



Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 27 February 2024

Councillors present:

Len Wilkins

Gary Selwyn - Vice-Chair
(Acting Chair)

David Fowles

Angus Jenkinson

Dilys Neill

Michael Vann

Julia Judd

Clare Turner- (Acting Vice-
Chair)

Jon Wareing

Officers present:

Robert Weaver, Chief Executive

David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and
Chief Finance Officer

Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and
Development (Monitoring Officer)

Andrew Pollard, Interim Programme Director

Claire Locke, Assistant Director for Property
and Regeneration

Ana Prelici, Democratic Services Officer

Cabinet Members present:

Councillors Tony Dale- Cabinet Member for the Economy and Council Transformation, Mike Every - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Lisa Spivey- Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Safety

External Guests present:

Vivien Holland, Local Partnerships Project Director

OS.46 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Gina Blomefield, Tony Slater, David Cunningham and Tristan Wilkinson.

OS.47 Substitute Members

Gina Blomefield was substituted by Councillor Len Wilkins, Councillor Tony Slater was substituted by Councillor David Fowles, Councillor David Cunningham was substituted by Councillor Julia Judd and Councillor Tristan Wilkinson was substituted by Councillor Patrick Coleman.

OS.48 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

OS.49 Minutes

Members made amendments to the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January;

- A missing 'd' in Paul Hodgkinson
- The minutes on OS.36 and OS.37 were repeated
- The meeting end time read 17:15 but should have read 7:15pm

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January.

Voting Record For – 5, Abstentions 5, Against 0

There were no amendments to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November.

Voting Record For – 6, Abstentions 4, Against 0

OS.50 Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chair stated that the Committee resolved to track progress made with GWR following the meeting, and asked that this be added to the action tracker.

OS.51 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcement.

OS.52 Public Questions

Samantha Frith, a member of the public asked two questions of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Safety. The Cabinet Member responded to, the questions but stated that they would circulate a further written response if they felt one was needed after speaking to officers.

“Thames Water are pleading compliance on their sewage discharge permits, but some of these permits, however, are ancient and outdated, the sewage pumping station, for instance, in Moreton in Marsh, was issued in 1984 Moreton, has increased by 40% in the last 10 years alone and there are plans to increase the population even further in the near future.”

Will the Council ensure that the Environment Agency updates the permits before any further pressure on the sewage network increases the already high volume of untreated spills going into our rivers and streams?”

The Cabinet Member stated that they would be very happy to lobby the Environment Agency but stated that the Council had no legal powers.

“Given that the quality of the treated effluent being released into our rivers and streams is currently unacceptable, with high levels of unstripped phosphates and chemicals flowing straight through the process having been untreated and are not being removed. Even more concerning is that this toxic cocktail will then be abstracted from our rivers and then given back to us diluted as drinking water. We have a flush and forget society and poor education

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on the consequences of what we poured down our drain, including highly toxic household cleaning chemicals.

There are now plenty of plant-based, environmentally friendly alternatives, so chemicals labelled 'harmful to aquatic life with long lasting effects' should not be allowed to be freely poured into our AONB community. So I ask you, will the Council lobby for a ban on the sale of his offer shelf toxic household chemicals? ”

The Cabinet Member stated that this would also be happy to lobby on this, but would speak to officers regarding this and follow up with a written response.

OS.53 Member Questions

There were no Member Questions

OS.54 Publica Review - Local Partnerships Transition Plan

The Chair stated that the item would be taken as the first substantive item on the agenda.

The purpose of the report was to consider the Local Partnerships report and for Cabinet to approve the recommendations therein.

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the item and invited the Interim Programme Director for the Publica Transition and the Local Partnerships Project Director to speak to the Committee. The Interim Programme Director introduced their experience, including experience of establishing and disbanding Teckal companies.

The Interim Programme Director explained that they had set up a programme office including officers from human resources and finance. The Director was involved in the build-up phase of the project, utilising the framework that local partnerships had put into place.

The Interim Programme Director stated that an early finding was that there was no overarching Publica structure chart, and one was being set up to ease the transition.

The Director from Local Partnerships also introduced the report, the aim of which was to provide high level recommendations for the Programme Director to utilise in setting up the transition programme.

The Cabinet Member for the Local Economy and Council Transformation referred to the recommendations to Cabinet resulting from the report.

As well as raising broader questions about the programme members discussed the report and its annexes. Members raised the following points which were addressed by Officers and the Cabinet Member;

- As in their introduction, the programme director confirmed that there was no overarching Publica structure chart.
- Members referred to the accountable officer on the report, which was listed as the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive confirmed that future reports would likely be in the Programme Director's name instead.
- Members referred to the complexity involved with officers working for multiple stakeholder councils. The Programme Director stated that at previous organisation they had set up a time sheet as means of recording who was working at each Council but such a system was not currently in place for Publica employees.

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- Members discussed the timescales for commencing the transition. The Programme Director emphasised that delivering the transition quickly was important but that they did not yet have specific timescales besides those suggested by Local Partnerships in their report. In regard to which employees would be transferred when, the Programme Director and the Director from Local Partnerships stated that the areas to be transferred first were 'easier' areas and that the more complex ones would be left within Publica until a later stage. The phases had come out of the workshops and the officers felt it was important to include these. However, the Director from Local Partnerships emphasised that the Programme Director could be flexible with this if the partner councils wished to be.
- Members discussed the design led model of the approach, and asked the officers which approach had been taken. The Programme Director stated that the approach had been designed based on the six principles in the Local Partnerships report but that there was no particular systems model they had chosen. The Cabinet Member stated that the current organisational structure could best be described as 'matrix' (in programme management terms).
- Officers and Members agreed on the importance of communication throughout the process as a way to maintain staff retention throughout.
- Members discussed cost, and specifically the ability to find efficiencies as part of the transition process. The Programme Director said that opportunities to do so would exist but that the decisions would be of the Partner Councils, if they chose to take them.
- Members discussed the PID (programme/project initiation document) and confirmed that the Programme Director would be writing this alongside the Director from Local Partnerships.
- The focus groups had only included senior members of staff, with no consultation of staff carrying out non-managerial roles. The Programme Director stated that this was due to the lack of time available to include non-managerial staff, but assured members that they would be speaking to officers at all levels in the coming months.

The Chair thanked Officers, the external guest and the Cabinet Member for attending the meeting and members for their input.

RESOLVED: To note the report

OS.55 River Quality/Sewage

The Committee adjourned for ten minutes before continuing.

The Assistant Director for Business Services introduced the item, highlighting the work that had been undertaken in the area, outlining the responsible organisations and their roles. The presentation was accompanied with a slide deck (included in the minute annex).

The Assistant Director also highlighted the recent successes in engaging with partners such as Thames Water and drew members' attention to the upcoming sewage summit.

Members discussed the presentation, raising the following points;

- The Assistant Director confirmed that the water working group was not a formal working group and therefore not politically proportional. Members suggested to the Cabinet Member that one should be set up, although some members noted that care should be taken to avoid derailing existing arrangements. Councillor David Fowles,

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having proposed this, committed to writing to the Cabinet Member detailing the proposed scope of the working group.

- The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Sewage Summit would be open to residents and Town and Parish Councils.
- Members highlighted that the presentation did not list everyone in attendance at the MP's flooding meeting. The Assistant Director stated that the list was intended to provide a summary, as they were aware that many parties attended these.
- Members also suggested that Council write to Severn Trent requesting an interactive flood map.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. Noted the update
2. Agreed to submit two recommendations to Cabinet:
 - a. That the Council writes to Severn Trent requesting an interactive flooding map.
 - b. That the Council forms a Rivers and sewage Working Group, considering the composition and scope through its terms of reference.

Voting record – For 6, Against 2, Abstentions 2

OS.56 Q3 Performance Report 2024

At this point Councillor David Fowles left the room. They apologised to the Chair as they had another commitment.

The Chief Executive introduced the item. They were joined by the Business Manager for Resources, Data and Growth, the Business Information and Performance Lead, and the Senior Performance Analyst. The purpose of the item was to provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance.

Members discussed the report and raised the following points:

- There were concerns around the Climate and Sustainability actions, which had several off target actions. Members specifically discussed the delays around delivering electric vehicle (EV) charging. The Assistant Director stated that these had been supply-side delays, and they were working with providers to secure a connection date. Officers shared Members' frustrations but were hopeful for an April connection date.
- The phrase 'highest standard of service' was potentially unachievable by nature of its definition. The Chief Executive stated that they would consider rephrasing this.
- Members noted that there were several acronyms within the report which were unexplained. The Chief Executive assured Members that these would be avoided or explained in future reports. It was explained that 'CD' was community builder.
- The revised timetable for delivering the Down Ampney Scheme was discussed. The Assistant Director stated that the bigger issues such as the drainage schemes had been resolved, and that the application would be ready for resubmission soon.
- The Chief Executive explained that the Council was exploring ways to bring long term empty properties back into use.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the report.

OS.57 Q3 Financial Performance Report 2024

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the item. The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the current position, stating that the key headlines had largely remained the same from the previous report.

Members discussed the report. It was clarified that 'early stage' on page 102 of the report referred to early stage of the reporting cycle. There were no additional comments or questions.

RESOLVED: To NOTE the report.

OS.58 Report back on recommendations

There were no comments on this item.

OS.59 Updates from Gloucester County Council Scrutiny Committees

Councillor Angus Jenkinson explained that there were delays due to waiting for the Gloucestershire City Region Board to convene, and that the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee

Councillor Dilys Neill explained that the next meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be on March 12.

OS.60 Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Assistant Director Property & Regeneration explained that the Climate and Ecology item would be deferred to May and that the Housing topic had been covered substantially so suggested that the Committee may want to reconsider it. The Work Plan would be considered at the meeting in April.

The Chair thanked the Committee, and thanked Councillor Clare Turner for acting as vice-chair.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 6.43 pm

Chair

(END)