

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 5 JANUARY 2016

Councillors Present: Steve Ardagh-Walter, Paul Bryant (Substitute) (In place of Virginia von Celsing), Anthony Chadley, Dave Goff, Clive Hooker, Mike Johnston (Vice-Chairman), Rick Jones, Alan Macro, Ian Morrin, Richard Somner, Emma Webster (Chairman) and Laszlo Zverko

Also Present: Catalin Bogos (Performance Research Consultation Manager), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Mark Edwards (Head of Highways and Transport), Gabrielle Esplin (Finance Manager (Capital and Treasury Management)), Gary Lugg (Head of Planning & Countryside), Bryan Lyttle (Planning & Transport Policy Manager) and Rod Mercer (Chief Accountant (Operations)), Charlene Myers (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: David Lowe and Councillor Virginia von Celsing

Councillor(s) Absent:

PART I

42. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2015 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

- Councillor Mike Johnston being shown as attending.

43. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

44. Actions from previous Minutes

The updates were noted by the Commission.

45. West Berkshire Forward Plan 13 January 2016 to 30 April 2016

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan (Agenda Item 5) for the period covering 13 January 2016 to 30 April 2016.

Councillor Mike Johnston asked whether item ID3069 (Review of 'First Step – Next Step' Equity Loan Scheme related to the proposed topic for scrutiny. Andy Day advised that he would investigate and report back to the Commission with a response.

Resolved that

- 1) Andy Day to confirm whether ID3069 (Review of 'First Step – Next Step' Equity Loan Scheme related to the proposed topic for scrutiny.
- 2) The Forward Plan be noted.

46. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme for 2015/2016. Members were asked to consider including item OSMC/15/176 (Delivery of the Council Strategy – Priority 5: Good

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at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults) for discussion at the next meeting of the Commission.

Resolved that:

- Item OSMC/17/176 be considered for discussion at the next meeting.
- The work programme be noted.

47. Items Called-in following the Executive on 17 December 2015

No items were called-in following the last Executive meeting.

48. Consideration of Urgent Items

There were no Urgent Items to consider.

49. Councillor Call for Action

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

50. Petitions

There were no petitions received at the meeting.

51. Delivery of the Council Strategy

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning the Quarter two In Depth Performance Report – Council Strategy Priority 4 (Infrastructure).

Andy Day introduced the report to Members and reminded the Commission that they had requested a more in depth analysis of the overall performance status using the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress of the Council Priority 4 – ‘ Deliver or enable key infrastructure projects in relation to roads, rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy.

Members were informed that there were 18 measures used to monitor progress and outturns were available for 10. Of the remaining measures, 3 were reported once a year and a further 5 were unavailable for the publication of the report (latest data for Quarter One was available instead).

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter asked whether the KPIs had been set nationally or locally. Catalin Bogos, Research, Consultation and Performance Manager, advised that KPIs were identified within the service which were subsequently reviewed by the Executive and the Task and Finish Group created by the Commission. He stated that national KPIs were not provided since there was no longer a National Data Set.

Councillor Alan Macro asked how Item SLE2pc01 could be considered ‘on track’ in light of the numerous delays. Gary Lugg, Head of Planning and Countryside, advised that the KPI monitored the delivery of a master plan for Theale and not the component parts of the project itself. He stated that the plan had been developed but there continued to be some delays on site which were outside the control of the Council. The Council would continue to work with partner agencies to deliver the changes but progress was directly influenced by Network Rail.

Councillor Emma Webster suggested that the KPI should be amended to reflect the completion of the master plan and provide an alternative target to monitor the progress of development on site – considering the degree of influence available to the Council. Gary Lugg agreed that the KPI would be amended accordingly. Bryan Lyttle, Planning and

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Transport Policy Manager, advised that the site was reclassified from First Great Western Trains to Network Rail which caused delays in the overall process to date. Councillor Webster asked whether the Commission could assist with influencing progress. Gary Lugg thanked the Commission for the offer of assistance but felt that the matter was progressing. Councillor Macro stated that a number of local residents felt that progress had been very slow.

Councillor Paul Bryant asked why the satellite solution had been considered in response to item SLE2ict01. Officers stated that it was not practical to provide cabling infrastructure to every property – in particular where they were remote, lone properties. Andy Day advised Members that a large portion of funding had been provided by Central Government to fund the project.

Councillor Rick Jones asked for clarification in terms of SLE2pc03. Bryan Lyttle advised that, in order to introduce Community Infrastructure Levies, a Viability Assessment must be conducted first. He stated that the assessment would be conducted by the end of the year which would enable the consideration of any changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy. Members were informed that the findings would be presented to the Portfolio Holder and the Planning Advisory Group. The Commission agreed that they would also like to see the report.

Councillor Mike Johnston asked whether an assessment had been conducted to consider local flood alleviation needs. Mark Edwards advised that the 2015/2016 programme of works included projects to address those issues highlighted through the 2013/2014 severe weather incident. He advised that the service closely monitored water levels throughout the District whilst focusing on the delivery of the agreed programme. Members heard that there were 21 projects contained within the current programme which detailed larger, capital schemes. However, smaller scale improvements were carried out on a daily basis – clearing gullies/drainage clearance etc.

Members discussed how they could help promote self help messages in terms of flood alleviation – in particular around clearing areas to minimise flood risks. Officers agreed that it was a good idea and discussions had taken place to consider the most effective method of promoting such messages.

In response to questions raised by Councillor Jones, Gary Lugg advised that an audit of open space had taken place to identify green infrastructure within the District.

Resolved that:

- 1) The Commission have sight of the report in response to item SLE2pc3.
- 2) The report be noted.

52. Revenue and capital budget reports - Quarter Two

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 12) concerning the Quarter two Financial Performance Report (2015-2016).

Rod Mercer, Chief Accountant, introduced the report to Members and advised that the forecast revenue position was an overspend of £0.5million, which was a decrease of £0.4 million from Quarter One and mainly a result of the amount used directly from reserves to support the Ofsted Improvement Plan.

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Members heard that the Communities Directorate was reviewing spending plans to mitigate the over spend by year end. This was primarily a result of the reported overspend within the Education Service (£0.3 million) and the Children and Families Service (£0.7 million).

Rod Mercer advised that the Council remained in a challenging financial environment, and was faced with delivering savings of just under £6m, as well as addressing significant in year pressures in the Communities Directorate. The Council was taking steps to maintain financial discipline and ensure that savings are deliverable.

Councillor Laszlo Zverko asked for clarification in respect of point 2.2 (3) - *£454k from capitalising equipment*. Gabrielle Esplin, Finance Manager (Capital & Treasury Mgt), advised that the service previously contributed towards a store of equipment from a central store. This had previously been understood to be a rental arrangement which was considered to be revenue spend. A recent review concluded that the Council *owned* a portion of the goods due to its financial contribution and was therefore making use of its own assets – which should be considered Capital. Gabrielle Esplin advised that the items would depreciate over time and this had been factored into the purchase costs and resell value.

Councillor Alan Macro asked how the Council could increase the rate of items returned after use. He suggested that service users may not know how to return items and this could cause unnecessary delays. Gabrielle Esplin suggested that the service area would be better placed to answer the question.

Councillor Macro asked for an update position in terms of the Risk Reserve Fund which had previously been reported as a remaining balance of £220k. He had previously stated that he felt this exposed the Council to unnecessary levels of risk and he was keen to know the extent of contingency planning undertaken by the service.

Councillor Macro highlighted that there were unexpected funds available within the Culture and Environment Protection Service – according to point 3.4(3). Gabrielle Esplin stated that future development work on the Padworth Recycling Site was planned and that some funding needed to be retained to allow for claims in connection with the contract for the original preparation of the waste site. Members requested an update position in terms of the work at the Padworth Recycling Site and re-profiling of Capital.

Resolved that:

- (1) Adult Social Care be asked to consider whether the Council could do anything more to increase the rate of equipment returned after use from the central store.
- (2) The Culture and Environment Protection Service be asked to provide an update position in respect of the Waste Site Budget allocated for the development of the Padworth Recycling Site.
- (3) The report be noted.

53. Key Accountable performance Report

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 13) concerning the Key Accountable Performance Report.

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Andy Day, Head of Strategic Support, introduced the report to Members. He advised that the report appraised progress against 27 key accountable measures and activities aligned to the objectives set out by the Council.

Of the 27 reported measures, outturns were available for 21. Those not available were 4 which were reported once a year and 2 which were unavailable at the time of the publication of the report.

To date, 13 were reported as 'green' (or on track to be delivered/ achieved by year end). 8 were reported as 'amber' (behind schedule, but still expected to achieve or complete the measure/ activity by year end). Currently there were no measures reported as 'red'. Those measures reported as 'amber' were detailed within point 1.6 of the report.

Andy Day stated that the report reflected a good position overall. He explained that services had the option to amend the measures which were reported to enable a realistic picture of performance but there were no changes requested by the end of quarter two.

Councillor Alan Macro was concerned to read that some of the 'amber' items were far from achieving the set target and had seemingly taken a long while to make any degree of progress. Catalin Bogos advised that the service area considered their ability to achieve the target based on local intelligence. He explained that although some reports indicated that the results were below the targets, the services stressed that the work had been completed but there was a time lapse between updating statistics. Catalin Bogos reassured the Commission that he was supporting services to identify suitable ways to measure performance efficiently. Councillor Macro acknowledged that some services were under immense pressure to complete their daily tasks but he also stated that it was important to update reports. However, this clearly added to existing pressures.

Councillor Steve Chadley asked how the Key Performance Measures were agreed and what processes were in place to challenge them. Catalin Bogos advised that each service area considered measures against their objectives which fed into the priorities outlined within the Council Strategy. The Research, Performance and Consultation Team supported the development of the measures and advised colleagues around how they could report against them effectively – ensuring that the process did not require extensive, additional resources. The proposed measures were then considered by Senior Management, the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (through the establishment of a Task and Finish Group).

Councillor Emma Webster advised that the OSMC Task and Finish Group considered the proposals in terms of achievability and appropriateness. She explained that some measures were reported once a year/specific points during the course of the year and others were cumulative measures; it was important that report included a mixture of measures.

Resolved that:

- (1) The report be noted.

54. Car Parking in West Berkshire

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning Car Parking in West Berkshire.

Andy Day, Head of Strategic Support, introduced the report to Members. He reminded Members that the Terms of Reference were accepted by the Commission at the meeting held on 15th September 2015 which proposed that a review of car parking across West Berkshire be conducted.

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The review considered arrangements for off-street and on-street parking across the district, how they were proposed, implemented and operated – along with any charges incurred through their use. The Task Group proposed nine recommendations which had been detailed within the report.

Councillor Mike Johnston, Chairman of the Task Group, extended his thanks to all those who supported the review. He explained that, through the course of the meetings, it became apparent that car parking across the District was well managed and coordinated. The management process included an annual review of car parking provisions and this considered the developing impact of on-street/ off-street parking.

The Task Group was pleased to see that car parking charges were priced competitively, albeit that the decision could be considered unpopular at times, as the generated funds which could be reinvested into the local highways.

The Task Group suggested that the Car Parking Strategy was reviewed to consider how proposed developments might introduce new challenges around the longer term car parking needs, although it was acknowledged by the group that the review could entail costs.

Mark Edwards, Head of Highways and Engineering, echoed the comments made by Councillor Johnston - he too felt that the review was useful. Mark Edwards advised that the key issue, in his opinion, was the potential lack of car parking spaces if all the known, proposed planning developments received approval. He advised that the Service continued to consider the best and smartest way to make best use of road space.

Councillor Rick Jones advised that the Task Group discussed the advantages of notifying residents of the Council Car Parking Strategy and it was considered that a leaflet could be developed to provide further detail.

Councillor Anthony Chadley asked whether it was a criminal offence to park a vehicle on the pavement. Mark Edwards advised that it was an offence but Councils did not have the authority to enforce the matter. He explained that, where it was best use of the road, parking on pavements could be permitted and these were clearly indicated where appropriate.

Councillor Alan Macro was concerned to hear that the proposed Market Street Development included car parking for only 60% of the properties – he considered that this was against Planning Policy. Mark Edwards stated that he would liaise with colleagues within the Planning Policy department and provide a response to the Commission.

Councillor Macro was equally concerned to read point 30 within the report: *An increase in the number of locations that are subject to on-street parking charges would appear to present an opportunity for the Council to generate additional revenue.* Councillor Emma Webster stated that this was merely an observation from the Task Group and reiterated previous comments that funds would be re-invested to meet the ongoing needs of the local highway.

Councillor Macro made reference to recommendation 7 and suggested that it could become increasingly difficult to monitor permitted parking in restricted areas.

Members noted that the Council already had a parking payment system available through the use of a mobile phone application. The Commission accepted the recommendation but noted that the service should consider consistency of systems/ integration with those already in use to avoid unnecessary confusion. Councillor David Goff stated that not everyone would have access to the mobile payment applications and for that reason it was important to make sure alternative methods were available.

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Members accepted the recommendations as proposed within the report but suggested that Officers checked the intention of point 9 as this service was already in place:

Resolved that:

- (1) Officers check the percentage of car parking allocated as part of the proposed Market Street development and report back to the Commission.
- (2) Officers check the intention of recommendation 9.
- (3) The report be noted and all recommendations accepted subject to (a) and (b) above.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.50 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature