

Delivering the new **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL**

Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Date: 25 November 2019

Time: 7.00 - 8.50 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A Collingwood (in the Chair)

Members: Councillors J Gladwin, R Bagge, P Birchley, P Cooper, B Gibbs, G Hall, G Hollis, S Renshaw, R Stuchbury, P Turner, J Waters, C Whitehead, M Rand and S Jenkins

1. Chairman's Introductions

The Chairman welcomed members and officers to the meeting. He confirmed that security passes were now available for the Committee to access all the council offices and members should contact Democratic Services to collect their passes.

The Chairman confirmed that members would restrict their questions to one minute with one question per item. This would enable all members to have the opportunity to ask questions and receive a response.

2. Apologies For Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Clarke OBE, C Ford, P Jones, S Lambert and R Newcombe.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Chairman noted that regarding minute 5, Equalities Policy Development, bullet point 5, wording in blue had been amended to reflect the correct information.

One member was concerned that comments regarding the Paralympics and the use of acronyms had not been included in the previous minutes. The Chairman confirmed that the minutes tried to reflect all points raised however not all comments could be noted. The formal Shadow Overview & Scrutiny meetings were webcasted and available as a public record via the Shadow Authority website at <https://shadow.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2019 were AGREED as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Draft Corporate Plan

The Committee welcomed Ms S Payne, Director of Policy, Communications & Performance, Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) who provided a presentation on the draft Corporate Plan for the new Buckinghamshire Council. Ms Payne explained that the Corporate Plan was part of a wider strategic planning framework to provide a clear direction and 'golden thread'. This would enable staff to be able to track their objectives back up through Team Plans, Service Plans, Directorate Plans and back to the Corporate Plan. The following points were highlighted:

- This would be a 3 year plan aligned to the budget setting process and was deliberately high level. The Directorate Plans would set out a higher level of detail and would include the key performance indicators used to monitor progress.
- Continuous monitoring processes would be undertaken, including through regular financial monitoring and performance monitoring and scrutiny.
- Development work included informal engagement with members, (shaping priorities sessions open to all members), an online member survey over summer 2019, a cross-council debate to seek input from external key strategic partners and discussions with residents at focus groups. This engagement helped develop a draft set of priorities. These had been taken out to wider consultation with the public, partners, staff and other stakeholders through the Budget and Priorities consultation. This had taken place for a period of just over a month and ran until 25 November 2019.
- There had been promotion of the consultation through a number of channels including electronic channels and face to face meetings. Specific targeting for underrepresented groups such as ethnic minorities and young people had been undertaken.
- Example priorities included:
 - Strong, healthy and capable communities,
 - Protecting vulnerable people,
 - Enhancing our environment,
 - Prosperous County.
- The priorities would be developed and refined based on the consultation feedback received.
- The next steps included consultation feedback to be considered in December 2019 then the draft Corporate Plan would be brought alongside the draft Budget to be scrutinised in January 2020. The Shadow Authority would sign off the Budget and Corporate Plan at the meeting in February 2020 with further Directorate and Services Plans being signed off in March 2020.
- It was noted that partnership working would be key to achieving the strategic outcomes.

In response to members' questions the following points were noted:

- The existing councils' Corporate Plan priorities were used as the starting point for the work undertaken on the draft Corporate Plan.

- It was noted that partnership working would be key to achieving the strategic priorities. Key partnerships would be set out in the new Plan, examples included the Integrated Care Partnership, emergency services, town and parish councils, voluntary community sector, Growth Board, and Cultural Partnership.
- It was noted that there had been a fairly low response rate to the consultation in relation to the total population of the County; however the response rate was comparable with that received for previous budget consultations, and specific targeting had been undertaken to promote the consultation to underrepresented groups.
- The Chairman suggested that a breakdown regarding the responses received be made available so that the representation of residents and groups could be evaluated.
- A member of the Committee commented on the Oxford/Cambridgeshire Arc and how this would affect residents, parish and town councils, new members and the new Unitary Council. It was noted that this level of details would be included in other plans developed by the new Council.
- The new Corporate Plan and Directorate Plans would be comprehensively reviewed post May 2020 to make sure these were still fit for purpose and would then be reviewed at least on an annual basis.
- A member noted that the consultation for residents provided the opportunity for them to comment on the draft Plan. There were good themes however some would be difficult to measure. It would be challenging to determine the final priorities and to ensure residents had their needs addressed however there was confidence in officers that this could be achieved.
- In relation to the responses it was noted that some of these could have been submitted on behalf of more than one person such as a parish council or stakeholder group; therefore one representation could be attributed to more than one individual.
- Regarding scrutinising the draft Corporate Plan the Vice-Chairman suggested that a draft be provided to the Committee members in advance so that comments could be forwarded to the Shadow Executive.
- One member noted that changing people's behaviours was very difficult and this needed to be considered as part of the draft Corporate Plan.
- It was also noted that making sure jobs and environmental issues were considered was a priority as it would be negative to the area if the county continued to be used as a dormitory for other areas.
- A Committee member noted that a majority of opinion polls were usually based on less than 1,500 and anything above this number was helpful in informing views.

To summarise Ms Payne thanked members for their comments and noted that these would be considered by officers. Regarding the level of detail proposed by the Chairman on priorities, this would be set out in the Directorate Plans following engagement with staff, members and stakeholders to help develop the plans. It was noted that the Corporate Plan was deliberately high level.

The Chairman thanked Ms Payne for her presentation.

6. Unitary Communications and Engagement Strategy Update

The Committee welcomed Ms K Walker, Senior Communications and Engagement Lead, Programme Office, who provided an update on the Unitary Communications and Engagement Strategy. Ms Walker noted that this had previously been considered

by the members at their meeting in July and were provided with an update on progress and future work. The following points were highlighted:

- Work so far had included improving the understanding of the unitary programme, providing reassurance to key stakeholders, bringing five authorities together in one unified voice, and supporting and promoting the Buckinghamshire Council programme aims and objectives.
- Most of the work to date had been linked to key milestones, e.g. announcements such as the appointment of the Chief Executive and progress of the programme. It was noted that the main focus over last few months had been aimed at key stakeholders such as staff and members.
- Member communications and engagement included a dedicated shared intranet space for members, newsletters, events, and videos from events. Also using existing communications channels such as weekly bulletins. A Members Survey was being developed to help understand what members needed to know over next few months and how they would like to receive information in the future.
- Staff had received a number of communications and officers had been working with different departments such as HR and ICT. Staff communication had included regular newsletters, staff roadshows, videos from Rachael Shimmin, special news on hot topics and a shared online space.
- Existing channels of communication across the five councils were also being used such as posters, social media for work, and surveys on how staff were feeling. The feedback provided by staff was that the level of communications had been good and staff felt well informed. An internal survey was being launched on the 25 November to ask staff what communication channels they used and what they would like to see in future, also to help develop the communications strategy for Buckinghamshire Council.
- Partner communications with town and parish councils and key strategic partners included parish and town council newsletters, partner newsletters, webpages, regular meetings, workshops and regular meetings with local council associations and Local Area Forums. This work would continue over the next few months with engagement regarding proposals for planning, a Parish and Town Council Charter and a specific strategic partners' event in January 2020.
- A number of consultations had been undertaken which included the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Community Boards, and Budget and Priorities which Ms Walker confirmed had received 2600 responses. It was noted this was 800 more than the BCC budget consultation last year. There had also been public drop in sessions held across the county. Further budget engagement would be held in January.
- External communications focused on using existing and new channels including user testing groups for the new website, social media, shadow authority website, newsletters, posters, press releases and officers had attended external events.
- Work would continue to engage with staff and members using information sessions, increased communications, staff roadshows in January and drop in sessions for staff.
- Future focus would be on the launch of the council and the day one campaign, focussing more on a public awareness campaign for the new Buckinghamshire Council and where the public can go to access services.

Mrs Walker requested that members provide feedback on what they would like to know and how they would like to be kept updated

In response to members' questions the following points were noted:

- A member asked about the rebranding. Mrs Walker confirmed that experienced in house designers had been involved in producing the new logo so this had been low cost to the council. Work had also been undertaken on the wider branding and research had involved residents, members and staff. Development for the rest of the branding not just the logo was continuing, including branding guidelines, linking to the Corporate Plan and work on a rebranding strategy which would be undertaken based on minimising cost and only re-branding where necessary.
- Social media following on the new developing council account was small and organic reach was developed using current councils' social media channels. A detailed social media strategy would be undertaken from January to April 2020.
- From the 1 April 2020 existing councils' telephone numbers could still be used and over time these would be reduced in a managed way. A significant staff training programme would be developed in the New Year.
- Members advised that their communication and briefings had been very good and the regular newsletters to councils have been found informative. However a committee member was concerned that rebranding might raise expectations about the amount of change that could not be matched. Mrs Walker confirmed that there would be a slow build-up of communication work which was being considered by colleagues at the councils to prevent any misunderstanding.
- Regarding rebranding some of this was legally required for the new organisation and a sensible approach was being taken to what was required.
- A member raised concern that information regarding the new salaries and terms of conditions for staff being transferred into the new organisation had not been available for consideration. In response it was reported that the Shadow Executive had agreed these and that trade unions and employee representatives had been involved in developing the terms and conditions. Workshops were being carried out with staff to help inform them of the changes.
- Also it was suggested that more detail on communication with parish and town councils regarding devolution of services was required. In response it was confirmed that a pilot devolution offer was being rolled out on 1 April 2020 with parish and town councils who would like to participate by working in partnership with the councils.
- Regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme this had received 137 responses. It was noted that this was comparable with the type of respondents that were relevant to the consultation.
- Communication for parish councils through their clerks had worked well. It was suggested that information could be uploaded to parish/community websites.
- The Chairman noted that members had considered three choices regarding the logo and the end result was as discussed.
- A member was concerned that residents were not fully aware of changes regarding the new unitary Council. Also that there would be three ward councillors representing a larger area that may need further explanation. It

was also suggested that a list of phone numbers be provided to the public for key services and websites and that the Leader of Shadow Executive make appearances on local news to provide information to residents on the new council. It was noted that this would have to be outside any purdah period.

- It was noted that staff turnover had been monitored by the Chief Executives Group and was a good way of checking how staff felt. It was noted that a Wellbeing survey was taking place with staff and ongoing engagement with staff and how they were feeling was being undertaken.
- It was noted that the High Wycombe Town Committee were being consulted on issues alongside parish and town councils.

Mrs Walker confirmed that the feedback received from the members would be taken into consideration and the Chairman provided thanks on behalf of the Committee.

7. Implementation Plan Update

Mr R Goodes, Programme Manager, provided the Committee with an update on the progress made on the implementation programme for the new Buckinghamshire Council.

The following points were noted:

- The Corporate Management for the new Unitary Council had been appointed. Service Director interviews were taking place and would be announced during December 2019.
- Work was being undertaken on the branding strategy and from 1 January 2020 an advertising and marketing campaign would begin for the day one launch.
- Pay scale for employees had been agreed. It was noted that all staff would be TUPEd across to the new council. Only staff in new roles would move to the new scheme and new recruits.
- A devolution pilot would be undertaken during the first year of the new Unitary with a 3 year programme.
- It was noted that throughout the implementation programme work was built on existing good practices across the councils.
- A shadow Buckinghamshire Growth Board had been established that would help manage the growth agenda across county.
- The current number of critical 'Must Haves' was at 116, these were continued to be reviewed.
- Further work on the 'Must Haves' would be undertaken by the programme boards led by the new Directors and a fuller report on the review would be available in December 2019.
- It was noted that February and March were busy periods and these would continue to be reviewed.
- It was reported that there were over 300 milestones underneath the 'Must Haves' and a lot of work would be done through the milestones which was expected for this type of programme.
- Regarding the 10 Amber 'Must Haves' these all had plans in place and there was nothing noted as red with the rest, green.
- Regular meetings were taking place with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to go through progress and issues. The

MHCLG had worked with other authorities going through the transition process and had reassured the Programme Office that work was on track.

- An implementation budget of £12.8m had been agreed and a small underspend had been forecasted but this was continuing to be reviewed.
- The aim was for minimal service disruption for residents on 1 April 2020. It was noted that 17 council access points had been agreed and a new website and telephone number would be available with the existing contacts also available on vesting day.
- Confidence was strong that the new Council would be established on 1 April 2020.

In response to members' questions the following points were noted:

- Regarding recruitment of Service Directors this would be done in two stages. The first stage to be done internally to provide current senior managers the option to apply for the new roles. If any roles were unfilled then these would then be advertised externally.
- The five 'access plus' centres would be based at the current council offices. There would be work in the future to review these.
- Regarding the current pay scales it was noted that the cost of living across the county had been considered however it was decided that there would be no adjustments and the pay scale would be the same across the county.
- Children's Services would be accessed as they are now, it was noted that there would be specialist staff to deal with specific issues.
- The list of partners for the Strategic Partner Board would be circulated to the Committee.
- It was confirmed that the up to date Risk Register would be provided to all members of the Committee with future updates. With regards to the red risks once these were mitigated only two would remain as red and these were being managed. There was confidence with delivery in the plan, it was explained that risks were understanding what could happen and for these to be managed. An example of a previous red risk was the general election and this was now happening and now an issue that was being managed.
- 48 of the 'Must Haves' were made up of what were required to do for legal reasons, 36 were linked to reputational risks, e.g. access points, and 32 were for business and political risks. If required the list of 'Must Haves' could be circulated to the wider committee and members could meet with Mr Goode if required. An update would be provided to the Implementation Plan Task and Finish Group on 16 December.
- A robust induction programme would be in place for the new members following the election to help members understand the new council and services. Work with members would be undertaken regarding the three member wards and how these would be dealt with.
- Regarding the transformation work, it was noted that this was expected to take three years, but could be longer. There would be significant work required on a new Local Plan, which could take longer than three years.
- Regarding the 'Must Haves' that had not been delivered in October 19, it was reported that one had been delivered after the report had been written and the others would be delivered in December 19 at the latest.
- Regarding the role of Service Director Corporate Finance it was noted that existing internal managers could apply for the role as well external candidates.

- Mr Goodes confirmed he would discuss with the Chairman of the Implementation Plan Task and Finish Group regarding the political 'Must Haves'.

The Chairman thanked Mr Goodes and the officers for all their work. Regarding resource issues the Chairman understood the pressure on officers with the work involved in the transition and suggested that the Shadow Executive provide additional funding to be made available to support officers. It was noted that there was no additional financial support from central Government.

8. Task and Finish Group Updates

Regarding the Implementation Plan Task and Finish Group, Councillor B Gibbs confirmed that the 128 'Must Haves' had been reduced to 118.

Councillor Gladwin reported that Budget Task and Finish Group members had been requested to view their accounts at their councils and share risks with other members of group. This would enable an understanding of large risk at other councils.

One Committee member requested information on the end of year accounts for all the councils. Councillor Gladwin noted that the Budget Task and Finish Group had received the consolidation of budgets for the previous year and members would be considering the latest set of accounts to see how councils were performing against their budgets.

It was noted that there were issues regarding the costs of planning at some councils, the Budget TFG were aware of these issues and had been discussed at a previous meeting.

The Budget TFG would be considering a detailed breakdown regarding changes in the budget at their meeting in December 19. The Budget TFG would be scrutinising the portfolio holders and each TFG member would provide expertise in at least one portfolio area.

9. Shadow Executive Forward Plan

The Chairman noted that there were a large number of items for the future Shadow Executive meetings. Mrs S Ashmead, Monitoring Officer, noted that this was expected due to policies and plans that required Executive decisions.

One Committee member that had attended the meetings noted that the Shadow Executive were dealing with a large number of items and discussions were taking place. It was noted when considering exempt items members that were not on the Shadow Executive were asked to leave the meetings during the exempt session.

Following a query regarding whether the Armed Forces Covenant was a critical decision for the Shadow Executive agenda, it was noted that currently the County Council had a Silver Award and the decision was needed so that this status could be transferred to the new council.

The Council Tax setting would be considered as part of the budget setting at the Shadow Executive meetings on 7 January and 18 February 2020 for recommendation on to the Shadow Authority.

10. Committee Work Programme

It was noted that the formal meeting on the 16 December had been cancelled.

This would now be replaced by informal private Budget Task and Finish Group and Implementation Plan Task and Finish Group meetings. Meeting invitations had been sent to the TFG members. Both meetings would be taking place at the same time so that members could go between the meetings if required. An email confirming the arrangements would be provided to the members.

The parking arrangements would be confirmed by email to the members.

Action: Democratic Services

11. Meetings of the Committee

It was noted that the public Budget Task and Finish Group meetings would be taking place from Tuesday 14 January 2020 to Friday 17 January 2020.

The next formal Shadow Overview and Scrutiny meetings would take place on Monday 3 February 2020 and Tuesday 3 March 2020.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

S Ashmead	Shadow Monitoring Officer
J Durkan	Democratic Services Officer
R Goodes	Programme Manager
S Payne	Director of Policy, Communications & Performance, BCC
K Walker	Senior Communications and Engagement Lead, Programme Office