

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 18th November, 2013

Present:- Councillors John Bull (Chair), Colin Barrett, Paul Myers, Charles Gerrish, Nigel Roberts, Patrick Anketell-Jones and Paul Fox

40 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

41 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Roger Symonds sent his apologies to the Panel, he was substituted by Councillor Paul Fox.

Councillor Barry Macrae sent his apologies to the Panel, he was substituted by Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones.

43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

44 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

46 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING - 30TH SEPTEMBER 2013

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

47 IMPACT ON CUSTOMERS OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WORKPLACES PROGRAMMES

Ian Savigar, Divisional Director – Customer Services, gave a presentation to the Panel on ‘Impact on Customers of Organisational Development and Workplaces Programme’ (a copy of the presentation is on the minute book for the Panel and also on the Council website). The presentation covered the following:

- The ‘One Council’ approach
- Customer Service Vision
- Customer Service Principles
- Principles for how we work
- Customer Service Excellence
- ‘One Council’ Organisational Development Programme
- Customer Service Offer
- The Role of Customer Service

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

Councillor Gerrish stated that he agreed with the officer’s steer to the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) that job seekers facilities should be reinstated in Keynsham and Midsomer Norton. He explained that this would greatly help many residents who have to travel into Bath at present. He asked that the Panel endorse the officers’ approach.

The Panel agreed to endorse the Divisional Director’s recommended approach to the DWP regarding reinstating job seekers facilities in Keynsham and Midsomer Norton.

Councillor Paul Myers stated that it was sometimes hard to get answers when speaking to officers on behalf of residents. He asked that job numbers be given through Council Connect. He stated that if the Council is committed to localism and being a listening Council then people should be given answers. Other Councillors reported that they do get job numbers when they contact Council Connect. The officer stated that a job number should be given with the new CRM system which will also mean issues can be tracked. David Trethewey, Divisional Director – Strategy and Performance, added that the new system is addressing these points and offered to meet with Councillor Myers.

Councillor Barrett asked that the elderly and vulnerable people be accommodated within the new system. The officer stated that this has been considered and One Stop Shops and Community Hubs would help to address this. He stated there was also a visiting officer service.

The Chair stated that the Panel feel general confident about the way things are moving on this. Councillor Barrett asked for an update in 6 months.

48 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Steve Harman, Strategic Performance Manager, gave a presentation to the Panel on ‘Performance Management’ (a copy of the presentation is on the minute book for the Panel and also on the Council website). The presentation covered the following:

- The Old World - Pre 2010
- New World – Post 2010
- Revised Local Performance Framework
- Some examples of current practice
- 'One Council' – What is it?
- One Performance Conversation
- Request for Members

The officer ended the presentation by asking Members of the Panel what performance information they need going forward and how they want to be involved.

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

Councillor Paul Fox asked that Quarterly Financial Reviews be included with this information in the future. He further asked if there was an example of something that has changed as a result of the new processes. Andrew Pate, Strategic Director – Resources, gave some examples. He explained that information around Council Tax and Business Rates collection had been looked at as well as the Social Fund. He stated that findings had been reassuring. He explained that other things had been looked at and feedback was less reassuring such as the speed of phone answering in Council Connect. He further explained that Ian Savigar, Divisional Director – Customer Services, has plans in place to address this issue but that there is a clear indication that resources are stretched in this area. It was acknowledged that performance is much higher than many organisations and quality of response is equally if not more important than speed. He concluded that performance management information does influence decisions regarding services.

Councillor Barrett asked how local priorities are set and how often they are reviewed. The officer explained that the Cabinet decide on the strategic objectives and they are reviewed twice a year. Councillor Bull asked if it would be possible to cluster performance indicators so it is clear how they relate to the strategic objectives. The officer agreed that he could do this for the Panel.

Councillor Nigel Roberts stated that most key indicators and benchmarking information focused on past information. He also stated that benchmarking partners should be considered outside of local authorities where relevant. The Strategic Performance Manager agreed and explained that officers are asked to make a year-end forecast so that there is an early warning if there is a worrying trend. Regarding benchmarking, he explained that benchmarking had been done with the private sector for example - telephone operating.

Councillor Roberts asked about the services that are not measured. He also asked about the officer's year end forecasts and what was done to balance over optimism/pessimism. The officer explained that as many service areas as possible are covered in the process, he explained that this is his key role. David Trethewey, Divisional Director – Strategy and Performance, stated that officers are always encouraged to be realistic in their projections.

Councillor Gerrish stated that there was sometimes too much focus on how quickly phone calls are answered and he would prefer that the focus was on the outcome. He referred back to the officer's introduction where he asked what information the Panel need in the future, he asked that members are trained on how to access performance information themselves. He also asked to be given information on the adverse effect of unforeseen events. He further added that he would value getting presentations from various teams annually as this would be an effective way of involving members beyond the Cabinet. Councillors Gerrish and Bull agreed that this would be useful for scrutiny panels.

David Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Community Resources, stated that the performance management information is vital to the Cabinet and that it influences future decisions. He accepted the suggestion above regarding presentations being extended to scrutiny.

Councillor Bull asked that future reports keep the Panel updated on this.

49 PROCUREMENT

Tim Richens, Divisional Director – Business Support, gave a presentation to the Panel on 'Procurement' (a copy of the presentation is on the minute book for the Panel and also on the Council website). The presentation covered the following:

- Legal Context – The Old
- The Changing Landscape
- Legal Context – The New
- Revised EU Directives
- Case Law
- Procurement Strategy 2013-17
- What does the Council spend its budgets on?
- What proportion of Council business is awarded to local suppliers?
- 'Think Local' – New Procurement Strategy
- What Outcomes will this deliver?
- Supporting the Changes – External.
- Supporting the Changes – Internal
- Social Value Policy and Toolkit
- Next Steps

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

Councillor Paul Fox commented that care contracts impact the figures significantly. He asked what counts as 'local'? Richards Howroyd, Acting Procurement Manager, explained that there is a strict definition of 'local' based on the post code of the trading address of where the service is delivered/invoices sent from.

Councillor Bull asked if there was any weighting given to local businesses. The officer explained that preferential treatment could not be given to anyone but in the social value toolkit, if a company can deliver local apprenticeships for example, that can be taken into account along with issues such as carbon footprint.

There was a discussion around Member Champions. Councillor Barrett was advised to speak to his group regarding a procurement champion.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked how cost effective the 'think local' policy is. Tim Richens, Divisional Director Business Support, explained that no extra resources had been given to the team and that if costs rise, he would look again at it.

Councillor Myers stated that some large contracts exclude small businesses. The officer stated that there was a move away from some big framework contracts and stated that how lots are broken up is significant. Councillor Myers stated that he applauded the move to less paperwork as this could exclude some small businesses. The officer added that the pre-qualification questionnaire and self-certification would also help.

In response to a question from Councillor Paul Fox, the officer explained that the possibility of sharing services locally is being considered but there are no firm proposals.

Councillor Bull reminded Panel members that the procurement code is available on the Council website.

50 UPDATE ON BUDGET SAVINGS AND INCOME DELIVERY

Tim Richens, Divisional Director – Business Support, gave a presentation to the Panel on 'Budget Savings and Income Delivery Update' (a copy of the presentation is on the minute book for the Panel and also on the Council website). The presentation covered the following:

- Background
- Delivery and Monitoring
- Savings and Income Update (1-4)
- Years 2 and 3 Items

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

Councillor Gerrish asked about the potential implications of a faster rise in interest rates than expected. The officer explained that all treasury advisors are projecting flat interest rates for the next three years.

Councillor Gerrish asked why members travel expenses had not been adjusted. The Strategic Director stated that this would be harmonised.

51 MEDIUM TERM PLANS AND 2014/15 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director – Resources, introduced the report. He explained that two extra appendices 'Resources Department Structure Chart' and 'Resources Department Objectives' had been tabled at the meeting (this information is available as part of the agenda pack on the website).

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

Councillor Barrett asked about the targets set for the Roman Baths. He asked why, if the increase in visitors this year is seen as exceptional, the targets are being pushed year on year. The Director stated that the targets are in line with what is happening and it will become clear if the trend continues. Councillor Gerrish stated that quality as well as quantity should be valued. The Cabinet Member stated that the Head of Heritage Services believes that one million visitors is the maximum that could safely visit the Roman Baths. He stated that the Council, through the Capital Programme, invest in the venue every year to make sure it is always a new experience. The Panel congratulated Stephen Bird – Head of Heritage Services - and the staff at the Roman Baths on their success.

Councillor Gerrish asked why a Tourism Levy would be voluntary. The Divisional Director for Business Support explained that the Council has no statutory power to enforce this.

Councillor Gerrish asked about the Legal and Democratic Services saving, the Strategic Director explained that there is a significant legal spend that is outside the department. Councillor Gerrish asked that money should not be counted twice. Officers noted this point.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked about the 20% reduction in staffing in the Property Department. The Strategic Director explained that the savings had already been substantially achieved through restructuring. He stated that it would be monitored.

Councillor Paul Fox asked if there could be a revenue savings column in Appendix 3 for future years. He also asked if officers had any plans beyond 2015/16 and if so, what was it? The officer explained that some capital schemes go on to 2017/18. He also explained that officers anticipated challenges for the revenue budget beyond 2015/16 and that SMT (Senior Management Team) are talking about how to deal with these challenges.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked about LEP, he asked how the accounts are scrutinized. The Strategic Director explained that has a small core activity that is likely to become a company that would be subject to external audit. He further explained that expenditure through the West of England would be scrutinized by this authority's auditors and any capital projects would go through the relevant local authority budget process. Councillor Gerrish commented that there was no scrutiny by elected members of the core structure function in the West of England. Councillor Fox added that he felt that decision making is separated from accountability.

The Panel supported more scrutiny of the LEP decisions and finance.

52 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

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

- There is progress on Community Asset Transfer on the following:

Bath Scouting Association
Whisty Community Association
Somerset and Dorset Trackbed Trust
Percy Community Association
Midsommer Norton Town Council/Town Trust

The Cabinet Member stated that he was happy to take suggestions on any other potential Asset Transfer.

- Regarding Keynsham redevelopment, he reported that the project remains on budget and on time and the marketing information for shops would soon be released.
- Four budget fairs have been held and gone well.

53 PANEL WORKPLAN

With the following additions and amendments, the Panel noted the workplan:

- The Panel noted that the LEP falls in the remit of the Economic and Community Development Panel.
- Councillor Barrett asked for some feedback on the Use of Consultants study.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services