

Delivering the new **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL**

Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Date: 4 February 2020

Time: 6.30 - 8.45 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A Collingwood (in the Chair)

Members: Councillors R Bagge, P Birchley, C Ford, B Gibbs, G Hollis, P Jones, R Newcombe, R Stuchbury, P Turner, J Waters, C Whitehead and M Rand

1. Chairman's Introductions

The Chairman thanked the members and officers for attending the meeting. He explained that the date had been changed due to a Wycombe District Council Cabinet meeting taking place on the evening of Monday 3 February. He noted that at this meeting Cabinet had considered a Climate Change Protocol which now brought the council in line with other Buckinghamshire councils.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors L Clarke OBE, P Cooper, J Gladwin, P Kelly, S Lambert and S Renshell.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Concern was raised that previous webcasts were not available to view as indicated in the previous minutes. The Chairman noted that these should be able to be accessed for openness and transparency. It was noted that webcasts should be available for 12 months and the officers would ensure that missing webcasts would be uploaded to the website.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2019 were AGREED as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Implementation Plan Update

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the progress of the implementation programme for the new unitary council. The Chairman of the Implementation Task and Finish Group, Councillor Barbara Gibbs, confirmed that the request for some of the March 'must haves' to be moved to January and February had

been undertaken. Also that regular officer update meetings were taking place to provide a seamless transition to the new council and she thanked the officers for the good work.

Mrs S Ashmead, Monitoring Officer, presented the report on behalf of Mr R Goodes, Programme Manager as he was unable to attend the meeting. It was noted that at the time of the meeting there were 58 days to go until vesting day.

The following points were noted:

- Corporate Directors and Services Directors had been appointed and recruitment was being undertaken for five remaining vacant roles. Interviews would take place in March with the aim of confirming appointments ahead of vesting day.
- Services Directors had undertaken work on the alignment of teams in their services areas. It was noted that this was an important piece of work to so that staff would be aware of where they sit in their structure. Staff would be informed in February of their positions in the structures and services directors would undertake a series of staff meetings.
- This information would also enable the development of the Service Plans that would sit underneath the new Council Plan.
- The Shadow Executive had agreed 16 Community Boards following extensive consultation.
- A Town and Parish Charter was under development with the help of representatives from town and parish councils.
- Town and Parish councils had been asked for expressions of interest in a devolution pilot scheme. Over twenty responses had been received and these were being evaluated for a decision on who would be included in the pilot.
- Work was continuing on the Council's Corporate Plan.
- Customer service standards had been agreed and training would be provided to all appropriate staff in preparation for 1 April.
- Testing of customer scenarios had been undertaken with AMEO.
- Preparations were being made for the upcoming elections in May.
- The Implementation Risk register was being closely monitored and key risks were being monitored on a weekly basis.
- The Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group had met for four days in January 2020 to consider the draft budget.
- Practical arrangements had been considered and agreed for the Interregnum period (1 April to 11 May 2020). These were to use existing committee measures if required during this time.
- A communications plan was being developed for day one and information would be available for residents so they know who and how to contact the new council.
- Staff roadshows were being carried out across the councils during January and February.
- A residents' magazine had been agreed and would be available in May once the new Council has been established.
- Officers remained confident that work was on track for April 2020 and focus was on the deliverables for day one.

In response to Member questions the following points were noted:

- New services directors would receive support from the Programme Office to provide capacity and help with deliverables. Development programmes were being undertaken and included management development programmes. Team building had been scheduled for services directors as a group and there was also support for individuals.
- Regular newsletters were sent out to Parish and Town Councils providing information on the new council. A meeting had been held recently with the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) which had been well attended.
- A working group of town and parish council members had been considering, and helping with, a Parish and Town Council Charter. Information regarding the Charter could be shared with other parish and town councils if requested and it was noted that information had been shared with BMALC. The new Service Director for Localities and Strategic Partnerships, Claire Hawkes, is visiting town and parish councils to provide information on this and other matters regarding the new unitary.
- Regarding Community Boards it was noted that the Shadow Executive had the authority to set these up and allocation of funding was within their remit. Information had been provided to Buckingham Town Council regarding this matter and had been shared widely.
- Staff would be TUPED across to the new council on their existing terms and conditions. Further work regarding staffing and restructuring would be undertaken through the transformation programme.
- Regarding the unparished area of High Wycombe it was reported that the Charter Trustees would be involved in the process regarding formulating a Parish and Town Charter.
- Interim posts had been put in place for roles that had not yet been filled and some of these had been covered by existing staff. Appointments for the vacant services director posts would be made by the end of March 2020.
- The Parish and Town Charter would not be part of the new council's constitution. This would be a protocol document and adopted as part of the council's policy.
- It was suggested that services that individual town and parishes were responsible for should be listed on the website. This would be helpful information for parish and town councils and the new ward councillors.
- It was requested that the response that had been provided to Buckingham Town Council regarding the Charter be circulated to all the parish and town councils.
- Town and parish councils had provided an expression of interest in the Charter. Detailed work would be undertaken which would then include local ward members as part of the decision making process.
- It was suggested that some parish and town councils would have preferred some guidelines regarding areas of interest for a charter. If this had been available then more councils may have been involved.

The Chairman thanked Sarah for the update and noted that a further update would be provided to the next meeting in March 2020.

6. Task and Finish Group Updates

The Chairman of the Implementation Plan TFG, Councillor Barbara Gibbs, requested that a report be provided regarding the Spending Protocol to the Committee at the next meeting. The Chairman confirmed this would provide a further understanding on

how budgets would be managed during the interregnum period and to enable a smooth transition to the new council.

The Chairman of the Committee noted that a substantial minority of the Budget TFG had requested that the Council tax harmonisation should have been as the original business case where WDC residents council tax stayed at its current level and the rest of county areas brought down to that level.

It was accepted that the majority view of the TFG was to raise Council tax on average by 3.99 %. However, they wanted the council to be transparent with all residents regarding the exact increase as residents of Wycombe District Council would face a much larger increase due to harmonisation.

A member raised concerns regarding the information provided at the Budget TFG and the budget forecasts for special educational needs and Children's Services. Also regarding the Planning budget that further work should be done as this could be a great budget risk for the future. The Chairman confirmed that these issues had been highlighted during the budget scrutiny process and the Budget TFG recommendations to the Shadow Executive would take these issues into account. The Chairman thanked the officers and members for all their help during the Budget scrutiny process.

The Vice-Chairman of the Budget TFG, Councillor Chris Whitehead, provided a presentation on the 33 recommendations as agreed by the TFG to be provided to the Shadow Executive for a response. He noted that the budgets for the next 2 years had been examined as part of the legacy scrutiny arrangements however year 3 did not provide as much detail. It was noted some of the £18.2m savings outlined in the unitary business case had already been made by the legacy councils. It was expected that the remaining savings would be realised over the next few years, however there was further work to be done. Once the Shadow Executive had provided their response to the recommendations then the budget would be provided to the Shadow Authority for agreement.

The Budget Task and Finish Group recommended the following to the Shadow Executive:

Recommendation 1:

- a) There should be a consistent approach to how inflation and salary increases are applied across the budget.
- b) Where budgets include monies released from a reserve, this should be clearly noted in a separate budget line.
- c) Further work should be undertaken on Years 2 & 3 of the MTFP to ensure the robustness of the budgets in light of a number of external factors which are outside of the Council's control.

Recommendation 2: The Corporate Plan for Buckinghamshire Council should include a stronger commitment to Climate Change, with the aim of the Council being net Carbon Neutral by 2035 (subject to consideration of the results of the Council's Carbon Audit) and the County generally by 2050. This Commitment should be explicit and transparent and will require strong political leadership to ensure delivery.

Recommendation 3: The budget should include specific budget lines which demonstrate how it will deliver the Council being net Carbon Neutral by 2035.

Recommendation 4: A specific Portfolio and Portfolio Holder should be nominated to be responsible to driving the Climate Change & Carbon Neutral agenda forward across Buckinghamshire Council and to take a leading role in the championing this across the Country and beyond.

Recommendation 5: An overall recruitment and workforce strategy for Buckinghamshire Council as a whole should be developed as a priority.

Recommendation 6: A strategy to reduce the number of agency staff should also be prioritised. The delivery and performance of this strategy should be monitored regularly.

Recommendation 7: Buckinghamshire Council should ensure that there is sufficient capacity to deliver existing savings plans and an ambitious capital programme, as well as managing far-reaching service transformation.

Recommendation 8: Buckinghamshire Council should invest in Key Worker Housing as a priority, to aid recruitment, reduce staff turnover and unlock additional skills capacity in the County.

Recommendation 9: A robust centralised management system is put in place to manage all Development Contributions across the County, including CIL, S106 and S278 monies which are so integral to successful delivery of the Capital programme.

Recommendation 10: Risks around funding bids from Housing Infrastructure Fund and other government bodies are acknowledged and implications on cash flow/borrowing/interest and the timing of building projects should be clearly identified.

Recommendation 11: Capital programme should be divided into those schemes which are fully funded, with deliverable business cases and those that are more aspirational, in order to give members and residents a clearer understanding of the programme. The detail should be included in the final budget.

Recommendation 12: A detailed breakdown of the funding for each Community Board should be included in the final budget.

Recommendation 13: Responsibility for Community Boards and the associated budgets should sit with the Communities Portfolio to drive Localism forward and have visibility of community grants and support in one place.

Recommendation 14: Increased funding for feasibility work in years 2 & 3 should be investigated to reflect the quantum of Capital projects (£493m over 3 years).

Recommendation 15: The balance of the Unitary Implementation

transition fund should be added to the £14m transformation pot.

Recommendation 16: Further assessment should be made during 2020-21 as to whether the £14m Transformation Pot will be sufficient to enable the required service transformation over the 3 year period of the MTFP.

Recommendation 17: As soon as plans are finalised for the priority order of service transformation, these should be shared with all staff to enable them to understand the implications for them as individuals over the next 3 years.

Recommendation 18: A robust and clearly understood approach to risk management to be adopted by Buckinghamshire Council as a priority.

Recommendation 19: The option of the Home to School Transport team being integrated in the Education service and Client Transport team being integrated in Adult Social Care, to realise savings and improve outcomes for residents should be explored.

Recommendation 20: A management reporting system should be established which enables a true comparison of costs and key performance indicators, in particular the quality of service, between in-house and contracted services on a like-for-like basis to support Buckinghamshire Council's future decision-making.

Recommendation 21: Priority should be given to the recruitment of experienced staff to support the Planning service in dealing with increased demand and Members would recommend that a 'Grow you Own' programme such as those in Social Care should be investigated.

Recommendation 22: Additional funding should be set aside for the Local Plan reserve as £3m over the next three years is likely to be inadequate.

Recommendation 23: When the Planning Service is reviewed, adequate resources should be allocated to enable an effective and timely response to planning enforcement issues.

Recommendation 24: Development of a parking strategy, including how to increase capacity, should be a matter of priority for Buckinghamshire Council after the elections in May 2020.

Recommendation 25: A review should be undertaken ahead of the parking enforcement procurement, to investigate how the Council's on street and off street parking enforcement can be integrated to deliver an improved service and to review future requirements in light of the new parking strategy, to ensure quality service delivery and value for money.

Recommendation 26: During 2020-21, as Community Access Points are reviewed, consideration should be given to their future funding.

Recommendation 27: There should be continued investment in the Social Work Academy, which utilises the apprenticeship levy and will provide more stability in the Adult Social Care workforce and positive outcomes for

clients.

Recommendation 28: There should be further investment in the ASYE Academy to enable Children's Services to recruit and retain more qualified staff, which will stabilise the workforce and lead to improved outcomes for children and families. In turn, this should also support the pace of change required for Ofsted Improvement.

Recommendation 29: A specific line should be included in the budget for Special Expenses.

Recommendation 30: Voluntary sector organisations which provide vital community services at minimal cost should be nurtured and a full review carried out to establish how they have been funded to date and how grants and other funding from Buckinghamshire Council should be offered going forward to deliver improved outcomes for residents.

Recommendation 31: A strategy for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping should be developed as a priority for Buckinghamshire Council.

Recommendation 32: A consistent approach to licensing for HMOs and Taxis should be applied across the Country as soon as practicable after 1st April 2020.

Recommendation 33: The evaluation of the Wycombe Street Warden scheme should be reported to the new Cabinet as part of a wider review of Community Safety/Anti-Social Behaviour.

Members were provided with background and reasons for the recommendations. In response to queries the following points were noted:

- It was reported that further information regarding the 10 year capital programme had been requested from the Section 151 officer. This would provide detailed information on projects and how these would be funded. Concern had been raised regarding expected development contributions and budget risks.
- The affordable housing recommendation was for staff to be able to afford housing locally and encourage recruitment. It was confirmed that a larger budget was required regarding social/affordable housing to enable a better package.
- A member was concerned regarding the recommendation for increased car parking and the aim for the council to be carbon neutral by 2035. In response it was noted that the Car Parking strategy would be to look at parking spaces across the county and to allow the new council to be clear and specific about what was required over the localities in the county. This would also take into account current pollution problems in the county.
- Regarding the request for additional funding it was recognised that some changes in the budget would have to be made to accommodate the recommendations and flexibility would be required.

- It was suggested that the community access points be reviewed after the first year. This could enable redundant council offices to be sold in the future as office space and therefore save any building requirements on green belt land.
- It was noted that unknown future grants and costs were included on the risk register.
- Additional information that had been requested at the Budget TFG meetings would be circulated to the Group.
- It was noted that the recommendations should be kept general until adopted and developed in the new council's policy.
- It was believed that the budget could accommodate a lot of potential savings.
- The aim for the recommendations was to provide a better budget and council for residents.
- Members were informed that in response to a survey, members of the public named climate change as a priority above pot holes.
- Year one of the budget was considered robust but year two and three required further consideration.
- Regarding CIL contributions, information was needed regarding how the expected forecast in year three was to be achieved and further detailed work was required. It was noted that close management was also required on how income would be managed with regards to the affordability of future capital programme projects.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked the officers and members for all their work on the budget scrutiny and the recommendations. It was noted that the Chairman of the Budget TFG, Councillor John Gladwin had been involved in the formulation of all the recommendations. The Chairman also noted that the budget was robust and covered all three years however years two and three needed to be revisited due to the unknown factors which the recommendations outlined for consideration by the Shadow Executive.

7. Shadow Executive Forward Plan

Members noted the Shadow Executive Forward Plan.

8. Committee Work Programme

The Chairman requested that the spending protocol and a further Implementation Plan update be provided at the next meeting. He suggested that the draft Constitution be emailed to the Committee in advance of consideration by the Shadow Executive. He requested that if Members had any further suggestions for items then to email him directly.

A member requested the draft Parish Charter be provided to the Committee and that the Budget TFG recommendations also be circulated. The Chairman explained that a detailed report regarding the recommendations was being presented to the Shadow Executive and the additional information requested from officers would be circulated to the TFG members.

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 3 March at 6.30pm to be held at the Oculus, Aylesbury Vale District Council.

Following the meeting and in agreement with the Chairman the date of the
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meeting would be amended to take place on **Wednesday 4 March at 6.30pm**, also to be held at the Oculus, Aylesbury Vale District Council.

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)

10. Risk Register

The Committee received an update on the Unitary Implementation Risk Register. Sarah Ashmead provided specific information on 13 risks and confirmed that these were regularly monitored by the Programme Office and the Chief Executive's Group. Regarding red risks it was noted that these were on track but required close monitoring.

Members discussed and commented on the Risk Register, and received clarification on a number of points. It was requested that the Risk Register be provided to the Committee at the next meeting.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

K Sutherland	Committee and Governance Manager BCC
J Durkan	Democratic Services Officer
S Ashmead	Monitoring Officer & Deputy Chief Executive