

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 24 MAY 2022

Councillors Present: Alan Law (Chairman), Adrian Abbs (Vice-Chairman), Jeff Brooks, James Cole, Tony Linden, Steve Masters and Claire Rowles

Also Present: Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Sarah Clarke (Service Director (Strategy and Governance)), Paula Goodwin (Service Lead HR) and Carolyn Richardson (Civil Contingencies Manager), Councillor Thomas Marino (Executive Portfolio: Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships), Councillor Howard Woollaston (Executive Portfolio: Housing, Leisure and Culture), Zahid Aziz (Thames Valley Police), Gordon Oliver (Democratic Services) and Tom Dunn

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillors Tony Vickers, Lee Dillon and Owen Jeffery

Councillor(s) Absent: Councillor Biyi Oloko

PART I

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 22 March 2022 and 10 May 2022 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chairman.

4. Actions from previous Minutes

Members noted the updates on the actions from the previous Minutes.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

6. Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

7. Effective Employee Appraisal and Management Development Update

Paula Goodwin presented a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning Effective Employee Appraisal and Management Development Update.

The Chairman noted that the report was slightly different from what was expected, which was a review of the appraisal system.

It was noted that a peer review of the HR Service had been undertaken through the Local Government Association. Although initial feedback had been very positive, further work was required to meet customer care standards.

It was highlighted that there was a very clear Workforce Strategy, which was updated in 2021. Good progress had been made in relation to delivering the strategy. For example, a training needs analysis had just been completed and had been used to develop a new corporate training programme.

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Leadership and management development and aspiring managers programmes would be developed in 2022. Improvements would also be made to the coaching and mentoring framework, informed by a pilot programme introduced last year. This would have external as well as internal support.

It was noted that there was a lot of recruitment activity planned for coming months.

HR was providing additional data for Personnel Committee on a 6 monthly basis.

A key action from the Workforce Strategy was to review the competency framework and performance management standards. An external consultant was helping to develop a behaviour framework, which would be subject to internal consultation prior to implementation. This would be used for appraisals and other performance management standards would be reviewed around the behaviour framework. Digital processes would be utilised to provide access to performance management data.

It was confirmed that the appraisal process hadn't changed, but would be reviewed within the next 12 months. In the meantime, managers had been encouraged to ensure that staff had 1-2-1s and appraisals. New templates and associated guidance had been produced and feedback had been positive.

The target was for 90% of staff to have received an appraisal and performance had improved from 74.9% in Quarter 1 to 87.2% in Quarter 4. Further training would be rolled out to managers.

It was noted that feedback from the Staff Survey was positive.

Councillor James Cole stated that an update on appraisals to Personnel Committee in February 2022 data had highlighted considerable differences between services. He had expected that data to form the basis of the report to OSMC and asked if the differences had changed.

It was confirmed that the Quarter 4 data would be presented to the next meeting of the Personnel Committee. Also, appraisal data was circulated monthly to Operations Board. Officers were not aware that this information was required for the OSMC report.

Councillor Steve Masters asked if there was any particular service that was falling short in terms of appraisals and what support was being provided to managers. He also asked about when management training would be provided and if it was possible for aspiring managers to take part.

It was confirmed that the People Directorate had completed 83.6% of appraisals, Place 90.9% and Resources 92.5%. Managers could ask HR if they needed support. The 1-2-1 form and associated guidance had been improved, and feedback had been sought. Also, training / coaching would be provided to help managers have better conversations as part of appraisals. In addition, a training needs analysis had highlighted the need for training about how to improve conversations with staff.

Paula Goodwin indicated that once the behaviour framework was agreed, training programmes for leadership, management development and aspiring managers would be designed. Managers were encouraged to put forward names of employees who were seen to be aspiring managers, and employees could also put themselves forward. It was stressed that all staff should have a personal development plan (PDP) and should have regular discussions with managers about their aspirations. This was important in terms of retaining staff. In addition to training, employees were offered other opportunities, such as secondment. HR was also looking at graduate schemes and internships. It was noted that the Workforce Strategy Delivery Plan was ambitious and actions would need to be prioritised.

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Councillor Jeff Brooks commended the progress made in improving completion of appraisals, but hoped that 95% or higher could be achieved. He noted that many work-streams were pre-existing, but were being reviewed. He suggested that there should be a flow-chart to show the links between appraisals, PDPs, training and peer-to-peer learning. He acknowledged that behaviours were important, but stressed that any framework should augment rather than replace measures of performance and competency.

Paula Goodwin confirmed that the behaviour framework would replace the competency framework. However, appraisals would still feature smart objectives and a PDP. Employees would still be expected to deliver, but there was also an emphasis on delivering in the best way possible (e.g. by demonstrating excellent customer care). It was confirmed that there would still be specific competencies for specific roles.

Councillor Brooks stressed the importance of career paths and showing staff how they could progress by developing particular competencies. He suggested that this should be made visual and transparent.

Councillor Tony Linden noted that the behaviour of some Members had not been appropriate in public meetings and stressed that it was important to address this. In relation to manager networks, he had seen some instances of silo working and hoped that this had been addressed. In relation to appraisals, he noted that these may have been affected by Covid.

Paula Goodwin confirmed that 87.2% of staff had received an appraisal within the last 15 months. She acknowledged that rates may have fallen due to Covid, since staff had other priorities, and in some cases, objectives would have changed due to Covid, and the need to support refugees. She indicated that work was ongoing to develop better manager networks across the organisation, and work would also be undertaken to look at improving internal communications and engagement to support manager networks. Within the Resources Directorate, there were 'unconferences' for managers. There were also lots of opportunities to get involved in projects and focus groups. Another action related to establishing networks for women who aspired to be managers. The challenge was to create these networks in a hybrid format now that people were working from home as well as in the office.

Councillor Claire Rowles highlighted the current values mentioned in the report, and expressed surprise that there was no reference to the Nolan Principles.

Paula Goodwin indicated that these would be reflected in the behaviour framework together with other principles such as inclusivity. Where they related to specific parts of the organisations, there would be no change.

Councillor Rowles noted that the Constitution made little reference to officers being governed by the Nolan Principles, so it was important to reference them in the behaviour framework.

Councillor Adrian Abbs asked if virtual appraisals had been a catalyst for improving the completion rate or if it was a potential barrier.

Paula Goodwin felt that rates had improved because managers were being encouraged to have conversations, and also because of the new forms, guidance and support offered. She felt that the return to the office had helped, but remote working should not be an excuse for not having appraisals.

The Chairman suggested that the improvements reflected the change in senior management.

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Nigel Lynn agreed that there had been more emphasis on appraisals amongst the corporate leadership team. He confirmed that it was part of his responsibility to ensure that members of staff were appropriately trained, appraised and had PDPs. He acknowledged that the current system was cumbersome, and would be simplified. Also, some managers had completed appraisals but had not uploaded the data. Focus groups had been set up in response to the Employee Attitude Survey which had highlighted a desire for more 1-2-1s and appraisals. He stressed that these should be part of an ongoing process.

Councillor Cole noted the report had acknowledged that corporate values were not promoted through current induction processes and asked what had been happening as part of inductions.

Paula Goodwin explained that staff were not currently measured against those values. Also, the values were not linked to the competencies used in the appraisal process. This would be addressed in the new behaviour framework. She indicated that there would be a graphical depiction of the connections between organisations values, objectives, and competencies.

Councillor Brooks stressed that in a face-to-face appraisal, it was easier to note aspects such as body language and discomfort that could open up wider conversations.

The Chairman noted that the original brief had been to review the current employee appraisal system. Members' concerns had stemmed not from the numbers being appraised, but from the numbers achieving the highest grades. He requested a short paper to capture the strengths and weaknesses of the current appraisal system. He also noted that the report had indicated that the behavioural framework came first, but suggested that the analysis should come first to identify the issues. He concluded by noting that managers should not wait until an appraisal to talk to staff about inappropriate behaviour – instead appraisals should focus on outcomes and management by objectives.

Paula Goodwin confirmed that a review of the appraisal process had not yet been completed. The change from a competency framework to a behaviour framework was an action in the Workforce Strategy and a review of the appraisal process and other performance management processes would be undertaken on the back of this to embed the change. Staff would be engaged as part of that review process and it would consider the effects of hybrid working.

The Chairman noted that OSMC had made the request for a review several months ago and asked whether this could be completed for the next meeting.

Sarah Clarke indicated it would not be possible to bring a report to the September meeting, but she undertook to provide an update to OSMC prior to implementing any changes.

The Chairman highlighted that the report had committed to a review by June. He also indicated that officers should have indicated earlier that the timescales for conducting the review were not possible.

Sarah Clarke apologised and highlighted that this was part of a journey, with a lot of work being undertaken to deliver positive change.

Action: Sarah Clarke to confirm when it would be possible to bring a further report on the appraisal system.

8. Crime and Disorder Committee - Community Safety Update

Sitting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, the Commission received a presentation (Agenda Item 6) concerning the Building Communities Together Partnership (BTCP).

Nigel Lynn explained that the BTCP was the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for West Berkshire. He highlighted the relevant legislation and the statutory partners.

The BTCP's Terms of Reference had been reviewed in Spring 2021 to focus on core CSP duties, and to anticipate the new serious violence duties. The partnership also fulfilled the roles of the Prevent Partnership Board and the Youth Offending Team Steering Group.

In addition to its statutory partners, the BTCP also had a number of non-statutory partners.

The BTCP was accountable to:

- Communities of West Berkshire
- The Home Secretary
- The Home Office
- The Ministry of Justice
- Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Adults

The partnerships' objectives were confirmed as:

1. To reduce and prevent crime
2. To ensure that statutory responsibilities were fulfilled
3. To identify and respond to changes in the nature, incidence and severity of crime in West Berkshire
4. To safeguard the vulnerable
5. To help people and communities to help each other and to engage with community safety related initiatives

The process and timescales for the annual assessment were described. The results would be used to inform the setting of partnership priorities and the Partnership Plan.

Superintendent Zahid Aziz summarised the work of the Thames Valley Police (TVP).

It was noted that there had been a slight increase in domestic abuse compared with the previous year. However, there had been a local reduction in domestic abuse during lockdown, when other areas had seen an increase. Rates had since returned to previous levels. Tackling domestic abuse was a key focus for TVP and BCTP, in terms of response, prevention and support for victims. Those at high risk of domestic abuse had received increased support and a priority for the coming year was to provide additional support for those at medium risk. It was emphasised that West Berkshire had the lowest levels of domestic abuse within Berkshire.

The Commission was informed of two trials relating to enhanced support for domestic abuse victims. One focused on continuity of care for victims and reduction in the time between the offence and the taking of statements. The other allocated a dedicated domestic abuse support officer throughout the course of any incident. Both had delivered positive outcomes, but the former was considered the most viable.

Another key focus for TVP was to ensure a robust response to county drug lines. Previously, there had been several operating in the area, Officers had engaged with drug

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users and street dealers to get intelligence of new activity and police operations had succeeded in quickly closing down new county drug lines.

It was explained that the BCTP had statutory duties around tackling violence against women and girls. There had been a week of action in March 2022, with 12 public engagement events, with presentations given to around 400 people. Also, officers involved in policing the night-time economy were given enhanced skills to help them spot predatory behaviour. However, it was noted that this was not a serious issue in West Berkshire. Investigative and crime management processes had been enhanced to prioritise precursor offences, and prolific offenders were being identified and managed. Front line staff had been given training around the use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders to prevent suspects from approaching homes / individuals for up to 28 days. There had also been engagement of local advocacy groups to understand victims' needs and what gaps still needed to be addressed. In addition, it was highlighted that there was a Government website where the public could identify locations where they felt unsafe / vulnerable and the BCTP took action to address issues where appropriate.

It was noted that knife crime was a priority, but West Berkshire had the second lowest levels of offences in TVP. Efforts had been focused on youth knife carrying.

In terms of violence offences, there had been a recent increase, but this was to be expected after the Covid lockdown restrictions had ended. However, it was stressed that West Berkshire had the lowest number of offences in TVP. The Home Office had announced £7 million over three years to fund the Violence Reduction Unit. Over £2 million of this was for specific operations to tackle hot-spots or areas where a trend was developing.

The work of the Neighbourhood Teams was highlighted. They sought to understand what communities needed and responded to trends, including those related to rural crime. It was noted that a problem solving and prevention analyst had been appointed to help with this process.

It was explained that the Public Spaces Protection Order in Newbury town centre had been successful in addressing anti-social behaviour, and a similar order was proposed for Thatcham town centre. Other activity to address anti-social behaviour included:

- 15 house closures
- 6 criminal behaviour orders issued
- 3 community protection warnings / notices issued for persistent anti-social behaviour

Nigel Lynn concluded the presentation by highlighting partnership working across the themes of domestic abuse reduction, county drug lines, community conversations and enforcement.

Councillor Steve Masters asked about the assessment of the two domestic abuse support trials. Superintendent Aziz confirmed that the assessment was being done internally by the Performance Team. He stressed the importance of tailoring the approach to local needs.

Councillor Masters asked about guidelines followed when dealing with vulnerable young people involved in county lines and if they were used as human sources of information. Superintendent Aziz confirmed that the police would not use a young / vulnerable person as a source of intelligence. Subject to their history, the starting point was to view the young person as a victim, and a wrap-around service was provided to support them. However, persistent offenders were prosecuted.

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Councillor Adrian Abbs noted that West Berkshire had a low number of domestic abuse incidents relative to other areas, but asked how it compared per head of population. Superintendent Aziz did not have the data to hand, but thought that the population was similar to the other local police areas.

Action: Superintendent Aziz to provide domestic abuse crime data per head of population.

Councillor Abbs also asked about monitoring carried out in areas that had been reported by the public as unsafe. Superintendent Aziz indicated that reported sites were reviewed to see what action could be taken. Around 130 locations had been identified - mostly parks and underpasses. Often there was little that could be done to make people feel safer, but mobile CCTV cameras were being considered.

Councillor Tony Linden welcomed the report, but expressed concern at the increase in domestic abuse incidents. He noted that the Secretary of State for Education had recently issued a report on Children's Services and asked the speakers for observations on this. Superintendent Aziz had not read the report personally, but noted that when children were taken into protection, it was often difficult to find suitable accommodation for them and they often had to go into a series of temporary foster homes. He agreed with the report's finding that it would be better for other family members to be supported to look after the child. He highlighted that the Safeguarding Partnership worked well and good support was given to young people.

Councillor Linden asked about the police use of the Theale Community Fire Station. Superintendent Aziz noted that they had previously been based in Pangbourne. He had not received any complaints and noted that the police could access a variety of towns and villages more quickly.

Councillor Claire Rowles acknowledged the work of Detective Inspector Emily Evans and Susan Powell in relation to tackling violence against women and girls. She also praised Jon Winstanley and the Highways Team who had reviewed several underpasses and cut back vegetation in key locations. She asked if Project Vigilant operated in West Berkshire. Superintendent Aziz explained that this has started in Oxford where there had been a significant increase in sexual offences. This pilot was then rolled out to other areas where there was an identified need. He explained that this was not a significant issue in West Berkshire, but officers had been trained to spot signs of vulnerability or suspicious behaviour so they could take appropriate action.

Councillor Rowles noted that she had received a number of enquiries about CCTV in underpasses and asked about its effectiveness and possible timescales for implementation. Superintendent Aziz had seen this used in Slough and Reading and felt that it would have benefits for West Berkshire. He undertook to discuss this through the BCTP.

Action: Superintendent Zahid Aziz to discuss the use of mobile CCTV with the BCTP.

Councillor Rowles noted that there had been a recent conviction of a Newbury police officer for misconduct and asked if there was an awareness campaign to help potential victims spot predatory behaviour. Superintendent Aziz confirmed that the officer's behaviour had come to the attention of an inspector who flagged it with the Police Standards Department. The officer was immediately suspended and had not been on patrol for 2 ½ years. He had gained information as an attending officer and via the police computer system. When taken to court, he was found guilty of misconduct in public office and data protection offences. He was sentenced to 2½ years in prison. He had not previously exhibited any signs of predatory behaviour. However, supervisors were now

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more closely monitoring risk areas to ensure that a similar incident did not happen in future. Following the Sarah Everard incident, TVP had sought to distance itself from the Metropolitan Police and demonstrate the positive things being done in Thames Valley. A recent newspaper article had highlighted that if residents had concerns, they could ask the officer to radio the control room to confirm their identity. He stressed that it was rare to have a plain-clothes officer working alone and this was being communicated to the public. He stressed that this had been an isolated incident and communications were mostly via the IAG.

Councillor Graham Bridgman indicated that the BCTP was within his Executive Portfolio and the Domestic Abuse Board and Lived Experience Sub-Group sat beneath this, which allowed the voice of victims to be heard. He noted that a rise in reported crime may be as a result of improved reporting or detection rather than an increase in the crime rate. Superintendent Aziz felt that there was improved public confidence and highlighted that an increasing proportion of those reporting crimes were men. He also felt that the support offered and positive outcomes encouraged people to report incidents.

The Chairman asked how the TVP staff levels had changed in recent months. Superintendent Aziz confirmed that there were challenges. While the number of officers had been stable and was increasing by 600 over a three year period, the new training programme allocated protected learning time for new officers, which took them away from front-line duties. This had led to challenges in maintaining capacity for crime prevention and safeguarding, which meant that more functions would need to be shared across partners.

9. Customer Journey - Out of Hours

Carolyn Richardson presented a report (Agenda Item 8) concerning customer journey for the Council's out of hours emergency service.

It was explained that the report provided an overview of the services and included officers' recommendations – the Task Group had requested additional before making their own recommendations to OSMC.

Officers had welcomed the opportunity to reflect on the current arrangements and the reasons why things were done in certain ways. The report set out the history of the service and the process through which the customer engaged with the service.

It was explained that calls were handled by a contractor rather than the in-house call centre. Calls to the service had dropped slightly during the pandemic, but there were typically around 800 calls per year to the service. Very little negative feedback had been received and any issues were easily dealt with in conjunction with the contractor. Officers also highlighted refinements to processes on an ongoing basis.

It was stressed that the service provided an emergency response for a limited number of services and it did not replicate normal daytime Council services. The service dealt with situations that could cause serious issues if they were not addressed quickly, and allowed for escalation in the event of a major incident.

The service was led by an out of hours manual, to which all services contributed. It was noted that issues had arisen in the past when services did not provide updates, but generally it worked well.

Officers had already identified a number of potential improvements, and the Task Group had started to identify a further set of recommendations, which would be developed further in due course.

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Councillor Adrian Abbs noted that the report's appendix referred to 593 calls per year rather than 800 calls.

Councillor Tony Linden noted that the Council had been in existence since 1974, but had changed name when it took on additional functions upon the demise of Berkshire County Council. In relation to page 80 of the report, he noted that Thames Valley Fire Control did an excellent job in terms of call handling. He noted that there had been a lot of false fire alarms triggered on commercial properties, so responses had been scaled back. Overall, he considered that the Out of Hours Service did an excellent job.

Councillor Jeff Brooks welcomed the inclusion of the schematic on page 68 which showed what the service did and did not cover. He noted that the report indicated that the out of hours service was 'adequate'. He had previously called the service when customers had been trapped in the Kennet Centre car park, but there had been nobody available from the Car Parks Team. He asked if processes had been improved following that event. He also asked if secret shopper exercises were carried out by external users to test the service.

Carolyn Richardson indicated felt that the service did a good job. She stated that the service was not there to make decisions, but to follow the manual. If the manual was wrong then this was due to the services not providing the necessary information. She confirmed that analysis was undertaken each year to look at the number of calls made for each service, and if there were large numbers for a particular location / service then they sought to understand the reasons for this and take mitigating action. In terms of mystery shopper exercises, she stressed that this needed careful planning to ensure that services were not called out unnecessarily.

Councillor Brooks asked about frequency of testing, and noted that there would be a degree of risk if there were errors in the manual. It was confirmed that testing did take place, but in a controlled way to avoid triggering unnecessarily alerts and responses.

Councillor Brooks stressed the need for a feedback loop from real customers to check they got the response they needed in a timely manner.

Nigel Lynn indicated that there had been a recent check of the communications processes around a critical event. Officers had been briefed that a test was planned, but they were not advised of the time or date.

The Chairman indicated that he had previously made a complaint following a bad experience, but on two subsequent occasions, he had had a good experience. All three had been related to Highways and he felt that this should have its own category in the choices given when customers contacted the out of hours call centre. Carolyn Richardson explained that the options were to ensure that calls were directed to the correct place. The Chairman suggested that given its importance, Highways might need to have a duty officer available.

Councillor Brooks asked if calls were recorded for training purposes. Carolyn Richardson confirmed that they were.

Councillor Claire Rowles asked how customers with disabilities were accommodated. Carolyn Richardson noted that customers currently made contact via telephone, but other options were being investigated.

The Chairman invited Councillor James Cole to summarise the initial observations of the Task Group. In relation to the out of hours service, Councillor Cole made the following observations:

- The report had been comprehensive, but the Task Group had asked for additional information.

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- They had asked whether the service could be run in house, but this was not possible with the existing budget.
- The current provider was not locally based, so did not have knowledge of the area – unfortunately, neither Sovereign Housing nor the Fire Service submitted a bid when the out of hours service was last tendered.
- The number of Emergency Duty Officers had reduced over time.
- Mutual aid was difficult due to lack of access to West Berkshire Council's systems - this should be addressed.
- Some services did not provide out of hours services – for example there was nobody from the Communications Team on call when the former Newbury Football Club building caught fire.
- The Task Group felt that a single number for in and out of hours services would make it easier for people to get in touch.
- Other communications channels should be explored (e.g. WhatsApp).
- The Task Group was keen to do some secret shopper exercises.
- It was felt that the contract should be managed by the Council's call centre manager.
- The out of hours service should be more widely promoted so people knew where to go / what to do.

Councillor Cole indicated that the Chief Executive would be attending a future meeting and the Task Group would be looking at the views of residents and Members.

It was noted that the Task Group had held a session focused on the Council's call centre and website. Observations included:

- The need for a single telephone number for all enquiries.
- Proposed improvements to the online reporting system were welcomed, particularly the ability to upload photos.
- The MyAccount facility appeared promising.

Councillor Cole indicated that the Task Group wanted to talk to more people. Several Members indicated that they wished to contribute. He explained that the timescale for concluding the review would need to be extended, with the report anticipated to come to the November OSMC meeting.

Councillor Tom Marino also indicated that he would like to contribute to the review.

10. **Appointment of Task Groups**

The Chairman stated that OSMC had agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at fees and charges and invited comments on the draft Terms of Reference provided in the agenda.

Councillor Jeff Brooks noted that the focus was on increasing fees and levying additional charges. He felt this was inappropriate during when there was a cost of living crisis, and suggested that this could be picked up by the media. He suggested that the Council should consider reducing its fees and charges where they were found to be higher than other local authorities. He indicated that he was not prepared to vote for the terms of reference in its current form.

Councillor Tony Linden indicated that he was open to reducing fees and charges if appropriate. He acknowledged the need to be sensitive to the points raised by Councillor Brooks, but noted that the Council's financial situation may be difficult depending on the settlement from Government.

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Councillor Abbs suggested that the Terms of Reference should refer to the value of the services provided.

The Chairman agreed that the point of the review should not just be about bringing in more money, but accepted that the wording of the terms of reference could be interpreted in this way. He proposed that the first paragraph should end after ‘...West Berkshire Council services’.

Councillor Abbs indicated that Part 2 should make reference to the value of the new services to be delivered through the new Leisure Strategy.

Councillor Brooks noted that page 124 referred to considering opportunities for new and increased fees and charges and asked that the wording be softened throughout the terms of reference.

It was suggested that OSMC should delegate to the Principal Policy Officer to amend the wording in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, with the revised wording to be circulated to OSMC Members for comment.

Councillor Claire Rowles noted that the terms of reference referred to increasing fees and charges and identifying additional funding streams throughout. The Chairman suggested that there was nothing wrong with identifying additional revenue streams if they were valid.

It was noted that the terms of reference already made reference to affordability and value for money.

Sarah Clarke highlighted that the original report on fees and charges had suggested a review of:

- new proposals for planning income;
- fee income arising from the Leisure Strategy; and
- other opportunities for commercial charging in the Place Directorate.

She indicated that OSMC could broaden the scope of the review in light of the current economic climate.

Councillor Brooks indicated that the current Terms of Reference included aspects that were not in the original report. He did not think that the objective of this review should be to find more revenue in order to help next year’s budget.

The Chairman stated that OSMC was being proactive in informing the setting of fees and charges for the next financial year and the recommendations may be for increases or decreases, but he hoped they would all be regarded as offering good value for money.

RESOLVED: that OSMC should delegate to the Principal Policy Officer to amend the wording in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, with the revised wording to be circulated to OSMC Members for comment.

Councillor Linden highlighted the need to consider the timescales for the review and proposed that Joseph Holmes be added to the list of witnesses. The Chairman agreed to liaise with Councillor Linden when making the amendments to the Terms of Reference.

11. Task and Finish Groups Updates

It was noted that this item had been covered as part of Agenda Item 8.

12. Health Scrutiny Committee Update

Councillor Claire Rowles presented the update on the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 11).

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The Committee had held a special meeting on 23 May 2022 to receive an update on the development proposals for the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The meeting also considered Councillor Macro's motion to Council on 17 March 2022 regarding the hospital redevelopment. Officers' recommendations had been rejected, so the matter would be referred back to Council. In addition, the Committee considered an update on the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Strategy refresh. The meeting had been attended by Alison Foster (Programme Director for Building Berkshire Together), Andrew Statham (Director of Strategy), Sally Moore (Head of Communications and Engagement) and Tom Broadfoot (Communications and Engagement Officer). It was noted that there had been some press coverage about a potential new site for the hospital, which picked up on a comment made by one Member at the meeting. It was stressed that this was not the Council's position. It was noted that the next meeting would be on 14 June 2022.

13. **West Berkshire Council Forward Plan 1 April to 31 July 2022**

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12) for the period covering 1 April to 31 July 2022.

Councillor Jeff Brooks indicated that the Liberal Democrat Support Executive had struggled to find the published Forward Plan and sought assurance that it would be kept up to date and published.

Sarah Clarke confirmed that the Forward Plan had not stopped being published and that the Council was legally obliged to produce it. However, it was noted that the format had recently changed. OSMC was advised that a link to the Forward Plan would be included in the weekly email to all Members. She also undertook to email the link to Councillor Brooks.

Action: Sarah Clarke to email the Forward Plan link to Councillor Brooks and to ask that a link be added to the weekly email to all Members.

The Chairman indicated that he had had discussions with the Leader about increasing the timescales for the Forward Plan to allow OSMC to be more proactive.

Councillor Tony Linden, suggested that the Forward Plan should include major projects. However, the Chairman suggested that this was covered in the Performance Reports.

Councillor James Cole highlighted the item on the Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Plan. He noted that the Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Board no longer existed, so it was not clear how the Delivery Plan would be monitored. He suggested that OSMC should look at this in 2023.

Action: Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Plan to be added to the OSMC Forward Plan.

14. **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme**

It was noted that the Task Group reports would both report to the November meeting. As a result, the items on the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Build Back Better had been slipped to March 2023.

In relation to the Thames Water item programmed for September 2022, Councillor Adrian Abbs indicated that he wanted to know the technologies that would be deployed by Thames Water to solve the issue of discharges into watercourses. It was highlighted that all Members had been invited to identify issues of concern, which would be forwarded to Thames Water in advance of the meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.56 pm)

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CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature