

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday, 16th May, 2018

Present:- Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chair), Lisa O'Brien, Andrew Furse, Patrick Anketell-Jones, Sally Davis and Robin Moss (in place of Joe Rayment)

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Joe Rayment sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Robin Moss.

Councillor Jasper Becker sent his apologies.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

6 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 Human Resources and Equalities Policy. *A copy of the statement is kept on the minute book for the Panel.*

7 MINUTES - 21 MARCH 2018

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

8 THE CORPORATE APPROACH TO EQUALITY

Samantha Jones – Inclusive Communities Manager introduced the report.

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

Councillor Bevan congratulated the officers on the 2010 and 2017 awards.

Councillor Furse explained that he felt the social deprivation gap seemed to be widening and was extreme in his ward which includes the Royal Crescent alongside pockets of deprivation. He stressed the need for the authority to work hard to promote social cohesion and further explained that communities needed support through resources to schools and youth teams. He expressed concern about the Council's resources and financial pressures. Councillor Bevan added that areas of social deprivation are also a concern in North East Somerset.

Councillor O'Brien referred officers to communication advice that has been developed by Mencap regarding typeface, type of language and pictograms. She also asked if there was any indication of measures regarding Domestic Violence. The officer explained that the Council commissions Southside to provide DVA services, including Independent Domestic Violence Advisors based in BANES and at the RUH. 'IRIS' has now been developed which was a new way of GPs identifying violence. She explained that there had been an increase in reporting of elder abuse (inter-generational abuse) and carer fatigue. It was explained that resources were limited and services relied on the Police and Crime Commissioners grant.

Councillor Moss congratulated and thanked the officers. He stated that the report only gave part of the picture as many services were now outsourced and privatised. He asked if customer feedback was on directly provided services and referred to recent report that 20% of elder people are unhappy with services provided to them at home – he asked if this type of feedback would go to Virgin/Sirona or BANES and also asked how we would deal with the CCG/BANES closer working. The officer explained that she did not have statistics regarding home services. She explained that equalities issues were central in commissioning and organisations bidding for work must demonstrate compliance with the authority's policies and procedures. She assured the Panel that information on complaints and court cases are sought and there are timeframes in place in the event of a conviction.

Councillor Moss asked about the spike in Domestic Violence in the Somer Valley 2 years ago, the officer explained that there was a change in the method of gathering data about an incident – an increase from 10 to 14 questions which affected reporting statistics.

Councillor Anketell Jones asked if the cost of the interpreting service is a barrier to use. The officer explained that it is not expensive compared with litigation and explained that the provider had changed recently and there is now a wider range of languages available. She explained that interpreters can be used by a wide range of services such as for marriage ceremonies to ensure that people understand that they are signing a legal document. Louise Murphy – Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer explained that the biggest spend around interpreters are Syrian families although almost all of the cost is reimbursed through the Home Office grant and some family members are now being trained as interpreters.

9 TRADING UPDATE - SERVICES TO SCHOOLS

Richard Moran, Education Business Manager introduced the report and gave a presentation on 'Trading Update – Services to Schools' which covered the following points:

- The Financial Landscape
- The Political Landscape
- Estimated Pupil numbers in Schools at 1st September 2018
- What is currently happening with Support Services?
- What has the LA done to date?
- What has been changed?

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

Councillor Furse stated that, while he understood the economic situation and that schools are converting to academies, it was sad that the authority had to relinquish oversight on quality and local sourcing of school meals which had been established. The officer explained that when schools change to new suppliers, they do set specifications which are very close to those that the authority had set up. Richard Howroyd – Head of Strategic Procurement and Commissioning explained that the authority will attempt to guide schools towards appropriate sellers. Richard Morgan explained that schools can provide the meals for a cheaper rate per plate because they do not have the overheads that were included in the authority's rate. Councillor Bevan commented that this was reassuring.

Councillor Davis commented that the overheads do make a difference and also parents and children are more careful over their diets now. She added that there must be some caution over the introductory offers made by some organisations that could slowly rise. Richard Howroyd (Procurement) stated that schools have been advised to use caution around 1 year deals. Councillor Davis stated that there are benefits to the new system and that schools feel they have more ownership now.

Councillor Anketell Jones asked what happens to the 5% of schools that do not convert to academies. Richard Morgan explained that the Government had indicated that all schools will eventually become academies. In the case of this authority, the business support function has changed significantly but the authority still provides advice, guidance and challenge as well as statutory duties such as assessment for Education Healthcare Plans.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Charles Gerrish explained that the move to academy status started a while ago and once the bigger schools converted, the authority lost its economies of scale which would have meant costs rocketing for schools and parents. He added that the quality of food was the responsibility of school governors and the authority should challenge governors if this was an issue.

10 STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT TEAM UPDATE

Richard Howroyd – Head of Strategic Procurement and Commissioning introduced the report and gave a presentation on 'Strategic Procurement Update' which covered the following:

- Working Together to Bring Down Costs
- Corporate Contracts
- Goods and Services Panel
- Contracts Register
- Supplying the South West
- Keeping the Contract Register up to date
- GDPR and Contracts
- Draft National Procurement Strategy
- Procurement Templates
- Current Issues/Risks
- Financial Risk Assessment

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

Councillor Furse asked about the Contracts Register (page 51) and how we deal with contractors that were not on it. The officer explained that there had been challenges in some areas such as individual social care contracts. It can be challenging where there was no signed contract. There have been robust discussions with commissioners.

Councillor Moss stated that value should be important as well as cost. He was concerned that the Social Value Act is not referred to enough and that sometimes small local businesses are being knocked out by national organisations. The officer explained that the Act is taken seriously and 5% are awarded on social value. He added that it would be helpful if members helped to spread the message that businesses must take time and effort on their submissions as any omissions cannot be dealt with at the bid stage. He noted that in a recent procurement, a Government Department has deducted 5% of grant funding for favouring local providers contrary to the Public Contract Regulations which the Council disputes.

Lisa O'Brien asked if contracts are monitored and if problems were found, break clauses were included. The officer explained that the big issue had been around social care contracts where providers had not had to go to the market for a long time. Other authorities have had similar issues. A lot of good work is being done and we make sure standards are kept.

11 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

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

- The end of financial year figures are almost ready;
- Community Asset Transfers are growing and new and creative opportunities are being explored;
- Property management structures are strengthening and acquisition opportunities are being explored.

12 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan.

The meeting ended at 6.40 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services