



Committee and Date

Environment and Services
Scrutiny Committee

ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2014 in the Ludlow Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

1.00 - 2.05 pm

Responsible Officer: Jane Palmer
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Present

Councillor Vince Hunt (Chairman)
Councillors Keith Roberts (Vice Chairman), Peter Adams, Ted Clarke, Nigel Hartin, Christian Lea, David Minnery [Sub: R Hughes], Pamela Moseley, Vivienne Parry and Arthur Walpole.

27 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Hughes; Councillor D Minnery attended as substitute.

28 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

29 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2014

The Chairman stated that, due to staff sickness, the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2014 were not yet available and would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

30 Public Question Time

There were no questions received from members of the public.

31 Member Question Time

There were no questions received from Members.

32 Scrutiny of the progress made in delivering the Council's Financial Strategy

The Committee considered the performance report and dashboards relevant to its remit together with a wealth of background documentation illustrating the progress being made in delivering the Council's Business Plan and Financial Strategy.

Some Members considered that the format of the report to the Committee was unwieldy and did not facilitate comprehension of the information as too much material was presented and the format was difficult to navigate. A Member commented that trends in the financial reporting and significant variations in the budget should have been provided in a short, one page report that systematically identified areas of change. The Committee considered that the dashboards provided a useful starting point but were only successful to a degree as their generality resulted in a loss of understanding.

The Performance Manager explained that an attempt had been made to provide as much information as possible to Members without compiling a single report. He noted that this format had not been readily accepted by Members but stressed that the underlying aim had been to ensure that Members understood the context to the specific information relating solely to areas within the Committee's remit. The information provided in the dashboards was available as a starting point from which members could 'drill down' to the underlying detail.

The Committee noted that savings totalling £10.5M over three years needed to be made in those areas within the Committee's remit in the 3 year period of the current Business Plan and Financial Strategy that had been agreed by Council in February 2014. The savings were broken down annually as follows, Year 1 £4.3M, Year 2 £4M and Year 3 £2.6M. [Areas within the remit of the Committee being: natural environment, waste management, highways, social housing, drug and alcohol misuse, leisure and libraries]

The RAG ratings of areas within the Committee's remit were noted as:

- Year 1 – Green £2.95M, Amber £18k, Red £1.3M
- Year 2 – Green £400k, Amber £1.1M, Red £2.5M
- Year 3 – Green 0, Amber £800k, Red £1.8M

The Director of Commissioning provided an update on progress and made specific reference to:

- Redesign of Waste Collection Services was progressing well but still in prototype and savings would not show this year. September 2015 was now the likely target for redesign in this area.
- A delay in the consultation on libraries and community hubs resulted in some proposed savings not taking place in the current year.
- Visitor Information Centres – Year 1 savings as Green but Red in some areas of Year 2 savings.
- Outdoor recreation, Community Action Team and leisure developments currently Green and potential redesign in Years 2 and 3.

Referring to Year 1 Red savings, the Director of Commissioning stated that the largest element of this saving related to the renegotiation of the Veolia contract, savings from which would not be realised in this financial year and there would also be no full level savings this year from the waste service redesign. It was accepted that other areas, such as development management, were over achieving and there was ultimately a balance in the level of savings being made.

The Committee considered the Q2 Performance dashboards appropriate to its remit.

Key points were made as detailed below:

Annual net number of new homes – it was noted that new build homes were showing an increase.

Keeping Shropshire's streets clean [% of inspections that fall below Grade B]

The condition of the highways, clean streets, the state of the verges and litter in verges was highlighted by the Committee as a potential future item for scrutiny. It was noted that the information shown in the dashboard was based on 4,000 annual inspections.

Visitors to theatres, museums, libraries and leisure facilities [Rolling 12 month total]

It was noted that some facilities were better used than others. In particular it was noted that libraries were not so well used but they were reinventing themselves to become facilities that were not solely about books.

The Committee requested more detail on the performance information in this dashboard and considered that the detail provided was too general and that the information needed to be broken down to cover each type of facility separately.

Positive developments were reported at Craven Arms where the library was now located in the Community Centre. This linked well with other community initiatives that worked well together and had resulted in increased usage of the library facility whilst contributing to the development of a strong and resilient community base.

Members were interested to be informed at a later date of the results of Church Stretton consultation on the possible relocation of the library into the school; a sharing of community facilities.

Public Satisfaction Survey – satisfaction with highways and transport

Again the Committee requested further detail on the content of the slide with the information broken down to provide a higher level of detail. However the Committee identified 'Condition' of highways as a potential issue for future scrutiny.

Rent collected as % of rent owed to date, including brought/forward arrears

The Committee requested an explanation of the figures presented and acknowledged that distortion in collection rates through the year were reconciled for timing delays at year end rent accounts which resulted in an improved (and more accurate) position.

Other issues raised at the meeting were scrutiny of the development of the Shrewsbury swimming pool and future monitoring of the part night lighting initiative, although it was recognised that this scheme needed at least 12 months to 'bed in.

It was noted that the Committee's comments would be fed back to the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee on 26 November 2014 when the overarching scrutiny response to the progress made in delivering the Council's Financial Strategy would be compiled and reported to the forthcoming Cabinet meeting.

33 Date/Time of next meeting

It was noted that the Committee's next meeting was scheduled to be held at 2.00pm on Monday 8 December 2014.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: