
Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Timelord 2

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Committee considering report: | Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission |
| Date of Committee: | 10 August 2021 |
| Portfolio Member: | Councillor Howard Woollaston |
| Report Author: | Gordon Oliver |
| Forward Plan Ref: | EX4011 |

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report presents the call-in request submitted on 23 July 2021 for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission to review the Executive's decision (EX4011) of 15 July 2021 concerning Timelord 2.
- 1.2 The call-in has been submitted in accordance with Sections 5.3 and 6.4 of the Council's Constitution.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 In accordance with the call-in request dated 23 July 2021, it is recommended that Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission review the Executive's decision (EX4011) of 15 July 2021 concerning Timelord 2.
- 2.2 Having reviewed the Executive decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission should either:
 - (a) Confirm the Executive decision; or
 - (b) Propose amendments and refer the matter back to Executive for further consideration

3 Supporting Information

Executive Decision

- 3.1 The Timelord 2 report was presented for consideration by the Executive on 15 July 2021. The report recommended that the Executive resolve to approve as follows:
 - To approve the Timelord 2 working model as set out in the covering report.
 - To approve an ongoing allocation of funding from within existing budgets for a staff home working allowance of £150,000 per annum.

Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Timelord 2

- To approve £50,000 of costs, from within existing budgets, to fund the ongoing additional costs of the internal booking system, staff development and support costs in respect of Timelord 2 and a doubling of the Reasonable Adjustments Budget.
- To approve the sum of £691,130 to be borrowed to fund the capital works required to support the goals of Timelord 2.
- To review the effectiveness of new proposals six months after the Timelord Programme has been implemented.
- Once this review has been completed to approve the disposal of the West Street House and West Point buildings if appropriate.

3.2 Executive resolved to approve the above recommendations.

Call-in of the Decision

3.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution five Elected Members (Councillors Lee Dillon, Alan Macro, Jeff Brooks, Tony Vickers and Erik Pattendon) called in the Executive Decision (EX4011) on the basis of:

- (1) Concerns around signing off a largely operational strategy before our new CEO is in post;
- (2) Concerns that in 4.1.1 and 7.8 none of the key principles refer to our residents and the quality of service they receive and the few measures in place to address this;
- (3) The cost to the Council of paying £12.50 to staff to work from home when many of them will be saving on commuting costs;
- (4) Lack of evidence that this new arrangement can "better support service users from home" and the need for such evidence to be provided;
- (5) Concerns around confidentiality and safeguarding for customers and residents as 20% to 30% of WBC's workforce do not have dedicated office space at home and a lack of mitigation measures in this matter. We do not believe it is sufficient to say that the working from home pattern over the last 17 months has resolved this aspect;
- (6) That if core hours cease (8.37) allowing highly variable work hours, there will be a concomitant lack of effective communication and continuity of service between employees, resulting in a poorer service for residents and customers. Core hours should be maintained, even if adapted;
- (7) The challenge that variable work-styles and core hours will create for managers in ensuring that new starters have requisite support in for the first 6 months of their contract;
- (8) Concerns over the haste with which these changes are being made despite the assertion (7.13) that it is not known how things will work post Covid;

Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Timelord 2

- (9) Lack of measures to mitigate potential problems with delivering dynamic training, advice, interventions, pastoral care and support and cultivating a team spirit that happens in a face-to-face environment;
 - (10) Lack of an assessment to determine the effectiveness of our services now and prior to the implementation of these new working policies/practises;
 - (11) The effect of variable working hours and styles leading to a decrease in social interaction that promotes innovation and creativity, as well as rapid reactions to issues and challenges, as staff will not be meeting so regularly;
 - (12) Concerns regarding the effect on the Newbury Town economy from these new ways of working;
 - (13) The potential for highly variable numbers of staff working from the office on any given day meaning basic resources, such as desks, may be unavailable;
 - (14) Lack of information on how Unison has reacted to these proposals;
 - (15) The effects of these changes on staff contracts.
- 3.4 The Members of the Council who submitted the call-in request proposed that the following alternative course of action should be followed:
- (1) This operational change should be delayed until such time as the new CEO is in post and can implement it smoothly and in line with his operational preferences and to make sure that changes can be made BEFORE implementation - the report states: A review of the programme is undertaken six months after implementation has been completed - this will potentially mean that bad practises cannot be unpicked once the Policy has been implemented.
 - (2) That the impact on residents and customers be properly assessed prior to implementation to make sure the Council retains a customer-based service, rather than implementing Timelord 2 and conducting a post-implementation review (7.13);
 - (3) That systems are put in place to ensure new starters have the required support in the office (or more than one on a rota) on the same days they are working and for the first 6 months of their contract;
 - (4) That the above issues are properly investigated and resolved prior to implementation.
- 3.5 The call-in request confirmed that the decision is not considered to be contrary to the policy framework, neither is it considered to be contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the budget.

Role of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

- 3.6 The role of the Overview and Scrutiny and Management Commission is to review the Executive's decision.

Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Timelord 2

- 3.7 The Commission will produce a report with its findings to the next meeting of the Executive (i.e. the meeting following the call-in request) unless there are exceptional circumstances why this cannot be achieved. In these circumstances the Chairman of the Commission and the Leader of the Council will agree a revised timetable.
- 3.8 The report will either confirm the original decision or propose amendments to it in any way it thinks fit and shall give reasons for its final decision. If the Commission upholds the Executive decision, that decision shall take immediate effect.
- 3.9 It should be noted that any matter which has been the subject of a call-in request may not be the subject of a further call-in request

4 Appendices

Appendix A – Timelord 2 Report (Executive, 15 July 2021)

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: None

Officer details:

Name: Gordon Oliver
Job Title: Principal Policy Officer
Tel No: 01635 519486
E-mail: gordon.oliver1@wetberks.gov.uk

Item Called-in following an Executive Decision: Timelord 2

Document Control

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Document Ref: | Call-in: Timelord 2 | Date Created: | 29 July 2021 |
| Version: | 1.0 | Date Modified: | |
| Author: | Gordon Oliver | | |
| Owning Service | Strategy and Governance | | |

Change History

| Version | Date | Description | Change ID |
|---------|------|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |