

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13TH MARCH 2018

Present:

Councillor Jenny Forde - Chairman
Councillors -
SI Andrews RA Morgan
Andrew Doherty SDE Parsons (until 1.00 p.m.)
RG Keeling NP Robbins

Observers:

SG Hirst (from 12.10 p.m.)

OS.38 SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

No substitution arrangements had been put in place.

OS.39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Member Declarations

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

(2) Officer Declarations

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

OS.40 MINUTES

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5th December 2017 be approved as a correct record;

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 0.

(b) subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February 2018 be approved as a correct record:-

(i) the insertion of the words 'subject to a review of their operation' at the end of point (i) in the final paragraph of the preamble to Minute OS.36;

(ii) the deletion of the word 'some' in the second line of point (ii) in the final paragraph of the preamble to Minute OS.36 and its replacement by the word 'many'.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 0.

Arising thereon:

(i) Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2021/22 (OS.37)

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the opportunity for Committee involvement in formulating the next round of budget consultation would be included within the future work programme.

(ii) Work Plan 2017/18 (OS.31)

The Head of Paid Service explained that representatives of the Cotswold Water Park Trust had thus far chosen not to take up the offer to make an informal presentation to the Committee.

OS.41 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) The Chairman welcomed the Council's Press and Media Liaison Officer, Mr. McNally, to the Meeting; and explained that Mr. McNally was available to provide support to the Committee in fulfilling its various roles. Mr McNally would undertake such duties alongside his current role.

(ii) The Chairman reported that she, alongside Mr. McNally and the Head of Paid Service, would be attending the South West Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Member event in Bath on 19th March 2018.

(iii) The Chairman also welcomed the Managing Director of Publica, the Head of Environmental Services, and Officers from the Council's Building Control Team to the Meeting.

OS.42 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

OS.43 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.44 CALLED-IN DECISIONS

No executive decisions had been the subject of Call-In since the Committee's previous Meeting.

OS.45 PUBLICA BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19

The Chairman briefly introduced the item and explained that the Committee was requested to consider the draft Publica Business Plan for 2018/19 and to forward any comments thereon to the Cabinet.

The Managing Director of Publica amplified various points of the Business Plan, which had been circulated within the Meeting papers. He drew attention to the Values of the company and explained that these had been developed over the previous 12 months and that the 'Vision and Objectives' were important symbols of the Company's future aims as a growing and improving organisation. The Committee was also informed that the Transformation Fund equated to £10m, but that this was partially funded through government grant.

The Managing Director explained that the creation of the company model had generated interest from other local authorities, and that a major case study would be launched in May 2018 for the District Councils Network. He highlighted that growth was about greater collaboration within an area, including town and parish councils, county councils and the Health Service; was geographic; and both internal and external. In conclusion, the Managing Director explained that he would be pleased to share the Transformation Plan with the Committee or a Liaison Group in due course, and informed the Committee that a Discovery Period was currently underway to enable the construction of the Plan which, once completed, would be shared with Members.

In response to Member questions, Officers confirmed that whilst the set-up costs had been more than expected, the transformation process would add no additional costs; future investment would focus on customers and users, and an 'improvement fund' would be established; digital capabilities were currently under-utilised in service delivery, and would therefore be maximised in order to secure improvement; the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was embedded as part of 'everyday working' and that Councillor training in relation to GDPR would be undertaken at the full Council Meeting in May 2018; and, there was no intention to start tendering for additional works as the main focus was on existing services.

A Member stated that, in his view, the Plan did not clearly highlight who were the customers of the Business Plan. The Chairman added that she also wished to seek clarity over who the services were being delivered for and the relationship between the Council and Publica insofar as delivery was concerned; and supported the suggestion that a single page document be produced for the front of the Business Plan, detailing Publica's relationship with the Councils and its customers and clients. The Chairman also stressed that no reference had been included with regard to the political landscape. In response, the Managing Director explained that the political landscape did not form part of the Business Plan, and that a change in administration would not result in any immediate change to the Plan's requirements as such changes would flow from revised aims and objectives which would then be worked into Service Plans. However, he agreed that a brief introductory/scene setting document could be produced.

Another Member highlighted that the Plan did refer to the upcoming 2019 Elections and potential political change across the partnership had been referenced/recognised. He also commented that the Plan was clearly still a 'work in progress' document, that it was not ready for consideration of approval by the Committee or Cabinet at present as the list of 'tangibles' would not be developed until April 2018. In conclusion, the Member explained that he considered the Plan consequently represented a framework, as opposed to a finished product, and requested it be re-presented to the Committee at a future Meeting.

In response to a Member's question regarding the relationships with Unions, the Managing Director explained that Consultation Groups had been in existence since February 2018 and that potential changes discussed had been in relation to travel and redundancy. He explained that relationships with the Unions were good and that minimal funding could be saved from the changing of any Terms and Conditions.

In response to further Member questions, it was reported that the new contribution-based pension scheme was ahead of the pension targets and, aside from delivering above expectations, was also not deemed to have had a negative impact on recruitment. In addition, the Flexible Benefits Scheme for staff would be launched at the beginning of April 2018, alongside the Staff Recognition Scheme which had launched during March 2018.

The Chairman enquired if there were any further new approaches to encourage diversity. The Managing Director explained that the Company would not be departmental/silo based but would, instead, be specialist skill and organisational based; there would be more fluidity amongst the organisation; the Gender Pay Gap would be published and that there would be greater flexible working arrangements and an increase in part-time and senior roles.

The Head of Paid Service concluded the item by providing a summary of the points raised by the Committee in the discussion, including:-

- the Committee acknowledged that the Business Plan was a first draft and, on this basis, was comfortable with the direction the Plan was taking;
- the Committee wished to seek clarity on the definition of 'customer' in relation to being a service recipient; and the difference between a 'client' and a 'customer';
- a single page document should be provided for use by Members at external events, such as Annual Parish Meetings;
- the final version Transformation Plan should be presented to the Member Liaison Group, and then as a formal paper to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet/Council;
- the inclusion of a target dates were welcomed;
- tasks completed by April 2018 be monitored to assess the consequent impact upon the Business Plan.

RESOLVED that the report be noted, and the comments made be forwarded to the Cabinet.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

OS.46 SERVICE DELIVERY PLANNING

The Head of Environmental Services introduced this item and explained that the Council was in the process of developing an approach to service delivery planning, including engagement with customers to reflect their needs.

Various aspects of the circulated report were amplified to the Committee and the Head of Environmental Services explained that the Plans would grow and as the document was more extensively used.

The Executive Director (Commissioning) of Publica explained that the report contained a set of plans for one service area and that the plans for the other service areas would be presented to the Committee once they had been finalised. The Executive Director highlighted that the report also demonstrated that Publica would provide different information to the partner Councils.

In response to various questions from Members, Officers confirmed that the document would be available in digital format and made accessible to Councillors in due course.

The Executive Director (Commissioning) also drew attention to the Service Plans for 2018/19, which it was hoped to present to the Committee's next Meeting, along with an update on Data and Metrics Work Scheme.

Looking forward, a cycle of service reviews would be undertaken to determine the best method for service delivery.

Various Members expressed their support for the identified approach, but considered there to be a need for a template plan to be produced, highlighting the relevant audience. Those Members also considered that the document could be simplified.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

OS.47 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING ENFORCEMENT - UPDATE

In introducing this item, the Chairman thanked the Development Management Team Leader for her work on the report which, she felt, highlighted that the service was taking 'positive steps in the right direction'. The Chairman also informed the Committee that the Team Leader would be attending the June 2018 Committee Meeting to respond to any questions and provide an update in relation to the Member and Parish Council enforcement training sessions.

A Member commented that it would be beneficial for the Committee to see a revised process diagram, highlighting the involvement of Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

OS.48 UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE BUILDING CONTROL ROADMAP (MARCH 2018)

The Service Business Manager introduced the item and provided Members with an update in relation to the progress that had been made in the implementation of the Building Control Roadmap. He amplified various aspects of the report and highlighted recent successes, including the ability to submit applications online and to book Sites Inspections via a mobile phone app, and explained that the

launch of additional products had effectively made the service a 'one-stop shop'. The Manager expressed the view that the separation of Building Support from Planning had proved beneficial to both service areas, allowing them to focus on their core business.

The Chairman and various Members commented upon the positive turnaround of the service. In response to a question, it was reported that there were 16 full-time members of staff overall, with some senior officers being employed on dual Council/Publica contracts to enable delegated decision-making in line with legislative requirements.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

OS.49 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2017/18
QUARTER 3

The Committee received a report summarising overall performance by the Council during Quarter 3 of the 2017/18 financial year, with particular focus on progress towards achieving the Council's top tasks and efficiency measures; and which also provided information on the Council's capital expenditure, capital receipts and the use of reserves. Officers amplified various aspects of the circulated report.

A Member enquired as to the differences in figures presented in relation to Building Control Inspections between the Summary Finance and Service Performance Report and those contained in the Building Control Roadmap report. In response, the Service Business Manager explained that the changes to the Building Control service would result in an additional £30,000 of income generated for the Council, but explained that market listing had had to be completed before increasing any Building Control charges.

Overall, Members considered that a net under-spend of £141,000 represented a 'fairly healthy' position for the Council.

Arising out of comments on the report, it was (i) requested that an explanation be provided in relation to the significant positive variance at the Packers Leaze site, owing to the possible controversy of the increased number of vehicles using the site; (ii) suggested that a further Meeting of the Broadband Working Group should be arranged; (iii) highlighted that the ICT department had only one Performance Indicator - the Customer Satisfaction Rate; and (iv) suggested that Police and Ambulance response times figures be broken down on a District basis, given public concerns over such response times.

RESOLVED that the report, and comments made, be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

OS.50 QUARTERLY DIGEST (INCLUDING COUNTY MATTERS)

The Committee received a Quarterly Digest, which included updates in respect of Gloucestershire County Council's Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel.

With regard to Health and Care, a Member explained that the reason the venue for the new hospital within the Forest of Dean had not been clearly stated in the consultation was that there was currently a discussion being undertaken across the towns of Lydney, Cinderford and Coleford regarding the location. He also commented that he considered the Winter Plan to be very encouraging and explained that the Trust had been regraded from 4 to 2, reflecting the large number of improvements that were taking place. The Member also informed the Committee that Performance Indicators for the ambulance service had changed and suggested that consideration be given as to how figures relating to ambulance response times within the District should be received/presented in the future.

Another Member, who also served on the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, explained that statistics from the South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) highlighted a steep rise in poor response times within the District.

It was agreed that SWASFT be requested to provide updated information relating to Ambulance response times within the District, for comparison with the data previously supplied to the Council at the end of the Trust's previous financial year, with the potential for the requested attendance of a representative from the Trust at a future Meeting of the Committee.

No other specific issues were highlighted.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

OS.51 WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Committee was requested to consider its forward work programme, including the identification of any other matters for possible consideration.

During the Committee's deliberations, the following additions/changes were agreed to the circulated programme:-

- June 2018 - an update on the Development Management and Planning Enforcement review;
- March 2019 - a review of Development Management and Planning Enforcement.

A Member commented that he wished to request a report regarding the Council's use of consultants and agreed to send details to the Officers.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the Work Programme be approved.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.

OS.52 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 1.05 p.m.

Chairman

(END)