored and the new council would need to deliver on reducing agency staffing in future years.
- Due to the development work being undertaken in the county and in establishing the new council, strong leadership would be needed.
- A member raised concern regarding the response to recommendation 9 and managing developer contributions, and balancing the budget on a long term basis. A strategic, robust approach was required and if not then this would be a huge risk. In response Mr Ambrose confirmed that the Shadow Executive had agreed the recommendation and changes were happening with a consistent approach and work would progress.
- It was noted management tools were already in place regarding development contributions at Wycombe District Council and the council had been part of a CIL pilot scheme. Money would not be lost but a harmonised approach of collection would be undertaken for developer contributions.
- Regarding the response to recommendation 32 a review was being undertaken on the taxi licensing policy. Dates regarding this and the HMO licensing policy would be confirmed. The Chairman requested that clarity be provided regarding the dates specified in the responses and a timeline of delivery be provided.
- More explanation regarding the funding of £2.2m outlined in the response to recommendation 28 was requested. It was suggested that key worker housing would help with the staffing issues regarding Children's Services. The Chairman confirmed that the funding was to provide 'grow your own' qualified staff for the service. The key worker housing funding would also need to be considered as this detail not complete. Mr Ambrose confirmed that this had been supported and a business case to support this would be undertaken. It was actively being considered and information regarding key worker housing would be available in the

near future. A member noted that housing was expensive in Buckinghamshire; key worker housing and staffing for the council supported each other.

The Chairman explained that clear recommendations from the TFG had been brought to the Shadow Executive which provided detail for the new council going forward.

8. Shadow Executive Forward Plan

It was noted that the Shadow Executive Forward Plan had a number of items for consideration at the meeting on the 10 March. Mr Goodes confirmed that some of these would be moved to the 31 March meeting. He noted that a new Shadow Executive Forward Plan was due to be published with the changes.

A member requested that an up to date plan regarding the deliverables be provided and noted that this would be a busy agenda for the Shadow Executive over the next month.

The Chairman queried the consultation period for the Buckinghamshire Permit Scheme and if this would be during the purdah period. Also it was noted that there was no Audit Committee to consider the Internal Audit Plan.

Mr Goodes confirmed that regarding the Milton Keynes 2050 Strategy this was a response to a consultation ahead of the purdah period and that was why the response was being provided at this time. The report had been published if members would like to consider the details. Regarding the Street Naming and Numbering Policy this was to harmonise policies across the council for the new unitary. Mr Goodes confirmed that he would check the consultation period regarding the Buckinghamshire Permit Scheme.

Mr Ambrose confirmed that regarding the Internal Audit Plan this would go to the first Audit and Governance Committee at the end of May 2020. It was being considered by the Shadow Executive so that the key priorities could be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: That pursuant to Regulation 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Minute 9, because of their reference to matters which contain exempt information as defined as follows:

Minute 9 Risk Register

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972)

(The need to maintain the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure, because disclosure could prejudice the Council's position in any future tender process or negotiations)

9. Risk Register

The Committee received an update on the Unitary Implementation Risk Register. Mr Goodes provided specific information on three risks identified and confirmed that the risks had been reviewed and reduced down.

Members discussed and commented on the Risk Register, and received clarification on a number of points.

The Committee thanked Mr Goodes for the information.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

K Sutherland	Committee and Governance Manager BCC
Durkan	Democratic Services Officer
R Ambrose	Interim Section 151 Officer (SA)
R Goodes	Programme Manager