

# **EXECUTIVE**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**

### **THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2019**

**Councillors Present:** Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Jeff Cant, Hilary Cole, Lynne Doherty, Rick Jones, Richard Somner and Howard Woollaston

**Also Present:** Paul Anstey (Head of Public Protection and Culture), John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Head of Legal and Strategic Support), Tess Ethelston (Group Executive (Cons)), Tandra Forster (Head of Adult Social Care), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Olivia Lewis (Group Executive (Lib Dem)), Carolyn Richardson (Civil Contingencies Manager), Councillor Adrian Abbs, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Carlyne Culver, Councillor Owen Jeffery, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor David Marsh and Councillor Steve Masters

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Lee Dillon and Councillor Erik Pattenden

#### **PART I**

##### **46. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

##### **47. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Adrian Abbs declared an interest in Agenda Item 7(e) (his question relating to the Sandford development) by virtue of the fact that he was Ward Member for the area, but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate.

##### **48. Public Questions**

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

(a) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Mr Alan Pearce**

A question standing in the name of Mr Alan Pearce on the subject of whether the A339 road junction for the new access into the London Road Industrial Estate had been constructed with a sustainable drainage system, was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(b) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing by Mr Paul Morgan**

A question standing in the name of Mr Paul Morgan on the subject of the availability of a Step 5 ground in Newbury was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing.

(c) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing by Mr Jack Harkness**

A question standing in the name of Mr Jack Harkness on the subject of playing facilities for Newbury Ladies FC, should they achieve promotion to the FA Women's National

## EXECUTIVE - 17 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

League, was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing.

(d) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Wellbeing by Mr Jason Braidwood**

A question standing in the name of Mr Jason Braidwood on the subject of children's football training venues in Newbury was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Wellbeing.

(e) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Wellbeing by Mr Lee McDougall**

A question standing in the name of Mr Lee McDougall on the subject of how the Council was meeting the aim and objective in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in relation to supporting residents to be more physically active, achieve a healthy weight and eat a healthy diet was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Wellbeing.

(f) **Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Dr Julie Wintrup**

A question standing in the name of Dr Julie Wintrup on the subject of when and in what detail would the assessment of the effects of a no deal Brexit be shared with local residents and businesses was answered by the Leader of the Council.

(g) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance by Dr Julie Wintrup**

A question standing in the name of Dr Julie Wintrup on the subject of how many families and individuals were living in West Berkshire who were considered to have No Recourse to Public Funds was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

(h) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Dr Julie Wintrup**

A question standing in the name of Dr Julie Wintrup on the subject of the Council's policy on free school meals entitlement of children from families that had No Recourse to Public Funds was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People.

(i) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Ms Caroline French Blake:**

A question standing in the name of Ms Caroline French Blake on the subject of how and when the Council would reverse the 97% cuts in Youth Services since 2010, and re-establish or preferably exceed its 2010 funding level to meet the urgent need of young people for support was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People.

### 49. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

### 50. **Key Accountable Performance 2019/20: Quarter One (EX3713)**

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 6) concerning quarter one outturns for the core business measures which monitored performance against the 2019/20 Council Performance Framework. The report sought to provide assurance that the core business areas set out in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 were being managed effectively and presented, by exception, those measures which were predicted to be 'amber' (behind schedule) or 'red' (not achievable) at the end of the quarter, and provided information on remedial action taken and the impact of that action.

## EXECUTIVE - 17 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

Councillor Howard Woollaston commended the report to the Executive. While the Council would by no means be complacent, performance was in a good place and much was owed to officers for their continued hard work.

Quarter one results showed that performance levels were in line to achieve the end of year targets for the majority of the measures of the core business areas. An analysis of the measures RAG rated Amber or Red, showed that actions had been implemented to improve performance, which in one of the two cases was just below the target set – average number of days taken to make a full decision on changes in a benefit claimants circumstances.

The area of underperformance concerning the timeliness of reviews of clients with an Adult Social Care long term service (LTS) had already been referred by the Executive at Q4 for more in depth scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC).

Councillor Woollaston highlighted that there had been a decrease in demand in Q1 in Children and Family Services; and an increase in demand in Adult Social Care services which had a particular impact on the Locality Teams.

Issues encountered with major ICT projects had been or were in the process of being resolved.

Councillor Graham Bridgman highlighted points relating to Adult Social Care. He welcomed the good performance reported regarding reablement/ rehabilitation following discharge of clients from hospital. Excellent performance had also been maintained for the timeliness in conducting financial assessments despite the number and complexity of financial assessments and reviews increasing.

Councillor Bridgman next made reference to adult safeguarding enquiries. The number of enquiries opened, whilst below the previous two quarters, was still 10.6% higher than the same quarter last year. Councillor Bridgman clarified that these enquiries related to externally run services and did not relate to the Council's own services. The Council held safeguarding responsibility for all its residents in receipt of social care services including from external providers. The practice followed by the Council on receiving a report was to hold a safeguarding enquiry for each individual client rather than the external establishment concerned which was the practice employed in other areas.

There had been a particular increase in reports relating to two external providers and it had therefore been necessary to open safeguarding enquiries.

Councillor Bridgman very much welcomed the fact that people were reporting their concerns.

As already explained, reviews of people with a LTS was reported 'red'. Councillor Bridgman acknowledged that the numbers provided in the report were disappointing: 61.1% at Q1 against the 70% target. However, Councillor Bridgman was able to report an improvement. The data made available in October 2019 showed that performance had increased to 69.01%. This news was welcomed, it showed the service was moving in the right direction. Improvements had been aided by the changes made by the service to the methodology used for conducting reviews. He looked forward to presenting this latest information to the forthcoming OSMC.

Councillor Bridgman also reported the outcome of work to identify the longest period of time clients were waiting for a review (worse case). The longest waits only concerned one or two clients. At June 2019 this was 30 months, but this period of time had since reduced to 23 months worse case.

## EXECUTIVE - 17 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

Councillor Hilary Cole drew the Executive's attention to the graph reporting the number of qualifying households on the Common Housing Register (page 37 of the agenda papers). This contained the Q1 comment that the backlog had been reduced to approximately five weeks. However, Councillor Cole was able to share the excellent news that this backlog had been completely removed. She gave thanks to Janet Weekes and the Housing Team for clearing this backlog. Councillor Lynne Doherty added her thanks for this.

Councillor Richard Somner took the opportunity to commend the hard work undertaken by Highways officers. He particularly highlighted that 98.8% of pothole and road repairs were being completed within the 28 day deadline; the successful prosecution of contractors for the disruption caused by the failure to manage traffic signals in Parkway at the beginning of the year; and the excellent work in engaging with parishes on road safety and speed management. This included ongoing discussions that had the potential for parishes to form their own speed watch programmes.

Councillor Jeff Brooks noted the expectation in paragraph 2.16 of the supporting information (providing benefits) that the service would be on target at Q2. He queried the level of confidence that this would be the case. Councillor Woollaston explained that staff had returned from sickness absence and the time taken for making decisions on benefit claims was being reduced. The expectation was to be on target by Q2.

Councillor Alan Macro pointed out that the production of the Local Plan was delayed and it was therefore 'red'. He questioned why this was not mentioned in the report.

Councillor Macro also questioned the absence of information on affordable housing completions and homeless prevention. These were both reported 'red' at Q4 2018/19.

Councillor Cole explained that the number of affordable homes was reported annually. Councillor Macro acknowledged this point but highlighted that affordable homes data was not available at Q4. Councillor Cole gave an assurance that this data would be made available and provided in a future report. There had been a delay due to sickness absence in Planning Policy.

Councillor Cole then reported that homeless prevention was working particularly well and was not a 'red' indicator. A Homelessness Strategy was being produced and would soon be circulated for consultation prior to being considered by the Executive.

Councillor Macro next referred to the Corporate Programme section of the report which explained that 14 infrastructure projects were currently underway, but the progress being made was mixed. He queried which of the projects were behind schedule and the actions taken to improve this. It was noted that the Corporate Programme would be presented to the OSMC on 29 October 2019 when this further detail could be considered.

Councillor Carolyn Culver queried whether the delay in reviews for people receiving a LTS impacted on the care they received. Councillor Bridgman advised that this should not be the case. He commented that the team knew their clients well and he was confident that reviews were targeted to those in most need. As well as planned service reviews, unplanned reviews were also undertaken if a care worker/carer felt this was needed. Delays should not impact on care and Councillor Bridgman was not aware of issues having arisen where there had been a delay. However, efforts would continue to be made to reduce delays.

Councillor Culver noted a continued increase in the number of empty business rated properties. She asked if this had been investigated and what action was being taken to reduce this number. Councillor Cole explained that there was awareness of the situation and efforts were being made. A number of the properties were retail. There was also some inadequate office accommodation which was difficult to put into use as better quality accommodation was being sought by businesses.

## EXECUTIVE - 17 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

Councillor Owen Jeffery noted, in paragraph 2.18 of the report, that the number and complexity of assessments was increasing and he asked Councillor Bridgman to comment on that. Councillor Bridgman clarified that these were financial assessments to assess whether clients could contribute to the cost of their care. There were a number of complexities to consider that made this a challenge, such as capital depleters and the ability to assess an individual's finances and assets.

Councillor Jeffery commended the efforts of the service. He was particularly pleased to note that performance on LTS reviews was close to the 70% target. However, he questioned whether there was confidence that this positive direction of travel could be maintained. Councillor Bridgman was confident that performance levels would be maintained and he would be working with officers to ensure that. He had already congratulated the officers concerned on this improvement.

Councillor Adrian Abbs turned to major ICT projects and asked why 7 of the 14 projects were behind schedule. Councillor Woollaston explained that any ICT issue fell within the ICT grouping. However, for many projects, there was minimal ICT involvement, i.e. those involving Gigaclear. He felt this gave an unfair poor impression of the service.

Councillor Abbs felt that further detail was required in the report to explain this. He queried the issues with Gigaclear. Councillor Woollaston explained that there had been a range of issues but the majority had been resolved. He was confident these issues would be fully resolved by the spring.

Councillor Abbs stated that he would like to be more involved to better understand the issues being faced. Councillor Woollaston stated he would welcome this input.

Councillor Dominic Boeck added that officers were very open to discussing projects/programmes with Members if this was required.

Councillor Doherty queried whether further detail should be provided in the report to explain why, for example, major ICT projects were reported as amber. Nick Carter explained that those officers who produced the performance report and its appendices were also currently working on the Council Strategy Delivery Plan impacting on their capacity. Further detail could be provided in future reports.

Councillor Steve Masters referred to the minutes of the last Executive on 5 September 2019 when the MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) approach was praised. He queried whether the approach would be continuing and whether this was likely to be affected by the work of Ridgeway Associates.

Councillor Cole explained that the Ridgeway Associates report was due out for consultation. The structure of the Housing Team was being reviewed following the peer review, but the MEAM approach was being incorporated into all aspects of housing work. Councillor Cole took the opportunity to advise that the number of rough sleepers was six. It was hoped that these individuals could be housed, potentially via the Housing First scheme.

Councillor Masters followed this by asking if the necessary resources would continue to be in place for this work. Councillor Cole advised that the work continued. Central Government funding had been received, but consideration was being given to contingency plans should this funding cease. She continued by explaining that funding bids were submitted for eligible sums and she was unaware of bids being refused, with funding awarded at least in part.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- Progress against the core business measures be noted;

## EXECUTIVE - 17 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES

- Those areas reported as 'amber' or 'red' had been reviewed to ensure that appropriate actions were in place and were making a difference, in particular for the measure relating to the timeliness of reviews of clients with ASC long term service which had been referred to the OSMC by the Executive at Q4.
- The decrease in demand in Q1 in Children and Family Services be noted.
- The increase in demand and its subsequent impact on performance and financial commitment in Adult Social Care services, in particular on the Locality Teams, be noted.

**Other options considered:** None.

### 51. **Members' Questions**

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

(a) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Alan Macro**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of the Council being more responsive to requests for speed limit changes from Councillors and members of the public was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

(b) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Carlyne Culver**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of whether the Council's draft Environment Strategy would be shared at the conference on Monday 28 October was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

(c) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Carlyne Culver**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of how the Council would determine the questions asked in its online public consultation about the Environment Strategy was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

(d) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Carlyne Culver**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Carlyne Culver on the subject of how the Council would ensure that the draft Environment Strategy and public consultation would be widely publicised to stakeholders and the public was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

(e) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning by Councillor Adrian Abbs**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of how much Council resource, in terms of officer hours, had been spent on the Sandleford development applications to date was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning.

(f) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance by Councillor Adrian Abbs**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of how much of the £750k invest to save money had been spent to date was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

**EXECUTIVE - 17 OCTOBER 2019 - MINUTES**

**(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Adrian Abbs**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of whether the Environment Advisory Group needed to meet more frequently in order to get the new Environment Strategy completed was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

**(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Alan Macro**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of what the Council was planning to do to ameliorate the extra traffic congestion and resulting pollution likely to be caused on the roads leading to the Thatcham level crossing by the extra passenger train services to be introduced in December was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

**(i) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Alan Macro**

A question standing in the name of Councillor Alan Macro asking what negotiations had taken place between the Council and the railway companies to request that the extra passenger train services to be introduced in December should call additionally at Thatcham and Theale was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 6.23pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....