

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5th FEBRUARY 2019

Present:

Councillor RG Keeling - Chairman

Councillors -

SI Andrews
Andrew Doherty
Jenny Hincks

RA Morgan
SDE Parsons
NP Robbins

Officers -

Head of Paid Service
Chief Finance Officer
Managing Director (Publica)
Executive Director Commissioning
(Publica)

Group Manager - Council & Company
Support (Publica)
Leisure Services Manager (Publica)
Committee Officers (Publica)

OS.32 SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

No substitution arrangements had been put in place.

OS.33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Member Declarations

Councillor Andrews declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item (12) - South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust - as he was a volunteer Community First Responder of the South West First Aid Trust.

There were no other declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Members or Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(2) Officer Declarations

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

OS.34 MINUTES

RESOLVED that, subject to the addition of the words 'for this information' in the third line of the eight paragraph of the preamble to Minute OS.25, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4th December 2018, be approved as a correct record.

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

OS.35 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

OS.36 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

OS.37 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.38 CALLED-IN DECISIONS

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

OS.39 PUBLICA UPDATE

The Committee received an update on issues relating to Publica, including service transformation and it was reported that the presentation would be published on the Council's website.

In introducing the item, the Head of Paid Service, as Lead Commissioner, provided an overview of the commissioning/monitoring arrangements with Publica. He explained that there was a wide range of arrangements in place, including the more formal Member Liaison Group meetings; briefings for Councillors and Officers; access to Publica Board meeting papers; Joint Corporate Management Team meetings, currently with Officers from Cotswold and West Oxfordshire and Publica, although it was hoped to include Officers from Forest of Dean in the future; membership of the Design Authority Group (DAG); formal quarterly monitoring reports; and unlimited access on individual items and with Publica Directors and staff.

The Managing Director, Executive Director (Commissioning) and Group Manager - Council & Company Support of Publica were in attendance to present the item to the Committee, and to respond to questions from Members.

The Managing Director explained that the transformation programme was progressing well. He emphasised that feedback from Councillors across the partnership was vital to the success of the programme, outside of Member Liaison Group meetings and briefings for Councillors. The potential for all Members to meet across the partnership was also being considered.

Members commented that this was an interesting change programme, and stressed the need for formal terms of reference to be in place for the various groups. Officers explained that the Publica Board had its own terms of reference; the Leaders signed off the terms of reference for the Member Liaison Groups; and the Memorandum of Understanding and legal documents contained other relevant information. It was considered that a structure chart on how these groups worked together, their purpose and who attended, would be useful. Officers explained that the risk register was presented to the DAG on a quarterly basis, prior to consideration by Members.

The Executive Director (Commissioning) and the Group Manager - Council and Company Support (Publica) explained that a commissioning strategy was being produced, which would underpin the framework strategies and policies of the partnership Councils and Publica. This would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee and the Cabinet. The strategy would apply across the partnership Councils and ensure that the priorities of the Councils were delivered efficiently and cost-effectively.

The Group Manager - Council and Company Support (Publica) presented a chart to Members explaining the process of service planning to help inform the priorities and key objectives to be included with each authority's Corporate Strategy/Plan; which, in turn, would inform the service plans and performance indicators, and feed into the budget setting cycle.

Officers drew attention to the rolling programme of service review and redesign, which would assist service delivery and improvement. A digital platform (Sales Force) had been purchased which would capture data and evidence to improve customer interaction, and future service delivery.

It was noted that, in its first year of operation, Publica had not only met but had exceeded the financial targets that had been set. Operationally, the focus was to create one organisation to serve four councils efficiently and effectively.

Members were concerned that the action to create a framework for monitoring, measuring and improving productivity/performance was off target. Officers explained that arrangements were in place to monitor activities and collect baseline data. Service reviews taking place would give a better view of what could be achieved and delivered.

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

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

OS.40 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2019/20 TO 2028/29

The Committee was requested to consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2019/20 to 2028/29, in the light of consultation feedback and other developments since its Meeting on 4th December 2018; and to provide feedback to the Cabinet and the Council as part of the Budget process.

To assist Members in their deliberations, the Chief Finance Officer amplified various aspects of the circulated report, particularly in relation to the key themes, which included:

- The final income from Retained Business Rates for 2019/20 had fallen from £3.5m to £3m as a result of verification of the draft business rate figures.
- The net budget position to be considered by Cabinet and Council had moved from a budget surplus of £12,000 to a deficit of £270,000, as shown in Section 9 of the updated report. The CFO Opinion, which formed part of the report to Cabinet and Council, referred to the adequacy of reserves.

The Chief Finance Officer responded to questions relating to the waste service contract, together with garden waste collections and fees for that optional service. Officers explained that there was now an alternative proposal, subject to Council approval, to continue with garden waste collections throughout the winter period.

Officers explained that contingency planning work with Members, which would include items such as: increasing council tax levels, increasing discretionary fees and charges and generating additional savings through partners such as Publica and Ubico would take place following the elections in May.

Whilst not wishing to make any recommendations, the Committee noted the following specific points, which it wished to pass on to the Cabinet for consideration as part of its deliberations:

- the reduced income from business rates (following verification of the estimates);
- the revised budget deficit;
- the increased savings targets in future years;
- the proposed council tax freeze;
- the proposed reduction in the garden waste service;
- comments from the budget consultation process, especially those regarding changes to the garden waste service and associated fee levels.

RESOLVED that the update report, and comments made, be noted.; and the identified comments be forwarded to the Cabinet and Council for consideration.

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

OS.41 STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES CONTRACT

The Leisure Services Manager (Publica) introduced this item and, in so doing, invited the Committee to comment on the scope for a review of the Leisure and Cultural Services Contract. The review related to Officer explained that the break clause in the 10 year contract could be invoked by the Council in July 2020, subject to six months' notice having been given - although the break clause would only be able to be invoked if SLM were not fulfilling the contract requirements.

It was explained that this review would be separate to, and precede, a more fundamental and holistic review as to future leisure and cultural provision at the end of the current contract period.

Members did not feel that they had sufficient information to contribute to the scoping exercise, particularly in terms of performance data, attendance statistics and, most importantly, whether the originally-specified contract outcomes were being delivered.

RESOLVED that a further report be submitted to the next Meeting, having regard to the feedback of Members.

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

OS.42 SOUTH WESTERN AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

The Head of Paid Service circulated a briefing paper which provided a general update on Trust activities and performance within Gloucestershire. Members commented that, if possible, it would be beneficial for performance data to be provided on a district-by-district basis.

The Head of Paid Service invited Members to submit to him any comments on the briefing paper, for a reply to be sent to the Trust. More generally, he would enquire if the Trust would be willing to provide six-month updates and, perhaps, an annual presentation.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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

OS.43 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 12.20 p.m.

Chairman

(END)