

DRAFT

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

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 6 JULY 2021

Councillors Present: Jeff Brooks, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Lee Dillon (Vice-Chairman), Gareth Hurley, Alan Law (Chairman), Ross Mackinnon, Thomas Marino, Steve Masters, Claire Rowles, Tony Vickers and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Catalin Bogos (Performance Research Consultation Manager), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Melanie Best (Transformation, Digital & Programme Manager) and Gordon Oliver (Democratic Services)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Lynne Doherty

PART I

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2021 and 4 May 2021 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Vice Chairman.

4. Actions from previous Minutes

All actions from previous Commission meetings were noted as having been completed.

In relation to Action 39, Councillor Lee Dillon asked whether parking revenues had been in line with predictions or if smaller towns had recovered quicker.

Action: Joseph Holmes to provide further detail on parking revenues.

In relation to Action 43, Members were asked to note the revised dates for future meetings, which had been moved to two days before Executive.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

6. Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

7. New Ways of Working

The Commission considered a report presented by Melanie Best (Item 6 on the agenda) which provided background to the New Ways of Working (NWOW) programme and outlined the value that the programme has added to the Council.

Questions were considered around how the NWOW programme had made a difference. It was felt the report lacked practical examples and articulation of financial savings delivered. It was suggested that heads of service should record efficiency savings. In response to these comments, it was noted that there was a huge number of potential transformation projects that would deliver tangible savings, and there was a wider report

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available with 680 recommendations, which could be made available to those who required more information.

Other comments were made around the programme's success especially within the Housing service. Also, it was noted that joint working in Adult Social Care was now a flagship project within the Integrated Care Partnership.

It was acknowledged that the pandemic had accelerated the delivery of recommendations in relation to digital services and the pace of change had been exceptional in the first three months.

It was suggested that the NWOW process should adopt a more all-encompassing, holistic approach, with a coordinated look at Council issues across the board to ensure there was a cultural change, with customers at the heart of the process. The phone system was identified as being in particular need of improvement.

It was queried as to why there were significant differences in the number of improvements proposed for different services. Development and Planning was the first to be examined two to three years ago and had relatively few recommendations, while Countryside and Transport was one of the last and had many more recommendations. It was explained that Planning had already gone digital and many improvements had already been implemented. Also, later reviews had benefitted from experience and lessons learned from previous ones. It was noted that there had been a change of approach part-way through, when it had been realised that the Council did not have the capacity or capabilities to deliver the original model.

A concern was raised regarding creating further digital exclusion among residents who were less technological able. The recycling centre booking system was cited as an example and the omission of a phone number for those unable to book online was highlighted. It was noted that existing communications channels would be retained and the Customer First Programme Board was looking at digital exclusion issues.

Members asked why some Council services were not fully covered by NWOW. It was explained that preparation work for Strategy and Governance had commenced before it had been removed from the programme and the Public Health service would be included at a later date. Assurances were given that due to the creation of the new Transformation Portfolio, all services would be considered.

Members asked how customer feedback would be sought and suggested that mystery shopping would provide an effective mechanism for understanding issues. It was explained that the Digital Services, Programme and Customer Services Teams would get together on a monthly basis to look at customer complaints, which could be considered alongside NWOW reviews.

Members suggested that future reports should state whether anticipated benefits had been realised and that they should also set out a medium-term work programme.

There was a suggestion that a culture change was needed within the Council to encourage continuous innovation. It was noted that the findings of the reviews had been welcomed on every level at the Council with a high degree of participation and feedback from staff, but a facilitated approach was needed to ensure reviews were carried out.

Furthermore, the organisation would continue to review the output from the programme in order to transform and improve services as part of the transformation programme of work, which will be led by the Transformation, Digital & Programme Team within the Customer Engagement and Transformation unit of Strategy & Governance.

8. Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy 2021 Update

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 7) presented by Nick Carter concerning the update Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Strategy.

It was explained that the Strategy was similar to the previous version, but with a greater focus on tackling inequalities, and the appendices included a Delivery Plan. It was overseen by Recovery Group, which met fortnightly, but would ultimately be wound up when all actions were being delivered elsewhere within the Council. It was noted that Corporate Programme Board was managing key recovery projects.

Discussion occurred around the question of improving IT literacy amongst members of the public. Assurances were given that the Council was aware of those issues and that it recognised a multi-channel approach was needed to simplify and improve online processes, while assisting residents who still wanted to speak directly with the Council.

The Delivery Plan was welcomed, but concerns were raised that it focused too much on inputs rather than measurable outputs or outcomes.

It was recognised that Covid would be around for some time and the Council may need to go back into response mode. It was noted that OSMC was holding a special meeting on 12 October to look at lessons learned from the pandemic and this would inform future response phases.

A request was made for the Strategy to address support for unpaid carers.

Also, there was a question around how quickly the Council could act on data to tackle inequalities, with a suggestion that groups should be allocated funding to be able to deliver rapid responses. Assurances were given that there was lots of data on inequalities and discussions were taking place with partners regarding programmes to address health inequalities.

It was noted that a new data-driven scheme was being set up to ensure that customers would only have to go through one portal to access support by a range of Council services, which would deliver significant benefits in terms of the customer journey.

9. 2020/21 Performance Report Quarter Four

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 8) presented by Catalin Bogos that provided assurance that the core business and Council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 were being managed effectively.

The report highlighted successes, and where performance had fallen below the expected level, it presented information on the remedial action taken, and the impact of that action.

There were queries around:

- a spike in third party highway claims; and
- an increase of 30 percent in fly tipping incidences.

It was ascertained that there were no clear reasons for the increase in highway claims other than Covid restrictions, which had led to more people walking and cycling and possibly having more time to report incidents. It was also noted that there were increases of instances of fly tipping in other local authorities, which was being addressed through enforcement and prevention, as well as through awareness campaigns. It was suggested that this may be linked to the limitations imposed on access to the recycling centres.

Concern was also raised that in the report, the Local Plan was reported as being on track but it was not. However, it was noted that in the period between the report being published and coming to OSMC, the circumstances had changed.

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Officers were challenged as to why it took so long to get data on affordable homes completed. It was suggested that the New Ways of Working Team could look at the processes to see if timescales could be reduced.

Also, a number of minor errors were identified and Members highlighted the need for improved editing / proof-reading of the report.

10. **2020/21 Revenue Financial Performance Provisional Outturn**

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 9) presented by Joseph Holmes regarding the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets. This report was the provisional outturn position for 2020/21 and went to the Executive on 10 June 2021.

Members did not have any comments in relation to this item. It was acknowledged that the report had already been considered at Executive where opposition members had been given the chance to make comment.

11. **Capital Financial Performance Report - Outturn 2020/21**

The Commission considered the report (Agenda Item 10) presented by Joseph Holmes on financial performance against the Council's approved capital budget. This report presented the provisional outturn position for the financial year 2020/21.

Members had no observations on the report. As with the preceding item, it was acknowledged that the report had already been considered at Executive where opposition members had been given the chance to make comment.

12. **Membership of Task and Finish Groups**

Members were invited to make nominations for changes to the membership of the Commission's Task and Finish Groups (Agenda Item 11).

Councillor Lee Dillon proposed that Tim Metcalfe be co-opted to the Leisure Strategy Task and Finish Group. It was noted that he had considerable experience in this area as a former West Berkshire Executive Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services.

Resolved that: Tim Metcalfe be co-opted to the Leisure Strategy Task and Finish Group.

13. **Task and Finish Group Updates**

The Commission were updated on the activities of the Commission's Task and Finish Groups (Agenda Item 12):

- **ICT Digital Task Group** – Councillor Tom Marino highlighted that the Task Group had met in March to review implementation of the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan. He indicated that it had been a positive meeting with discussions including progress on Agresso, Office 365 rollout, and the Chatbot. There were no significant concerns and the Group had agreed to meet again in September.
- **Leisure Strategy Task Group** – Councillor Gareth Hurley indicated that an informal meeting had taken place in May, which had been productive. The first formal meeting of the Task Group was scheduled for July, but the strategy would not be available for review until October / November.

Action: Gordon Oliver to circulate notes from the informal meeting.

It was suggested that the Leisure Strategy Task Group could review the previous version of the strategy and provide feedback.

It was suggested that future agenda items should include details of the active task and finish groups, their terms of reference and membership.

14. Health Scrutiny Committee Update

The Commission were updated by Councillor Claire Rowles on the activities of the Health Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 13):

- The Committee was formed on the 4th May 2021.
- Members had received training from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.
- The Committee had also received informal briefings from the Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch West Berkshire.
- The Chairman and Vice Chairman would be attending the virtual conference organised by the King's Fund on Health and Care.
- A page had been created on the intranet to provide a repository for useful guidance and other health scrutiny resources.
- The intention was to continue to hold informal briefings between meetings.
- The first formal meeting would be on 11 August 2021 to review the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the draft work programme.

15. West Berkshire Council Forward Plan 6 July to 31 October 2021

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan for the period covering 6 July 2021 to 31 October 2021 (Agenda Item 14).

It was highlighted that the version of the Forward Plan in the agenda papers was different to that published online. Similarly, Members highlighted that answers to formal questions were not being published in a timely manner.

It was advised that because the Forward Plan was published in advance of the meeting, it may not be the same as the latest version. **Action: Nick Carter to discuss this with the Monitoring Officer.**

Questions were asked about individual decision ID4114 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, and whether it required a public consultation process.

Action: Gordon Oliver to discuss this with the Monitoring Officer.

It was also suggested that if there were changes to the Forward Plan it would be helpful to have a note of when the change had been made and whether the item was on-time or delayed.

Members stressed the need for a Forward Plan with a longer time-scale to give OSMC a chance to engage earlier on key strategies.

Members did not identify any additional items on the Forward Plan that they wished to bring to OSMC.

16. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme for 2021/22 (Agenda Item 15).

The following changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission work programme were discussed:

- Future meeting dates would be changed to 31 August 2021, 14 December 2021 and 22 March 2022 – this would allow OSMC to comment on quarterly finance and performance reports before they went to Executive.
- The meeting on 14 October 2021 would be retained as a special meeting to focus on lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic.

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- Councillor Steve Masters requested that the Thames Water coming to the meeting on 22nd March 2022 item be expanded to include sewage management in relation to West Berkshire's watercourses.
Action: Councillor Masters to set out a proposal in an email to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
- Councillor Lee Dillon requested an item on the Council's telephone systems.
Action: Councillor Dillon to set out a proposal in an email to the Chairman.
- Councillor Claire Rowles asked that the Equalities and Diversity Strategy report focus on disability and how the Council engaged residents.

Members thanked Nick Carter for his regular attendance at OSMC meetings and for being open to being held to account.

Resolved that: the proposed changes to the work programme be agreed.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature