

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Monday, 28th March, 2022

Present:- **Councillors** Karen Warrington, Winston Duguid, Andrew Furse, Lucy Hodge, Shaun Hughes, Hal MacFie, Alastair Singleton and Sally Davis

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Mark Elliott

74 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

75 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

76 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Mark Elliott sent his apologies

Councillor Richard Samuel, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources, sent his apologies.

77 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

78 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

80 MINUTES

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

81 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources sent his apologies and sent the following update to the Panel:

Finance

- In the last quarter the focus has been on completing the 22/23 budget process. Council approved the budget at its meeting in February. The main currently activity is directed towards the Q4/year end out turn with officers beginning to finalise accounts for reporting to the Cabinet. Pressures in Children's services remain but are to some extent mitigated by reductions in Adult Services.
- HCRG acquisition of Virgin Healthcare. Financial due diligence has been completed together with legal advice on the contract change. This is being discussed with the CCG and it has been agreed that both the Cabinet and the CCG board will consider the position towards the end of May. The ' , Adults, Health and Well Being PDS has discussed the current position. Given the value of this contract I mention this to this panel.
- Further funds have been allocated for welfare support by the government and the distribution of these are being worked up currently.
- Capital programme delivery monitoring is to be stepped up with a more rigorous monthly assessment of scheme delivery.
- Arrangements are in hand for the reception of Ukrainian refugees. The council, will receive £10000 per individual to support refugees together with an additional top up for education.
- Inflationary costs in relation to energy remain a concern as does the current level of inflation in the economy which is likely to increase pressure for higher pay awards.

Economic Development

- The top floor of Bath Quays South has been let and is going through legal documentation. Marketing continues on other units. The Newark Works project is progressing well and is expected to be complete by the mid -summer. Once this is complete it will be possible to undertake the pedestrian bridge works on either side ahead of opening later this year.
- Discussions continue with Legal and General in relation to Bath Quays North but members may recall that the current long stop date is 2025 for development to commence.
- Officers are constructing an evidence base for a new ED strategy statement expected in the autumn.

A number of funding awards have been made on High St renewal funds and the Keynsham High St project has now completed. York St resurfacing and waterproofing is underway and anticipated to complete on time in April/May.

Work is continuing on the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone and revised proposals will be presented to the Stakeholder Group this week.

Work continues on the Fashion Museum relocation and a briefing is arranged for Newbridge members on the proposals for the Collection centre. Options for the main museum remain under evaluation. It is proposed to establish external funding arrangements to support the museum as is the case with many cultural offers.

Cleveland Pools is nearing completion and a soft opening is expected later this summer.

Bath River Line phase 1 from Newbridge to Churchill bridge has approved funding and work will start this summer on the identified improvements.

82 PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

Cherry Bennett, Director of People and Policy, gave a presentation to the Panel which covered the following:

- Background
- Key Challenges and Risks
- Attraction, retention, and workforce planning
- Staff engagement and performance
- Talent and Development
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Preparing for the future programme
- KPIs

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

Councillor Shaun Hughes asked how savings, mentioned during the budget setting, were made from vacancies. The officer explained that savings in salary payments are made during the time delay/lag in the recruitment process which is possible in some roles.

Councillor Andy Furse asked how many long-term vacancies there are in the 300. The officer explained that the data is not good but there are around 50 – some are hard to fill posts. There are a high number of vacancies in care homes where recruitment and retention are challenging. Our 11% staff turnover is average.

Councillor Furse asked about the training for those members of staff who do not use IT every day. The officer explained that the new performance development system could be accessed on a phone so would be accessible to those staff members who do not routinely use IT as part of their job.

In response to a query from Councillor Furse about capacity, the officer explained that there is a bit more capacity in the department now – 3 senior manager posts and an additional recruitment business partner post.

Councillor Hal MacFie asked how KPI's could measure the degradation in a service such as in enforcement where Councillors now use a generic email rather than contact officers direct. The officer explained that this would be a service performance KPI, we can pick that up with colleagues and directors.

Councillor MacFie stated that it felt like a lot of staff had left in the past year, yet it is reported as only 7.5%. The officer explained that the number was for the previous year, and we do not have the figure for this year yet. It could be team specific, or it may be a result of the labour market being more competitive than previously.

Councillor Lucy Hodge asked about exit interviews and if they are available centrally and what the strategy is. The officer explained that the data on why a person is leaving is not captured in sufficient detail and the new system was only introduced recently.

Councillor Hodge asked about fuel costs and staff working from home. The officer explained that staff can use pool cars and can work from the office now more so than they have been. We have a working well from home group which will look at fuel saving and financial planning for next winter.

Councillor Alastair Singleton referred to the 'Time to Hire' KPI and stated that anecdotally, to achieve a competitive salary we have to go through the recruitment process and fail. The officer agreed.

Councillor Winston Duguid stated that it is a tough environment, Covid had created an exceptional situation of blended working. Recruitment and retention will be a key issue – due to the rising cost of living, people will be looking to change jobs in some areas. Retention is important – it is important for staff to understand the purpose of the organisation and feel valued for what they do. This can be achieved through wellness interviews and managers knowing their staff. The officer agreed.

Councillor Karen Warrington stated that there are also other factors that affect the workforce such as the lack of rental properties in the city and fuel costs of moving further out of the centre.

Councillor Hughes asked about a working from home package as the Council has made savings on heating but staff working from home have to heat their homes all day. The officer explained that there is no working from home package. There is government tax relief and also some staff have saved on travel expenses. It was acknowledged that circumstances were difficult for many colleagues and the senior management team will keep this under review.

The Panel **RESOLVED** that the Panel noted the presentation.

83 PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE - REVIEW OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Amanda George, Director of Business Change and Customer Services, introduced the report and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Background
- Keynsham Civic Centre

- Design images for Keynsham Civic Centre
- Other office accommodation (Lewis House/Guildhall and The Hollies)
- Staff engagement
- New technology
- Impact of the changes
- Impact of the changes – Climate Change
- In summary

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

Councillor Hal MacFie asked if there is a figure on how many people would use the bus to travel to Keynsham Civic Centre. The officer explained that there is currently a staff travel survey and results would be shared.

Councillor Andy Furse stated that the data shows that hybrid working has had little impact on staff retention. How is performance/productivity measured? The officer explained that data from the staff survey showed that more staff had regular 1 to 1 performance conversations with their manager as this is more accessible online and people do not need to travel. A new online system is currently being peer reviewed which would record objectives and productivity.

Councillor Lucy Hodge stated that she had had feedback from some officers about it being unclear what the plans are regarding days spent in the office from June. She stated that she would have liked to see more metrics from the staff survey and also to see the questions asked in the survey. She stated that it would be useful to ask how travel has changed. Also, she asked if the reduction in the cost of meetings was referring to business meetings. The officer stated that it was a valid point that plans were not clear for June but this is being addressed. There is someone in post now who will create information packs for managers who will cascade this to staff. Every team who has asked will have a dedicated team space. We are committed to being flexible. The officer stated that she could share the questions from the staff survey and will also share the results of the current travel survey.

Councillor Shaun Hughes asked about the fuel savings mentioned – the officer explained that this saving was from business travel reimbursement. The officer stated that she would provide the response rate on the staff survey and also a breakdown by department on staff retention.

Councillor Hughes asked about the carbon footprint in moving from heating one large building, to heating 12,000 homes of staff working from home. The officer explained that it is hard to model this data because all homes are heated differently. There are currently studies regarding the impact of working from home. Keynsham Civic Centre will have the capacity of 650 staff per day. 450 staff are moving out of Bath but staff in offices will be spread over the week, not everyone will be in every day.

Councillor Hughes asked if the Hollies would be refurbished. The officer explained that there is collaboration space and hot desking on the top floor and that there would be a programme of work of improvements to the building eventually.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report and presentation.

84 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

Mandy Bishop, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the report with Will Godfrey, Chief Executive and Jeff Wring – Service Director Commercial and Governance.

The Chief Operating Officer explained that there is a Risk Management Steering Group. She explained that the report gives an overview of how risk management is being embedded across the organisation. The Corporate Risk Register is currently being reviewed and this will be brought to the Panel in the future. The Chief Executive added that every conversation in the organisation has a risk management activity, we are trying to broaden that conversation.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions

Councillor Winston Duguid stated that the background work looks robust and welcomed that this was being embedded into the culture. He explained that, while Member need to be aware of this work, this is about co-working with you in control. Councillor Duguid urged officers to prioritise cyber risks. The Director explained that there is a complete Corporate Risk Register which can be shared with Members (along with the Business Continuity Plan), it is the update that is being described in the report. Regarding cyber risk – firewalls have been updated. The Chief Operating officer added that staff are warned about opening suspicious emails and the message will be threaded through the return to Keynsham Civic Centre.

In response to a query from Councillor Warrington, the officer explained that there is a plan to achieve cyber essentials accreditation. He also confirmed that IT penetration tests are being carried out one area at a time.

In response to a query from Councillor Singleton regarding the conflation of 2 things in the Risk Register, the officer explained that this is an example of why the register is now being updated.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report.

85 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the future workplan.

The meeting ended at 5.45 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services