

SHADOW EXECUTIVE

TUESDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 2019

Present: Councillor Martin Tett (Chairman)

Councillors K Wood (Vice-Chairman), J Chilver, A Cranmer, I Darby, T Green, C Harriss, P Hogan, D Martin, N Naylor, M Shaw, W Whyte, G Williams, F Wilson, M Appleyard, M Winn and P Irwin

Also in Attendance:

Councillors R Scott and R Stuchbury

1 **Apologies**

The Leader advised Shadow Executive Members that item 6, Shadow Scrutiny Work Programme had been withdrawn as there was a need to meet with the Chairman of the Shadow Scrutiny Committee to discuss the programme prior to it being brought to a Shadow Executive meeting.

Apologies had been received from S Bowles (M Winn deputising), A Macpherson (P Irwin deputising) and B Chapple (M Appleyard deputising). The Leader advised Members that B Chapple would be off for an extended period due to a broken leg and passed on his best wishes from all Members of the Shadow Executive. The Leader confirmed that D Dhillon would become a lead member of the Shadow Executive and C Harriss would take over B Chapple's Portfolio role as Environment Lead. The Leader would confirm following the meeting if a deputy portfolio lead would be appointed as part of the interim arrangements.

2 **Minutes**

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2019 were AGREED as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

3 **Declarations of interest**

There were none.

4 Question Time

Question 1 Scrutiny Work Programme

As Chairman of the Shadow Authority, I had intended to ask a question about the proposed Work Programme of the Scrutiny Committee, but I note that agenda item 6 has now been withdrawn.

Turning instead to agenda item 10, Programme Update, I note the volume of work that has been undertaken by the Executive to date and the work that is scheduled for the next five months until vesting date. In particular, para 3.11 refers to 128 critical 'must haves', which need to be implemented by 1 April 2020.

Given that our staff are trying to maintain all existing services in the current District and County Councils and deliver on the implementation programme, do you believe that you have sufficient resources to deliver on this timetable, incorporating what appears to be an extended Scrutiny function?

Response – The transition to the formation of the Buckinghamshire Council on 1 April 2020 is utilising existing resources from across all five existing councils in order to run the Programme Management Office (PMO). Admiration and gratitude is given to all staff working long hours. Progress is discussed on a regular basis with the Chief Executive of the new council and there is confidence that there are the right skills and knowledge in the PMO. There are regular monitoring updates to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the use of internal audit to review the work being done and external resources are being used as critical friends. This is a challenging time for staff as they take on additional work alongside business as usual. The Shadow Executive would like to discuss the scrutiny workload with the Shadow Scrutiny Committee in order to ensure there is the right balance between a focus on delivering the new council and at the same time ensuring legitimate scrutiny takes place.

Question 2 Managing the Council Tax

I would like to ask what plans the Shadow Executive is putting in place to manage the collection of council tax within the new Buckinghamshire Council. Presently, all the council tax is being collected by the four district councils, and is adequately managed in those areas. What work is being undertaken to prepare for the oversight and management of council tax collection within the Buckinghamshire Council, and what preparation is being put in place to ensure that parish and town councils' council tax will be distributed back to those parishes both efficiently and in accordance with best practice? Meanwhile ensuring that there is no delay in parish and town councils receiving their precept in a timely and efficient manner within the new local authority, and enabling them to pay their staff and cover their expenses which they had budgeted for within their precepts.

Response - The process for collecting Council Tax will not change on the 1st of April 2020. The Unitary Authority will continue to use their existing software for the production of bills, receipting income, account reconciliations, and production of management reports. All Councils have discussed the change of legal structure with their current banking providers and no new risks are created by the structural change;

a change of name on existing bank accounts can be achieved. A working group is exploring the harmonisation of the cash receipting system (e.g. processes to receive payments); this should not create any additional risks than current arrangements. Parish Council precepts will not be affected by the move to a Unitary. The Parishes will receive their precepts in instalments as per the arrangement agreed between the former District Councils and the Parishes / Towns. Typically, the precept is split into two advance payments, i.e. April and September.

Question 3 Paying Council Tax by Direct Debit

Many Buckinghamshire residents pay their Council Taxes by direct debit. These taxes are currently paid directly to District Councils and the Direct Debit Guarantee requires that changes in the amount, date or frequency of payments be notified to payers with at least 10 days of notice. If it will be the new Buckinghamshire Council that levies the Council Tax on our county for 2020/21, what plans have been made to ensure that adequate notice is given to residents of the changes in their direct debits or that new Direct Debit agreements are signed?

***Response** - There are no planned changes to Council Tax Direct Debit payment dates. The Banks have confirmed that existing Direct Debit Mandates will remain in place and there is no need to ask residents to sign a new agreement. Residents will be notified of the new instalment amounts in their Council Tax Bills that will be issued in March in the usual way.*

5 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)

Members considered the 28 Day Notice of executive decisions due to be taken. The Leader advised that the forward plan was under regular review and urged residents to view the forward plan on the website for the latest version.

Members discussed the need for them to receive a report on the transition for local community and voluntary groups. Members highlighted the reliance on the sector to support the delivery of services and that it was also critical for them to understand any changes in order to set their budgets.

The Chief Executive highlighted that she held regular meetings with voluntary sector chief executive's group and there was no intention to destabilise those groups. It was agreed that a paper would be added to a future meeting of the Shadow Executive to give an update on progress, to reassure and recognise the work the sector does and that the current relationships will transfer along with the financial support.

ACTION: R Goodes, PMO Manager

RESOLVED: The Shadow Executive NOTED the forward plan.

6 Scrutiny Work Programme - ITEM WITHDRAWN

7 Consequential Parliamentary Order

Members were asked to consider a report that highlighted certain rights, functions and legislative amendments which needed to be addressed as a consequence of the creation of a unitary council in Buckinghamshire and included in a statutory Order made by the Secretary of State which would come into force on 1 April 2020.

Members were asked to agree the proposed list of matters or to make additions/amendments. Matters included:

- Pension Fund Transfer
- Charter Rights for Markets and Fairs
- Charter Trustees
- Amendment of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003
- Chilterns AONB Conservation Board
- Lords-Lieutenant, Sheriff and Port Authorities
- Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens and Farnham Park

RESOLVED: Members AGREED the following recommendations:

- 1. That matters to be included in a Supplementary Provision and Miscellaneous Amendments Order as a consequence of the Buckinghamshire Structural Changes Order 2019 be noted and submitted to MHCLG.**
- 2. That the Interim Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chief Executive be authorised to submit any further matters that may arise to MHCLG for consideration and take all actions necessary to progress the drafting of the Order.**

8 Branding

Members were asked to consider a report that sought their agreement on the new brand identity for Buckinghamshire Council. This included approval of the logo, the associated colour palette and the font to be used on the new council's assets. It was noted that a separate report known as the New Branding Strategy would be completed at the end of October 2019 which would identify items and assets that would be recommended for rebranding in readiness for or from 1 April 2020.

Members appreciated the work that had gone into the creation of the new branding and the use of in-house resource which had meant costs had been kept to a minimum.

Some Members were disappointed with the blue colour of the proposed logo as they felt it was not very interesting and was reminiscent of the Buckinghamshire County Council agendas. The Branding Lead Officer and Member stated that there had been vast debates on colour choice at the focus groups and feedback had suggested vibrant colours to be more childlike and after testing on various assets it came across better monotone. There was a pallet of colours that could be used for other uses i.e. presentations. The choice of blue also reflected a move away from the colour green which was currently featured across all five existing councils.

The Leader highlighted that the branding was a unification of the various historic councils Buckinghamshire had and combined the swan, trees and rivers that presented both north and south of the county.

A Member requested that there was a clear launch of new branding which explained clearly what it symbolised. It was also requested that the branding be launched to all schools.

ACTION: E Denley, Communications Workstream Deputy Lead

Following questions from Members it was confirmed that a consultation on the new branding had taken place, but was carried out over a short period time in order to hit implementation deadlines. The consultation had included Members, staff and resident focus groups. It was confirmed that staff from all five existing councils had been included in the roadshows that had taken place in the summer.

RESOLVED:

Members APPROVED the proposed logo as the new brand identity for Buckinghamshire Council.

9 Spend Protocol Update

Members were asked to consider a report that sought Member's approval to a general consent which would allow the existing five councils to conduct their current business without referral to the Shadow Executive within specific limits as set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

Members AGREED the general consent as set out at Appendix A in the report.

10 Programme Update

An update was provided to Members on the progress being made with the programme that was establishing the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council. An overview was provided on the confirmation of Portfolio Holders, the further discussions required on the scrutiny work programme and the 128 'must haves' for day one which were regularly reviewed and were making good progress. Future key decisions were highlighted and the communications delivery programme that was regularly reviewed.

The Leader announced the following Tier 2 appointments for the new Buckinghamshire Council, following a nationwide search and rigorous selection process.

- **Sarah Ashmead** had been appointed as the Deputy Chief Executive.
- **Richard Barker** had been appointed as the Corporate Director for Communities.
- **Joe O'Sullivan** had been appointed as the Corporate Director for Resources.
- **Gill Quinton** has been confirmed as the Corporate Director for Adult Services and Health.
- **Ian Thompson** had been appointed as the Corporate Director for Planning, Growth and Sustainability
- **Tolis Vouyioukas** has been confirmed as the Corporate Director Children's Services.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Monitoring Officer role would now transfer to Sarah Ashmead as part of her new role as Deputy Chief Executive. Members

expressed their thanks to Cath Whitehead who had undertaken the role in the transition period.

11 **Date of next meeting**

12 November 2019.