

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 12th May, 2014

Present:- Councillors John Bull (Chair), Roger Symonds (Vice-Chair), Colin Barrett, Charles Gerrish, Barry Macrae, Nigel Roberts and Liz Richardson

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Paul Myers sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Liz Richardson.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

6 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

7 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

8 OFFICE SPACE - ALLOCATION UPDATE

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director for Resources, gave a presentation to the Panel on 'Changing How We Work #onecouncil' (a copy of the presentation is on the website)

with the agenda papers for this meeting). The presentation covered the following points:

- One Council – Workplaces Principles
- One Council – better ICT
- One Council – Workplaces benefits
- Our Offices
- Keynsham: Teams 'based' here
- Lewis House: Teams 'based' here
- Hollies: Teams 'based' here
- St Martin's: Teams 'based' here
- Guildhall: Teams 'based' here
- Offices: overview
- Timeline

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

In response to a question from Councillor Barrett, the Director explained that monitoring is carried out and so far objectives are being met and surpassed.

Councillor Barrett asked if hot-desking is working well in other authorities. The Director explained that in Wiltshire and Hampshire it is working very well. He explained that Bristol Council are not following the same programme as this Council so it was not comparable.

Regarding Strategic Directors desks/rooms, Councillor Macrae stated that he felt that it is good for Directors to be moving around the authority.

Councillor N Roberts stated that lots of large companies are re-organising to enable more 'corridor conversations'. He also explained that cutting space did mean not having to lose jobs. The Director confirmed that this project did not involve losing staff.

Councillor Gerrish stated that he endorsed what is proposed as he often sees empty desks in Council offices.

Councillor Barrett asked about the possible increase in home working and if this would affect member's ability to contact staff. The Director explained that staff would be contactable.

Councillor Symonds asked about video conferencing and stated that officers could use this facility when reporting at meetings rather than sit in the meeting waiting for their item. The Director explained that there would be video conferring facilities in meeting rooms only at this stage but this may develop.

Councillor Bull asked if staff satisfaction would be measured. The Director agreed that it could be built into the staff survey.

Councillor Gerrish asked about a medium term strategy regarding the use of St Martin's which he feels is not very accessible. The Director explained that the plan is not to use St Martin's as there should be enough space in other buildings.

Members asked that they receive an update report in six months.

9 PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSFORMATION NETWORK - UPDATE

David Trethewey, Divisional Director Strategy and Performance, gave a presentation to the Panel on 'Public Service Transformation Network' (a copy of this presentation is on the website with the agenda papers for the meeting). The presentation covered the following points:

- What is the Public Services Transformation Network
- Who is in the Network
- Why have we joined?
- How does it work?
- Case Study: into Sustainable Work
- The opportunity – Working together
- What are the key issues?

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Macrae asked about meaningful comparisons regarding the other authorities in the network. The Divisional Director explained that you can link with whichever authority is either most like your own or regarding best practice. Councillor Macrae questioned the comparison of domestic violence levels between this authority and Manchester. It was explained that where figures may not be comparable, we can learn from other authorities. Councillor Symonds stated that the network was about sharing good practice.

Councillor Richardson stated that, regarding the 'affordable warmth' issue, many rural areas in this authority use oil which is expensive.

The Divisional Director explained that the Network can also be used as a link into Government.

Following a question from Councillor Richardson, the Divisional Director explained that it is a loose network and therefore could be expanded. He explained that the Government is facilitating Local Authorities.

Councillor Macrae asked how many of the other authorities in the network have Curo type organisations. The Divisional Director explained that the Energy at Home project involves Curo. He further stated that Curo share information with other providers.

Councillor Bull asked that the postponed visit to the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) be re-organised.

10 FINANCING AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PROPOSED GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE (LOWER BRISTOL ROAD)

Graham Sabourn – Head of Housing gave a brief introduction noting that the Panel have an interim report in their papers and that a full report on this will come to a future meeting.

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Gerrish stated that there had been a lot of talk of the overall amount spent. He stated that the standard of pitches is an area for debate and that it would be useful to get information from other authorities and what they are providing. He asked if the Sustainable Urban Drainage best practice has been considered as the pitches would be concrete hard standing. The officer explained that it is non-permeable ground.

Councillor Bull suggested a visit to an existing site to enable panel members to have a better understanding of the reason for the level of expenditure. The officer explained that the key issue is understanding the issues around this site.

Councillor Symonds referred the DCLG guidance document and stated that many of the Panel's questions may be answered in this document. Councillor Macrae stated that he had read this document and noted that many of the recommendations are not mandatory. The officer agreed that many of the recommendations are desirable but some are conditions when you bid for funding.

After some comments about the need for pitches, the Strategic Director explained that the issue had been referred to the Panel with a questions mark around the budget on the site. He explained that a more detailed report would be brought to the next meeting and that a visit or desk top survey could be done prior to the next meeting.

Councillor David Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Community Resources stated that if members wanted a site visit, that would be reasonable but suggested only the Chair and two others as visits are expensive. He stated that the site may include major highways work and the Panel must satisfy itself that the money is spent well. He stated that the administration would not change on the fact that a site will be provided.

The Chair reminded the Panel that there would be a full report on this issue at their July meeting.

11 KEYNSHAM TOWN CENTRE SCHEME - RETAIL UPDATE

Richard Long, Head of Property Services and Mike Dawson, Group Manager – Commercial introduced the report. They passed around a marketing brochure (this brochure is kept on the minute book for the Panel).

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Macrae commented on the positive image and asked about reporting back at the stage when applications had been sifted. The Group Manager (Commercial) explained that there is a monthly check around the applications and sifting stage which explains the potential consequences in each case.

Councillor Gerrish stated that the information in the report bore little resemblance to what local businesses feel. He reported that there is some dissatisfaction around mixed message from DTZ and the Council. He explained that the Council has employed a business advice company for the businesses in Riverside but that this company had provided minimal help. He re stated that there is significant dissatisfaction among local traders who feel they are not getting answers and are hearing different messages. He asked if it was correct that there was a surplus of applicants for the new units. The officer confirmed that there are two companies talking to the existing Riverside tenants, one of which is business support. He stated that there are six offers, three from existing tenants from Riverside. The Strategic Director stated that this had been important feedback from Councillor Gerrish, he noted that the Council is not the landlord of Riverside and does not therefore have full control. Councillor Bull agreed that it was uncomfortable feedback. Councillor Gerrish stated that businesses feel they are in limbo as they have been running businesses for many years, they don't know the level of compensation so they cannot plan to rent new units/stock them/fit them out as they do not have the financial information to make these decisions. The Strategic Director stated that a message must go out to traders giving a timetable of what is going on.

12 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

David Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Community Resources, updated the Panel on the following:

- On procurement, there is slow but good progress and there will be a chart at the September Cabinet meeting showing the value of contracts and level of use of local traders which may be scrutinized.

Councillor Barrett asked about the use of consultants and of agency staff and the associated costs. Councillor Bellotti agreed that this must be monitored but that there are examples of where the use of a consultant is efficient.

- The Keynsham Project is on time and on budget.
- Roman Baths – high numbers are continuing.

13 PANEL WORKPLAN

With the following addition, the Panel noted the future workplan:

- Office Space Accommodation/Changing How We Work – Update (November 2014)

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services