

SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2015

2.30 pm - 4.30 pm in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes

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Present

Councillor David Minnery (Chairman)

Councillors Steve Davenport (Vice Chairman), Joyce Barrow, Roger Evans, Vince Hunt,
Alan Mosley and Dave Tremellen

15 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Lloyd, G Dakin and Councillor M
Kenny for whom Councillor H Fraser attended as substitute.

16 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

17 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2015

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
held on 15th June 2015 be approved as a correct record.

It was noted that the final report of the Discretionary Housing Payments [DHP] Task and
Finish Group had not been circulated to Members nor considered by the Performance
Management Scrutiny Committee prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

18 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

19 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

20 Additional Information for Quarter 1 Performance Report 2014/15

The Performance Manager presented the report detailing additional information for
Quarter 1. He observed that generally the direction of travel was positive although there
were some exceptions. Referring to Q1 Performance slides [copy attached to signed copy
of the minutes] he commented that this additional information gave the opportunity to look
at information unavailable when the committee previously considered the Q1 performance.

Referring to slide 1, Job Seekers Allowance Claimant Count, the Performance Manager drew Members' attention to the steady reduction in the Long Term Claimant count but it was noted that this remained twice the level of December 2008.

Members noted that Slide 2 showed that the gap between the number of Shropshire Schools rated as outstanding and the National average was closing rapidly. In response to a Member's query about changes in practice, the Performance Manager confirmed that the Officer responsible for schools ensured that early intervention took place where schools were observed to be encountering difficulties and support was provided. Members noted that only schools within the Council's control were included in the figures.

The Performance Manager drew Members' attention to the two red dots on Slide 3 which showed a sharp drop in performance for keeping Shropshire's streets clean. In response to a Member's question, the Director for Commissioning stated that the fall in standards was due to the contractor redirecting litter picking teams to road resurfacing work following a period of poor winter weather and this information had not been communicated to the Council at the time.

A Member stated that the Contractor had failed to undertake a substantial amount of work specified in its contract with the Council, the Director for Commissioning agreed to look into the matter and provide information outside the meeting.

Members considered slide 4 which showed the numbers of visitors to theatres, museums, libraries and leisure facilities over a rolling 12 month period. It was noted that libraries continued to see a reduction in visitors whilst visitor numbers to leisure facilities were increasing. A Member commented that a recent survey undertaken in schools showed that a substantial number of families did not have access to the internet at home and queried the impact of the withdrawal of internet access within the library service on this group.

The Director of Commissioning explained that the Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee had recently scrutinised the library service in the County and as part of this work an Equalities Impact Assessment had been undertaken. He continued that the Council was intending to operate libraries in a different way. In response to a Member's query he confirmed that where library services were transferred to other service providers, staff who had not been directly employed by the Council were offered a detailed training programme to ensure that they had the necessary skills to provide the requisite level of service.

The Performance Manager stated that the latest data for waste recycling was at 41.5% compared to a target of 51%. The National average was 41%. The Director for Commissioning added that Veolia were spending £6,000 over 12 months to promote recycling following concerns over a drop in the volume of waste being recycled. He confirmed that this was being fully funded by Veolia.

Members considered slide 5 which showed a comparison between 2014/15 and 2015/16 for referrals to Children's Social Care, showing a drop in referrals when compared to the same period the previous year. It was noted that this was due in part to new working

practices through a redesigned 'Front Door' approach, improved inter-agency working and earlier intervention through the Early Help Programme.

Members noted the numbers of Looked after Children and the Numbers of Children with Child Protection Plans shown on slide 6. In response to a Member's query the Performance Manager explained that children with Child Protection Plans were those deemed to be at risk from significant harm. It was suggested that the Young People's Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider why Shropshire had a higher number of children with Child Protection Plans than similar authorities.

The final slide showed an increase in delays in transfer in care from hospital from the same period of the previous year. Work with partners to improve matters was ongoing. The Director for Adult Social Care confirmed that the Council was responsible for only 15 to 20% of delays. He continued that those predominantly affected were older people who had more complex needs than the general population. This group of people were often required to make significant decisions regarding their future on leaving hospital which could not always be made quickly. The Director for Adult Social Care confirmed that delays were not caused by lack of funding for support packages and the over spend of his department's budget was not relevant or a contributing factor to the delays.

Referring to the dashboards appended to the report distributed with the Agenda the Performance Manager drew Members' attention to final dashboard, 'I want to live a long, enjoyable and health life', chart 7 which showed that a higher number of Shropshire residents considered they had control over their daily lives compared to the figures for the West Midlands area; the Shropshire figure had improved considerably whilst the National figures had remained static. The perceived quality of life had also slightly improved.

RESOLVED:

That the Additional Information for Quarter 1 Performance Report 2014/15 be noted.

21 Revenue Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2015/2016

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance introduced the Revenue Monitoring Report for Quarter 2, which had previously been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 14th October 2015. He explained that the Quarter 2 position indicated that of the £28.4m planned savings, £7.6m were categorised as red which meant that further work was required within service areas to ensure they were achieved. He continued that the projected outturn would be an overspend of £4.1m. Members noted that the projected over spend would impact on the Council reserves, reducing the General Fund Balance at 31st March 2016 to £11.4m.

Members noted that work was ongoing to reduce the projected level of overspend and the Financial Strategy proposed a new approach to savings delivery.

Members discussed the level of one-off savings and their impact on potential savings in future years.

A Member requested information on predicted additional spending on the IT infrastructure which had been identified in a report which went to the Audit Committee for consideration in July. The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance confirmed that the Audit

Committee had been looking into this matter and issues with the Council's IT system had been identified. He continued that the Council had employed the services of an IT Consultant to assess the situation and he was expected to report his findings to a meeting of Cabinet in November. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Support and IT confirmed that the issue was receiving immediate attention. A Member suggested that as the identified problems with IT had a possible impact on the performance and delivery of Council Services that this area should receive further scrutiny from the Committee through the establishment of a Task and Finish Group.

Members discussed the predicted overspend for Adult Services. The Director of Adult Services confirmed that service redesign had led to the Authority having the lowest expenditure on Adult Services of any of the West Midlands' councils whilst still providing an excellent service.

RESOLVED:

- i. That an IT Task and Finish Group be established once Cabinet had considered the Consultant's report; and
- ii. That the Revenue Monitoring Report Q2 be noted.

22 Capital Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2015/2016

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance drew Members' attention to the Capital Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2015/16 which had also been considered by Cabinet on 14th October 2015. He reported that the re-profiled 2015/16 capital budget was £62m of which £14.4m had been spent at approximately half way through the year. He explained that this was following the pattern of previous years.

Members noted that the current capital programme was heavily reliant on the Council generating capital receipts to finance the capital programme. Members consider Table 5 in the report which set out the projected capital receipts programme which now had a RAG rating with red rated items being at high risk of slippage and unlikely to be completed before the end of the financial year.

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance commented that delays in capital programme expenditure could result in higher costs, although where possible price protection was built into contracts.

In response to a Member's question regarding the BDUK broadband provision contract, the Commissioning Director agreed to provide further information to Members after the meeting on the recent Health Check undertaken on the provision.

RESOLVED:

That the Capital Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2015/2016 be noted.

23 Financial Strategy and Budget 2016/17

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance advised Members that a report outlining the Council's Financial Strategy for the next 5 years would be considered by Cabinet on the 28th October 2015. The report would set out the implications of changes in Council funding over the next 5 years, with the aim of the Council becoming self-

sustaining. The Chairman suggested that Task and Finish Groups would be an appropriate method to consider any issues emerging from the Financial Strategy and Budget 2016/17.

In response to a Member's question the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance confirmed that the Government had announced that Councils would be permitted to retain all the business rates they collected but no further details had yet been announced. He continued that he understood that Councils would have authority to reduce local business rate levels but not increase them beyond the nationally set multiplier unless the authority was part of one of the proposed devolved areas. He continued that it was expected that the Revenue Support Grant would be completely phased out by 2020. He suggested the financial situation was likely to worsen as a result of losing the Revenue Support Grant and other grants currently received despite the retention of business rates. He commented that the Government's Autumn Statement was due to be published on the 25th November 2015 and he hoped that this would provide more information. He added that the Government would confirm details of the 2016/17 Settlement on the 14th December 2015.

Members discussed and confirmed that the relevant parts of the Financial Strategy should be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- i. That each Scrutiny Committee reviews the aspects of the Financial Statement within their respective remit and provide comments to the Performance Management Committee at its meeting on 2nd December 2015.
- ii. That these comments would be put forward to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 9th December 2015.

24 Future Work Programme for the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

Members considered a request to add planning performance to the Committee's work programme. It was noted that planning performance had been considered by the recent Planning Committee Task and Finish Group under the remit of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee. A Member commented that although the subject matter came within the scope of either Scrutiny Committee as it had already been considered by the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee the responsibility to take the matter forward should remain with that Committee. It was suggested that a joint approach could be adopted with the establishment of a joint task and finish group.

RESOLVED:

That planning performance be added to the Committee's work programme with a view to establishing a joint Task and Finish Group with the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee.

The Performance Manager advised that he had received a request to add a further two items to the Committee's work programme:

- The ShropNet system used by some Town and Parish Councils as a platform for their IT provision;
- The evolution of Local Joint Committees to be considered at an appropriate time.

Members commented that following the introduction of Windows 10 and its apparent incompatibility with the ShropNet Platform many Town and Parish Councils were dissatisfied with the service provided.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the remit of the proposed IT Task and Finish Group be expanded to include consideration of the ShropNet system;
- ii. That the evolution of Local Joint Committees be added to the Committee's work programme for consideration at the appropriate time.

25 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee

RESOLVED:

That all future meetings of the Committee start half an hour earlier at 2.00pm.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 2nd December 2015.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: