

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 31st July, 2017

Present:- Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chair), Colin Barrett (Vice-Chair), Christopher Pearce, Lisa O'Brien, Chris Dando, Liz Richardson (in place of Jasper Becker) and Will Sandry (in place of Andrew Furse)

12 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the new Vice Chair, Councillor Colin Barrett and new panel member, Councillor Lisa O'Brien.

13 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Jasper Becker sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Liz Richardson.

Councillor Andy Furse sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Will Sandry.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Liz Richardson declared that she was a Cabinet Member at the time the report at item 9 was prepared.

16 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Andy Halliday made a statement to the Panel regarding the closure of the events room at Bath Central Library.

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director for Resources explained that this is a logistical issue rather than a political one and the estimated loss to income is approximately £900. Councillor O'Brien stated that she had contacted the Cabinet Member for Policy and Transformation Councillor Karen Warrington and put Mr Halliday's points to her. She

will be briefed this week and will report back to Mr Halliday. The Chair thanked Councillor O'Brien.

18 MINUTES

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

19 DIGITAL STRATEGY - ANNUAL UPDATE

Angela Parratt, Head of IT and Digital, gave a presentation to the Panel on 'Digital' which covered the following:

- 'Digital' – definition
- Digital – designing for the customer – you, me!
- Opportunity
- 20/20 vision
- Benefits – Citizen and Council
- Initial Programme
- Fix my street – example
- People and leadership are the key
- Process and technology – redesign can drive efficiency
- Digital is part of the Strategic Review

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

Councillor Sandry asked if the officer had looked at any other authority's examples of digital strategy. The officer confirmed that she had noted that Bristol and Wiltshire had simplified their digital approach but that Aylesbury was the example that this authority most wanted to move towards.

Councillors Pearce and Barrett asked what measures are in place for people who do not have digital access. The officer explained that no services are being taken away, there is just a shift towards digital. She explained that people can still contact the Council through non-digital channels such as by phone or through the One Stop Shop.

Responding to a query from Councillor O'Brien, the officer agreed that there is a lot of familiarity with digital channels and Apps etc but there is also a need for education. She explained that Help the Aged help to get people familiar with devices.

In response to questions from Councillor Sandry, the officer explained the following:

- Regarding 'Fix my Street', the Council has bought the back end. It has been concluded that a CRM is not needed. She explained that small, scalable solutions are needed in order to respond to continual change.
- Regarding Drones – this has been considered but would need investment so would have to have a solid use case. At present a drone has to be in sight of the operator but rules might change. She explained that other Councils use drones to inspect bridges.

- Regarding Drop box – she reported that there is a development team in the department who have developed a solution to this so no need to buy Drop box.

In response to questions from Councillor Richardson, the officer explained the following:

- Regarding Council Connect and follow up – the officer explained that there is no follow up because different bits of technology are used, this will be changed.
- Regarding FMS – Councillor Richardson explained that she had stopped using this as messages were not getting through. The officer stated that emails will have been received.
- The officer agreed that local statistics on digital use are more useful than national statistics and agreed to send some customer insight information to Panel members.

Councillor Barrett asked about conversations with neighbouring authorities and the possibility of cross authority working regarding digital. The officer explained that there are conversations but each authority is in a different stage. There is a shared code with Wiltshire, talks planned with the IT provider for North Somerset and talks with Oxford regarding their use of FMS. The Strategic Director added that while a partnership may have risks, neighbouring authorities can learn from each other at the right time.

There was some discussion around budget for the new system, it was explained that £5million was provisionally approved in the budget.

In response to questions from Councillor Dando, the officer explained the following:

- Regarding costs, we will be using more and more technology but it will not always cost more.
- The officer will report back regarding the digital broadband national programme. Regarding people who have English as a second language, part of the design of digital is to make access easier.
- Regarding security, she agreed with Councillor Dando that the pressure regarding security will not go away but no organisation is delivering this yet.

20 'REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2016/17'

The Cabinet member for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Charles Gerrish introduced the report. He introduced finance officers Donna Parham (Chief Finance Officer) and Gary Adams (Head of Corporate Finance).

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

Councillor Gerrish responded to a query about highway repairs from Councillor Barrett, he explained that there is no change in the road inspection programme and money has been received from the government in this financial year.

Councillor Sandry asked if the Cabinet is losing its grip on the budget, Councillor Gerrish explained some unexpected costs in that four care homes closed and in excess of 100 people had to be re homed. This cost more than was budgeted in this area.

Councillor Sandy asked about the overspend in catering services, Councillor Gerrish explained that the Meals on Wheels service is currently being re-drawn and there has been a proposed increase in the charges for school meals but as academies opt out, there is a decrease in economies of scale.

Councillor Sandry asked about Alice Park skate park, Councillor Gerrish explained that there may be a decision on this in the next couple of months. Regarding the Gypsy and Traveller sites, Councillor Gerrish explained that there may be a capacity issue with the planning department.

Councillor O'Brien asked why the overspend on care home closures and children's services was not foreseen. Councillor Gerrish explained that he has monthly meetings with his officers. He stated that the 151 team did get short notice on this and there has been an internal investigation and he felt the answer was understandable. The Strategic Director explained that this area of the budget is under intense pressure and is a complicated budget to run, a close eye is being kept on this and there will be a further report in October.

Councillor Dando asked if the budget is adequate going forwards considering a chunk of the reserves have been used and if there is a loss regarding business rates. The Cabinet member explained that the reserve is for unexpected pressures. The Cabinet member also explained that some supermarkets had appealed regarding business rates and won so business rates are reduced, this was unexpected but a one off.

Regarding Hospital Trusts, the Cabinet Member explained that the LGA has taken up the issue of whether they should be treated as charities.

There was some discussion about student housing. Councillor Sandry stated that every planning application for an HMO is an act of self-harm by the Council.

21 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Charles Gerrish updated the Panel on the following:

- Digital by choice should always remain a choice;
- A property acquisition will generate money each year to help with revenue difficulties;
- Bath Quays South – additional income from lettings will be generated;
- Other finance issues have been covered in the previous report.

22 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan with the following amendment:

September 2017 – ‘Community Infrastructure Levy’ added and ‘Traded Services’ to move to the next available meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services