

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 13th April, 2017.

Present:- Councillors Nazir (Chair), Strutton (Vice-Chair), Bedi, N Holledge, Parmar, Sadiq, A Sandhu and R Sandhu

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Usmani

PART I

76. Declarations of Interest

None received.

77. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 9th March 2017

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2017 be approved as a correct record.

78. Action Progress Report

Members were reminded of the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made at its meeting on 9th March 2017, that the Cabinet support the exploration of a Business Improvement District (BID) for Slough as the best possible solution for revitalising Slough town centre. The Committee were informed that the Cabinet agreed that further work should be undertaken with businesses and partners in the town centre before bringing a further report on the BID proposal to Cabinet at a later date.

Resolved – That details of the Action Progress Report be noted.

79. Member Questions

None received.

80. Presentation: Policing Strategy In Slough - Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Scrutiny Officer explained that due to unforeseen circumstances the Police and Crime Commissioner was unable to attend the meeting. It was noted that arrangements would be made for the item to be rescheduled for the new municipal year.

81. Local Government Association Communications Peer Challenge

The Assistant Director, Strategy & Engagement, introduced a report that set out the recommendations of a recent Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge of the Council's communications function and the action plan developed in response to the feedback.

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(Councillor Sadiq joined the meeting)

The process was part of the LGA's support to authorities and the review had taken place in November 2016 by a team that included experienced communications professionals from the LGA and other local authorities. A significant amount of good work had been recognised, however, the review highlighted a lack of a strategic approach to communications to explain the Council's ambition and direction and a number of short, medium and long term actions had been identified to address this issue.

Members discussed the process undertaken, particularly the involvement of non-Executive councillors, and it was responded that the LGA team had identified those they wished to interview as part of the review. This included the Leader of the Opposition, partners and senior officers from across the Council. The report to the Committee provided an opportunity for scrutiny to shape the Council's response to the review. Clarification was sought on the timeline for implementing the recommendations and it was noted that some had already been actioned, for example, the appointment of an Interim Head of Strategic Communications who would play in a leading role in responding to the LGA's findings and make the necessary changes to communications activity and operation. The Assistant Director was confident that the timescales set out in the action plan would be met and much of the work was already underway. The Committee agreed to receive a progress update on implementation in the Autumn of 2017.

The Committee recognised the importance of the Council's communications function in terms of how the authority was perceived and how it engaged with residents and partners. The Assistant Director highlighted that the focus was much wider than the local press and included raising the Council and town's profile at a national level, for example on economic development, and in the trade press. Members raised a number of specific issues including communication with residents and the future opportunities to improve engagement.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee noted the LGA Peer Challenge report and the Council's action plan and agreed to consider a progress update later in the year.

Resolved –

- (a) That details of the report be noted.
- (b) That the LGA's recommendations contained within the Action Plan, as appended to the report, be endorsed.
- (c) That the Committee be provided with an update on implementation and progress of recommendations, contained within the action plan, in Autumn 2017.

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82. Performance and Projects Report Quarter 3 2016/17

The Head of Financial Reporting introduced a report that update the Committee on the latest performance information on the balanced scorecard indicators for the third quarter of 2016-17 and progress on a range of major projects.

The Council was either on or very close to target on more than three-quarters of balanced scorecard indicators. Members' attention was drawn to the three indicators receiving a 'red' RAG status – crime rates per 1,000 population and two relating to 'excess weight' in primary school children. The main areas of variance from the second quarter were also noted that included the Council Tax collection rate and proportion of residents signed up to self-service. The project updates were noted, including four transport, highways and leisure schemes which had experienced delays during the reporting period.

The Committee welcomed the more streamlined presentation of the report which made it easier to identify the areas where further management action was required. In response to a question about how resources were allocated, the Officer stated that refreshed Five Year Plan outcomes provided a clear focus for the targeting of resources. During the course of the discussion Members requested further information on the following matters:

- Proportion of residents signed up for self service - further details to be provided as to why the self service sign up rate had dropped from 12.6% to 9.4%.
- Burnham Station scheme - clarification regarding the Local Enterprise Fund and its contribution, if any, towards the Burnham Station Improvements.
- Children with excess weight at Primary School - Further information relating to what specific measures had been implemented to address the issue.

The Committee discussed a number of other specific aspects of the report including the School Place Programme and household recycling rates. At the end of the discussion, Members noted the report.

Resolved – That the Council's current performance, as measured by the indicators within the balanced scorecard and update on Gold Projects, be noted.

83. Financial Update Month 11 2016/17

The Head of Financial Reporting introduced a report that provided the Committee with the latest forecast financial information to the end of February 2017.

The Council was forecasting a General Fund revenue underspend of £18,000 at Month 11, which was a considerable improvement of £436,000 on the forecast overspend reported for the previous month. The overspend in Adult

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Social Care of £859,000 remained due to the increasing levels of need for existing clients receiving domiciliary care. However, this was offset by underspends in other directorates with particular improvement reported in additional investment income leading to the overall forecast to balance the budget for the year. Slippage in the Capital Programme was 11% and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was forecasting an underspend.

Members asked whether the overspend in Adult Social Care would have an impact on the budget for the next financial year. The Officer responded that the continued pressures in Adult Social Care had been reflected in the 2017-18 revenue budget and the Council would start from a more realistic position, however, it was recognised that as a demand led service it was difficult to accurately predict the exact position over the coming year. Clarification was sought on the reasons for the HRA underspend and it was noted that this was primarily due to delays in some works.

The Committee discussed a number of aspects of the Capital Programme set out in Appendix B to the report. Slippage in a number of projects was reported and it was requested that explanatory notes to be incorporated into future reports to summarise the reasons for such delays. A Member sought clarification on scheme PO60 Station Forecourt and further information as to which station forecourt this referred to was requested. Members were assured that the Capital Strategy Board closely monitored all projects and the level of slippage was significantly reduced compared to previous years as result of the management action that had been taken.

At the end of the discussion, the Committee noted the report.

Resolved – That details of the latest financial forecast be noted.

84. Review of the Council's Insurance Function

The Senior Risk & Insurance Officer introduced a report with guidance on the current provisions for the Council's insurance function.

At its meeting on 12th January 2017, the Committee discussed the progress made on the insourcing of Environmental Services. As part of the discussion, Members had raised the issue of SBC's liability to staff who would be under its employment. Assurances were sought that the liability scheme was sufficiently robust to ensure that such employees would be in receipt of appropriate cover. The Head of Financial Reporting had therefore provided the guidance on the insurance scheme and SBC's liability and the report outlined a series of matters, including the insurance market; SBC's staff working on insurance; the procurement and renewal of SBC's insurance scheme; the costs of the insurance scheme; and excesses.

The Committee was given assurance that discussions had been held with the Council's insurance providers to ensure the required provision was in place for employees engaged in any Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) that was established. Members asked a number of questions about the levels

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of excess and rights of tenants to which the Officer responded. At the conclusion of the discussion, the report was noted.

Resolved – That details of the report be noted.

85. Annual Scrutiny Report 2016/17

The Scrutiny Officer outlined details of the Annual Scrutiny Report 2016/17 for Members consideration. The annual report included a review of the scrutiny work programme for the past year and assessed the impact scrutiny had had on influencing policy and holding the Executive to account. In particular, the Committee's work, in conjunction with the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on housing was highlighted. Significant work had been undertaken during 2016/17 in relation to the Council's Housing Service, which included the Housing Revenue Account, the allocations policy and addressing issues regarding homelessness.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chair of the Committee and all Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the panels for their support and leadership throughout the year. Officers were also thanked for their contributions to the Overview and Scrutiny function.

Recommended to Council – That the Annual Scrutiny Report 2016/17 be endorsed.

86. Annual Petitions Report 2016/17

The Senior Democratic Services Officer provided the committee with details of the Annual Petitions Report 2016/17. A total of 23 petitions had been received for the period April 2016 to March 2017. A summary of the subject matter and response to the petitions was noted.

Resolved – That details of the Annual Petitions Report 2016/17 be noted.

87. Attendance Record

Resolved – That details of the Members' Attendance Record 2016/17 be noted.

88. Date of Next Meeting - 13th June 2017

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 13th June 2017.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.42 pm)