

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday, 14th September, 2016

Present:- Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chair), Bob Goodman (Vice-Chair), Christopher Pearce, Jasper Becker, Colin Barrett, Chris Dando and Andrew Furse

24 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

25 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barrett stated that he is an honorary members of WWISE.

28 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Pamela Galloway – WWISE made a brief statement thanking the Panel for support regarding warm water swimming at Bath Leisure Centre. She informed the Panel that GLL are looking at their proposals and will be producing a report in due course. Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources added that a meeting will be set up with WWISE members and the Leader of the Council and Councillor Veal – Cabinet member for Community Services.

30 MINUTES

Following the amendments shown below, the Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman:

- The question and answer document will be appended to the minutes;
- WWISE reference should read 'Bath Leisure Centre' not Keynsham.

31 COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT REVIEW

Ian Savigar, Divisional Director Customer Service introduced the report. He explained that the authority is planning to implement a revised scheme for Local Council Tax Support for people of working age from April 2017. He explained that a public consultation on a preferred scheme is underway and concludes in October 2016. He referred to an update sheet handed out at the meeting 'Summary of Responses to New LCTS Scheme Public Consultation' (appended to the minutes).

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Barrett asked if the numbers of responses had met expectation. The officer stated that, so far, yes this met expectations. The officer also explained that the number of people receiving benefits has decreased.

Councillor Pearce asked where the £4m for the scheme comes from and if there is additional money or if the revised scheme is just about how the money is allocated. The officer confirmed that the revised scheme has the same cost but will contain changes in how the money is allocated. Councillor Pearce asked if there is likely to be substantial winners and losers. The officer stated that between 400-500 will significantly lose out but the scheme is designed to be better and fair, so that number is offset by winners who have higher levels of need, and the Welfare Support Team will gain some additional funding to support those who are most affected.

Councillor Dando referred to the potentially unhappy respondents and asked if the money could be split differently. The officer explained that there would be people who will lose out as well as those that gain but overall the aim is for a simpler and fairer system more in line with Universal Credits. Councillor Dando spoke to officers regarding the best way to get full information on this issue.

Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources, explained that with any changes in the benefit system there will be people who are differently impacted and that people who have less as a result of these changes will be targeted by the Welfare Support Team. He confirmed that it is the process that is being changed, not the overall spend.

Following a question from Councillor Furse, the officer explained that 55 responses had been received and the total number of claimants is 5, 500. Councillor Furse stated that we have to be careful as this is such a small sample. Councillor Furse asked if a better taper could be considered as there seems to be a cliff edge. The officer explained that most people fall into band 3 so the perceived issue is not as great as it might appear and there is a limit to the number of bands that can be achieved.

Councillor Becker asked how the Universal Credit system is working. The officer explained that this system has been in place since May this year and that Housing Benefit numbers have come significantly down. He explained that there have been some teething problems around temporary accommodation but that this has had more of an effect on Curo (new applicants have to wait 5 weeks for the first payment). Administratively it is working well so far.

32 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ticki Toogood, Organisational Development Manager gave a presentation on Organisational Development to the Panel which covered the following:

- What is Organisational Development?
- Corporate Strategy
- Our progress
- OD principles
- Emerging Themes
- What will success look like?

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Pearce asked how OD is different from other approaches. The officer explained that it is about involving people, getting ownership and getting people to be involved in solutions to problems. Andrew Pate, Strategic Director for Resources explained that the organisation has changed over the last 4/5 years and will change again in the next 4/5 years. He explained that the leadership team has worked on this approach to ensure that people are more alive to changes and that silos are broken down. Councillor Pearce asked if this learning has filtered down, the Director explained that work has been done to get the message out but this is a challenge. He explained that if the PDR system is simpler, it is more likely to work.

Councillor Barrett asked if the authority grows its own talent and does this show in the percentage of staff that are promoted rather than being recruited externally. He also pointed to the recent move away from external support and asked if savings have been made. William Harding – Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the reference in the report refers to the spend on OD rather than spend in general. In past year £100-£130k has been spent on external help and now it is £20 - £30k. He stated that the point regarding growing internal talent is valid and more attention is now being put to learning and development.

Councillor Furse commented that there is a balance to be struck between maintaining a highly skilled workforce and making savings. The Strategic Director added that apprenticeships and developing skills are important. He explained that this presentation is new and is at an early stage but that it will help the organisation.

Councillor Dando stated that it is a good presentation about getting ownership from individuals and it is good this is being done internally.

Councillor Goodman asked if salaries have an impact in officers rising through the ranks of the organisation. The officer stated that there is another piece of work being done regarding the workforce and development plan in the financial context.

William Harding added that in this 'millennial generation' there is a body of evidence that motivations are different from past generations and money is not always the main motivation. He added that for the first time there will be five generations in the workforce.

33 COMMUNICATIONS

Jonathan Mercer – Communications Manager gave a presentation to the Panel which covered the following:

- The Media Landscape
- Worldmap of Facebook Users
- Sky news on social media
- Changes in the media
- Changing behaviour
- Interest access in the UK and the Digital Divide
- What are we successfully doing now?
- Successful video campaigns
- Engaging suitable content reaches more
- The future – opportunities and challenges
- Social Media – Real time updates
- Social Media – recruiting
- Social Media – events
- Volunteers: recruiting and recognition
- Integrated campaigns on and off line
- Improving engagement with staff
- Channel shift and raising income
- New commercial website approach – mobile enabled
- Stripped back Council website – find information in seconds
- Reaching across the digital divide
- More lifestyle information on local radio
- Connect magazine
- Media/community response
- What will communications look like in 2 years.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Barrett asked if there is an issue with abusive emails, the officer explained that there can be aggressive emails but not bullying. Accounts can be blocked if necessary.

Councillor Dando asked if the search engine will be developed and also if the Council sees its role as supporting local media. The officer explained that the website will be made much simpler during its next stage of development and be made more mobile friendly. He further explained that all press releases are sent to the local media.

Councillor Becker asked how many people in the authority do not have internet access. The officer explained that the national figure is 10%.

34 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources updated the Panel that the Government have announced a change in the business rates system and this authority has applied to be in the pilot.

35 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan with the following additions:

The Panel may have Directorate Plans in January 2017 – this is to be confirmed.

Councillor Furse stated that the Panel should look at outturn reports to assess whether the authority has achieved objectives and is on the right trajectory. The Cabinet Member explained that it is a dilemma as there is no guarantee to get the figures for September for the November meeting – the timing may be wrong.

It was agreed that the Chair will liaise with the Strategic Director on when is the best time for the Panel to receive meaningful information.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services