

# DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

## EXECUTIVE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 12 JANUARY 2023

**Councillors Present:** Lynne Doherty (Chairman), Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Ross Mackinnon, Thomas Marino, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston

**Also Present:** Councillors Lee Dillon, Adrian Abbs, Jeff Brooks, Alan Macro and Erik Pattenden.

**Members and Officers Present Remotely:** Councillor Carlyne Culver

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Richard Somner

**Officers Present:** Sarah Clarke (Service Director Strategy & Governance), Paul Coe (Service Director Adult Social Care), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources), Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive), Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) Eric Owens (Executive Director – Place), Lizzie Reeves (Project Manager - MC, OS), Andy Sharp (Executive Director – People) and Nicola Thomas (Service Lead – Legal & Democratic)

### 69. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Somner.

### 70. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

### 71. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

### 72. Public Questions

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

### 73. Petitions

Councillor Lee Dillon presented a petition containing 1,208 signatures requesting that the Council review its decision on funding the REDIbus Service. The petition was referred to Officers for a response.

### 74. Draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 (EX4312)

Councillor Lynne Doherty introduced and proposed the report (Agenda Item 6), which provided an overview of the draft Council Strategy 2023-2027 (the Strategy), and sought approval for public consultation in early 2023. Councillor Doherty explained that the Strategy proposed a number of outcomes that the Council would focus on delivering in the next four years, which had been grouped into five priority areas.

In response to a query from Councillor Jeff Brooks, Sarah Clarke, the Monitoring Officer, explained that the paper was not subject to call-in as the proposals would be subject to Council, not Executive, approval in May.

Councillor Lee Dillon suggested that the timing of the Strategy and its consultation should be deferred to after May 2023, to allow for alternative priorities in the event of a new

## **EXECUTIVE - 12 JANUARY 2023 - MINUTES**

administration. Councillor Doherty stressed the importance of having a seamless plan and strategy in place and commented that as it was both evidence and resident based, it was likely to be the same, whichever party was in administration.

Councillor Graham Bridgman welcomed the ambition of the Strategy and seconded approval of the report.

**RESOLVED that:** Executive

- Consider the draft strategy, recommend amendments to its content and approve it for public consultation.

### **75. West Berkshire Council Customer Charter (EX4311)**

Councillor Lynne Doherty introduced the report (Agenda Item 7), which set out a Customer Charter detailing a number of proposed service standards which customers could expect when dealing with the Council, regardless of the contact channel chosen.

Councillor Lee Dillon queried customer recourse in the event that a commitment was not met. Councillor Dillon further queried whether there should be an out of hours service provision. Councillor Doherty clarified that the complaints process was included on the Charter, and that this was in line with other local authorities.

Councillor Doherty agreed to include a response commitment for out of hours emergencies within the Charter.

Councillor Adrian Abbs referred to his membership of the OSMC Customer Journey Task Group (the Group), and commented that it was surprising that the Group had not had the opportunity to review the Charter, suggesting that it would have benefitted from the scrutiny.

Councillor Doherty agreed to Councillor Macro's request to remove the use of acronyms from the Charter.

Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter seconded the paper and highlighted the second proposal within the report which referred to adopting the Charter in tandem with a concerted internal effort towards a culture whereby good customer service was seen to be the responsibility of all within the organisation. Councillor Ardagh-Walter felt that the Council already provided good customer service to residents but commented that parallel work would need to be undertaken to train new joiners to adapt and interpret the Charter to specific and varied situations, with the overall core aim of providing a quality service for residents.

**RESOLVED that:** Executive

- Approve the draft Customer Charter.

### **76. 2022/23 Performance Report Quarter Two (EX4210)**

Councillor Tom Marino introduced the report (Agenda Item 8), which provided assurance that the core business and council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 were being managed effectively.

Councillor Graham Bridgman noted that there had been an increase in recorded crime and non-crime domestic abuse cases. Councillor Bridgman clarified that the Council were reporting on the figures recorded by Thames Valley Police and commented that he had received a report from the Superintendent. Councillor Bridgman read the statement which reported that the local policing authority had been working hard to prioritise violence against women and girls, providing increased training to officers and scrutiny from supervisors to improve all forms of domestic crimes. There had been evidence that

## EXECUTIVE - 12 JANUARY 2023 - MINUTES

officers were failing to recognise offences and so missing a number of crimes. The Superintendent's report confirmed that greater scrutiny had been placed on the domestic risk assessment to ensure broader questions were asked by attending officers. It was noted that the Policing Authority had also introduced a Domestic Abuse Champion whose role was to re-engage on an ongoing basis with victims of domestic abuse, and to support medium risk and vulnerable victims. The Superintendent had noted that as a consequence of these initiatives, there was evidence to show that victims felt much more supported and confident to report further incidents and crimes. Concluding the statement, Councillor Bridgman commented that he felt assured that the police were aware of the issues and taking actions to address.

Councillor Erik Pattenden referred to Table 30 (number of referrals to the Emotional Health Triage), and expressed surprise that numbers were reducing. Councillor Dominic Boeck commented that the figures were encouraging and suggested a return to more stable reporting following the peaks during the pandemic.

Councillor Jeff Brooks referred to the table reporting staff turnover on page 67 of the Agenda pack and queried the reason for the increase. Joseph Holmes, Executive Director for Resources commented that information was being gathered through exit interviews and that there had been investment in new talent acquisition staff to investigate improved recruitment and retention schemes.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that the Council no longer monitored delayed transfers of care for those patients in the Adult Social Care system, and whilst he acknowledged that it was no longer recorded nationally he requested that it be re-introduced as a performance indicator locally. Councillor Jo Stewart noted that some data was still captured and agreed that Officers would review to determine if the information could be reported on a regular basis.

Councillor Macro queried why the Care Quality Commission (CQC), had not reviewed the rating for Birchwood Care Home given that they had looked at all the other Council run care homes in January. Councillor Stewart commented that the CQC had undertaken a very 'light touch' high level review and determined that they did not need to return for a further review of the care homes.

In response to a query from Councillor Macro as to when introduction of the electronic medication administration system would take place at Birchwood Care Home, Councillor Stewart commented that it was imminent.

When asked about the level of confidence that Birchwood Care Home would obtain a 'Good' CQC rating when inspected, Councillor Stewart responded that a permanent registered manager had just been recruited to the team, which would provide consistency and leadership, and that staff had been undertaking a huge amount of work to improve the Home. Councillor Stewart offered to bring further progress reports to Executive in the future.

Councillor Adrian Abbs referred to page 71 of the Agenda pack which detailed business counts and job density figures and requested assurance that the data was being monitored. Councillor Abbs suggested that the trends between the 2017/18 and 2022/23 data implied a weakening of business in the area. Councillor Mackinnon commented that the data was being monitored, and suggested that the trends in business numbers related to Covid. Councillor Mackinnon agreed that there needed to be increased job density in West Berkshire and urged support from all Members for the London Road Industrial Estate plans which were aimed at creating hundreds of high quality jobs.

Councillor Lee Dillon referred to the Environmental exception report detailed on page 88 of the Agenda pack and queried how the outturn was measured in practice and whether

## EXECUTIVE - 12 JANUARY 2023 - MINUTES

litter was only removed from Council held land. Councillor Ardagh-Walter clarified that the measure related only to public highways and pavements and would not include playing fields.

Councillor Dillon commented that whilst the figures for the average number of days taken to make a full decision on new Housing Benefit claims was reducing, it was still above the target 19 days, and queried whether the issue was being prioritised. Councillor Woollaston noted that the report referred to Quarter Two data and suggested that the Quarter Three information would show a significant improvement, confirming that additional staff had been assigned to the department.

In response to a query from Councillor Dillon relating to delays in processing planning applications, Eric Owens, Interim Director for Place, explained that the department was currently in the process of recruiting 5-6 staff who were hoped to be in place by March. Further, processes and procedures were being enhanced and so it was hoped that performance would have improved by the Quarter Three report.

Councillor Pattenden queried what steps were being taken to tackle the recruitment issue within the Children and Family Services team, particularly in relation to the data recorded for the percentage of children in care, where children had been visited in the past six weeks. Councillor Boeck responded that he had been disappointed and concerned by the reduction in figures, but commented that he had been assured that no child had been placed in danger as a consequence and that the children had been visited, even if not within the performance timeframe. Councillor Boeck acknowledged that the matter could not be ignored, but that there was a recruitment challenge both within the service and nationally. It was reported that the recruitment and retention strategy for the service had been revised and was in the process of being implemented. Councillor Boeck suggested that whilst there was a recruitment issue, there had also been an increase in demand for the service which had been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Councillor Abbs referred to the exception report detailing the percentage of household waste recycled, composted and reused, and suggested that the explanation for reduction as drought, did not appear to be evidenced. Further, he suggested that the current target of 49.5% should be significantly higher. Councillor Ardagh-Walter commented that weather would always have an effect on the figures, and expressed confidence that introduction of the food waste recycling scheme would significantly increase the tonnage to over 50% by the same time in 2024. Councillor Ardagh-Walter added that a new target would be set for the 2023-24 municipal year and he was keen to stretch it further.

**RESOLVED that:** Executive

- Note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2023, a maintained strong performance for the core business areas, good results for the majority of the measures relating to the council's priorities for improvement, and remedial actions taken where performance is below target.

### 77. **Social Value Update (EX4305)**

Councillor Ross Mackinnon introduced the report (Agenda Item 9), which provided an update on the Social Value Policy which had been adopted by the Council at Executive on 18 November 2021. Councillor Mackinnon commented that it had been an encouraging start to the Policy.

Councillor Jeff Brooks explained that his interpretation of the report was that only 3 out of 73 published procurement projects had included a specific social value question. Councillor Mackinnon clarified that it was 38 projects that had social value considered but was happy to amend the wording for clarification. Councillor Mackinnon further added that the Council held

## EXECUTIVE - 12 JANUARY 2023 - MINUTES

regular 'meet the supplier' events where small and medium enterprises within the district could receive advice in structuring bids.

Councillor Lee Dillon agreed that it was a positive start but suggested that the report should include greater detail, listing the number of volunteer hours, and recording attributable facts to enable the Council to quantify its social value delivery.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- The council continues to monitor the implementation of the Social Value policy to determine how it is embedded within the procurement process and what benefits are derived in the future.

### **78. Members' Questions**

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

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.25 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

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