

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 30th January, 2017

Present:- Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chair), Bob Goodman (Vice-Chair), Jasper Becker, Colin Barrett, Chris Dando, Lizzie Gladwyn (in place of Christopher Pearce) and Ian Gilchrist (in place of Andrew Furse)

47 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

48 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Furse gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Gilchrist.

Councillor Pearce gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Gladwyn.

50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

51 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Nicolette Boater made a statement to the Panel regarding the Resources Directorate Plan. *A copy of this statement is attached to these minutes and available on the Council's minute book.*

The Chair stated that a copy of the statement would be forwarded to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Tim Warren.

Andy Halliday made a statement to the Panel regarding the potential move of Bath Library. *A copy of this statement is attached to these minutes and available on the Council's minute book.*

The Chair stated that a copy of the statement would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Community Services, Councillor Martin Veal.

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director Resources, explained that the proposals referred to are in the third year of a financial plan and there will be a separate decision on the proposal. Consultation on the proposal will begin early next month. He also referred to some incorrect information on this issue on social media.

53 MINUTES

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

The following comments were noted:

- Councillor Gilchrist asked about the progress on two things that Councillor Furse requested at the last meeting – information on the Risk Register for the East of Bath Park and Ride and information on expenditure (since 2008) on the same issue. Officers confirmed that they are following up these requests. Councillor Barrett asked that the separate expenditure on appeals be made clear.

54 RESOURCES DIRECTORATE PLAN 2016-2017

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director for Resources, introduced the report

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

Councillor Goodman stated that last year there were several hopeful income streams, he asked if these figures have been met and what areas of income are at risk. The Strategic Director explained that there is a report on Budget Monitoring on the Cabinet agenda (meeting date 1st February 2017) where this information is available and Appendix 4 details future risks. Tim Richens, Divisional Director – Business Support explained that the Resources income targets are on track.

Councillor Gilchrist asked about the Property Company (ADL) and whether there will be a regular progress report and also if it will seek to serve social housing. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency Councillor Charles Gerrish explained that a progress report will be produced and so far it is ahead of budget. Regarding social housing, he explained that it is a dilemma, social housing is provided by Curo and the Council cannot re-enter the social housing market. He explained that the process for agreeing on new developments is that proposals go to both the ADL board and within the Council. The Strategic Director stated that the Annual Report by ADL may be something that this Panel could take an interest in.

Councillor Becker asked how proposed cuts effect the overall staffing of the Council and how does this compare with other Councils. The Cabinet Member explained that it is difficult to give a comparison because this authority does different things to others such as Heritage Services and also the sizes of Councils differ. He added that there will be job losses over the 3 year period but that this would mainly occur in year 3.

Councillor Paul May (Cabinet Assistant for Finance and Efficiency) explained that the process has been proper and logical including consideration of schemes that will reduce costs as well as considering benchmarking information. Consultants have been used to help with priorities and work has been done with the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development regarding levels of pay.

Councillor Gilchrist asked about energy services and how BANES was aiming to outprice larger companies. He also noted the difficulties in getting people to convert. David Trethewey, Divisional Director Strategy and Performance, explained that the authority would be going into a partnership agreement, not setting up alone. The procurement will test the market. He added that it is an aim to extend possible savings to those experiencing fuel poverty. The Strategic Director explained that the risk rating is 'H' (high) (page 38) due to it being part way through the process, there will have to be a Cabinet decision to take it forward.

Councillor Dando stated that it is difficult to scrutinize the proposals due to the lack of detail, especially in terms of risk. He explained that the Library service changes are shown as proposals yet the saving is shown here already. He added that there is time to get more detail on this as Library proposals are for year 3 of the budget but he hopes to have more detail before the Council meeting. He restated that the Panel needs more details on proposed savings. The Strategic Director explained that the proposed savings regarding the Library Service are primarily in year 3 of the financial plan so are mainly not for approval as part of budget setting for 2017/18 and there will be a detailed business plan and consultation on this. He added that this would also go back to Cabinet for an executive decision about the capital investment prior to implementation.

It was noted that items such as 'Digital by Choice' could come back to the Panel for discussion and consideration as detailed plans are developed. The Cabinet Member stated that while the 'Digital by Choice' item recognises the growing demand for digital services, the opportunity for people to access the Council services non-digitally will remain.

Councillor Gilchrist noted the Thermae Spa profit share and suggested the authority build its own Spa. The Cabinet Member had no comment.

The Panel noted that the Cabinet Member had heard their comments on the Resources Directorate Plan and that the following issues could come back to the Panel (or other PDS panels) with more details at the appropriate time:

- ADL progress report;
- Library proposals;
- Digital by Choice.

55 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2017/18 AND FINANCIAL OUTLOOK 2017/18 TO 2019/20

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director for Resources, introduced the report. He explained that the report contains more detail for year 1 and less for years 2 and 3. He reminded the Panel that the Council will be setting the budget for 2017/18 (not the future years) at its meeting on 14th February 2017.

Tim Richens, Divisional Director – Business Support highlighted the main points as the Panel went through the report.

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

(Budget report papers pages 7-117)

Councillor Goodman asked about the Retained Local Business Rates scheme and if the retention on growth remains in 2019/20. The Officer explained the pilot scheme allows the authority to keep 50% of growth at present but that the scheme goes national in 2020 and the baseline will be reset. He further explained that the Government aim is that the authority keeps Business Rates but that other government grants are no longer paid.

Councillor Barrett asked for the breakdown of Table 5 (page 31) as the ‘unknowns’ make up 10% of the budget.

In response to a query from Councillor Gladwyn, the officer explained that the figure of £950k (page 28) represents a one off provision to fund a number of appeals (businesses can appeal their assessments) that have happened in the last year.

Councillor Becker asked if Business Rate retention money goes into a common pot and also if the extra Council Tax money for Adult Social Care goes to that area only and will residents see the benefit. The officer explained that the Government are swapping Business Rates for other grants which will disappear so there is no direct benefit to businesses. Regarding Adult Social Care, he explained that the money is strictly ring-fenced to that service and will help the authority keep up with the demographic demand for the service. In response to a question on CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) from Councillor Becker, the officer explained that this is a ring-fenced tax for infrastructure.

Councillor Barrett asked about the additional income as a result of Devolution. The officer explained that one positive from devolution is that the authority gets to participate in the pilot regarding Business Rates. The £30million per year for 30 years goes to the combined authority whose leadership will set the priorities for investment, mainly in infrastructure, and so no additional money comes to individual Councils, although their areas will benefit from the investment.

Councillor Dando asked about the minimum reserve policy and whether the Council will pay more for borrowing over a long period. The officer explained that it does not cost the Council more money but it changes what is set aside each year.

Regarding the Corporate Estate information, Councillor Goodman asked about the Guildhall and stated that it did not seem to be a large amount of money to keep it in good repair. Derek Quliter - Divisional Director Property & Project Management, explained that little money was needed this year because over the last 2 years a large amount of money was spent on the complete reroofing of the whole of the Guildhall.

Councillor Gilchrist asked about the Councillor remuneration review, the Director explained that it is outside the scope of this meeting. It is to be confirmed that the report will be seen by full Council this year.

(Equality Impacts – Appendix 6 page 119)

Councillor Bevan reminded the Panel about the Council Equalities Policy. Samantha Jones, Inclusive Communities Manager, explained that each PDS Panel has been briefed on the Public Sector Equality Duty and that there are three main responsibilities for Councillors: to tackle discrimination and harassment; to promote equality and to foster good relations between different groups of people. She underlined that the Councillors must be clear on the impacts to people of any cuts and seek to provide a safety net to mitigate potential damage.

(Summary of Area Forum Feedback – page 131)

In response to a query from Councillor Dando, The Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency Councillor Charles Gerrish explained that the process has been different from past years as in November the budget was still being worked on. There have been 5 budget forums and there was a range of engagement and turnouts – feedback will be provided to the forums on the observations they made. Councillor Dando asked if there is an email address where people can send feedback, the officer stated that he would circulate the link to the Council website where feedback can be given. Councillor Dando asked if the forums had been representative and if they had understood what was being asked of them. The Cabinet Member explained that the process is still in the development and that we could do better in seeking to maximise advertising of the meetings. Councillor Goodman explained that at the Bath City Forum there had been a very frank exchange of views with the Strategic Director and Cabinet Member and it had been positive.

Councillor Bevan stated that if engagement is only possible through the website, it may not be accessible to everyone, the Cabinet Member agreed that this is a valid point but explained that people can also write or phone or attend a forum meeting.

(Feedback from PDS Panels on Directorate Plans 2017)

The Strategic Director for Resources explained that the Panel may wish to note that while there are no resolutions from the PDS Panels, there is a request for reassurance from the Health and Wellbeing Select Committee regarding Equalities which Resources Panel Members have had advice on at this meeting.

Councillor Gilchrist stated his concern about where the actual savings on Libraries will come from, the Strategic Director explained that more information will be available at the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 1st February and consultation will begin in February which will allow people to see what is proposed. He explained that this is a three year budget and these proposals are for year three so plans are still at an early stage. Councillor Barrett will speak to The Divisional Director - Customer Services regarding Weston Library.

It was concluded that the Panel comments on the Budget Report will be summarised in the Chairs statement to the Cabinet on 1st February 2017 and comments/queries will also be used to develop the Panel future workplan.

56 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency Councillor Charles Gerrish updated the Panel that he had been spending most of his time working on the Budget but could also report back on the following:

- There is an ADL Board meeting tomorrow and the Business Plan will go to the Cabinet;
- He has had a meeting with the Mayor regarding a possible Community Asset Transfer;
- He has spent some time correcting mis-information regarding the Women's Refuge Shop in Walcot Street – the reason for closure is not to do with the Council.

57 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan.

The meeting ended at 6.40 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

Statement to the 30.1.17 Resources PDS Panel meeting of B&NES Council

Thank you Chair.

Page 3 of Appendix 4 to the Resources Directorate Plan states that four posts are being removed "as a result of further consolidation of policy functions" and asserts that the reduced "capacity for new initiatives ...policy development and support" this implies presents only a "Low" risk to the delivery of the Council's 2020 vision and associated strategic priorities.

Although I am not sufficiently informed to comment on either the merits of cutting these particular policy posts or of cutting policy rather than other things in order to meet the enormous financial challenge the council faces, I am anxious that this Panel considers **the impacts of deleting these four posts in the wider context of getting the best possible value from the policy resource the Council retains, and in particular whether continuing the consolidation of policy functions, a trend going back at least 5 years, is the best way of doing this.**

In scrutinising this, I thus hope that you will bear in mind the following:

1. My statement to September 2013 Council in which I highlighted the importance and value of having a Policy Development and Scrutiny officer working separately to those with more formal executive powers and responsibilities;
2. My question to this Panel last July in which I observed that no appointment appeared to have been made to The Policy Development and Scrutiny Lead Officer position designated as the Council's Statutory Scrutiny Officer in January 2015, and highlighted the "increased importance of this role in the context of a Council administration with a sizeable majority, able if it so wishes to make decisions without regard to the adequacy of stakeholder support, policy coherence or evidence";
3. My statement to last November's meeting of this Panel illustrating my continuing concern around the adequacy of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in the light of the demands that a controversial, complex and cross-cutting policy-related infrastructure investment spanning more than one council administration, such as P&R East, brings to the fore;
4. Last Wednesday's long and fiercely contested Cabinet decision on this subject, providing an even more graphic illustration of the need for rigorous and effective policy making within the Council, and the risks associated with not having the right quality of policy-making resource in the right part of the organisation at the right time.

*Nicolette Boater, B.A.(Oxon.), M.Phil.
Strategist, Economist and Policy Analyst
adding lasting value at the public private interface*



This page is intentionally left blank

Resources Committee - 30/11

Madeleine Clavin, Committee member (Intro 1st)

I would like to plead with you to press for a reversal of the decision to move the Bath Central Library from the Podium to Lewis House - ~~at least please for this have not yet been seen~~

I do so mindful that the library has over recent years invested considerable council monies in purchasing much digital equipment - modern self service equipment, upgrading software on public computers, high speed wifi installed and digital archive computers. Alongside of this the staff team has been constantly developed ensuring first class delivery of excellent customer care - for which we have received National award

Many visitors also use the library facilities to enjoy displays in our well equipped City Centre Exhibition room, art show in some of our varying children's + family activities in the dedicated refurbished children's area.

Considerable time + effort has ^{also} gone into improving our foyer - used by very many diverse groups, reflecting the cities activities or serves like a cafe or 100 seats study area is very popular; with laptop plug in, wifi hot spots, and close access to extensive reference materials

Much of our work has been done in response to continued consultation with library users, who regularly state how they value of preserving City Centre - Pump Room Library.

I feel devastation if this library if moved will simply uproot on many of our users lives, not just now but with the future. Surely I and others who have given so much to develop the library to where it is now will be extremely upset to see this.

I seek your support for my plea.

This page is intentionally left blank