



Date: Wednesday, 9 December 2015

Time: 12.30 pm

Venue: Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire,
SY2 6ND

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CABINET

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

5 Reports of Scrutiny Committees (Pages 1 - 8)

a) Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee: To consider the final report of the Student

Accommodation Task and Finish Group.

Report of the Head of Economic Growth and Prosperity is attached marked: 5A

Contact - Andy Evans 01743 252503

b) Performance Management Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny of the Financial Strategy: Summary
of the Feedback from the Scrutiny Committees

Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer is attached marked: 5B **TO FOLLOW**

Contact: Tom Dodds 01743 252011

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Committee and date
Cabinet
9 December 2015

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK ON THE FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Responsible Officer Tom Dodds

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1. Summary

This paper presents Cabinet with the feedback from the Scrutiny Committees on the Financial Strategy. Each Scrutiny Committee has considered the Strategy from their respective remits and asked questions of the Directors and Portfolio Holders who attended the meetings. The feedback from the Scrutiny Committees is attached as appendices. This paper highlights common themes, and incorporates other specific points arising from the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 2 December 2015.

2. Recommendations

A. Cabinet are asked to consider the feedback from the Scrutiny Committees as they receive the papers on the Financial Strategy and the Budget 2016/17.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

3.1 The significant challenges and related decisions that the Council face present both risks and opportunities to consider how services and outcomes can be delivered differently. Scrutiny can provide a valuable and useful function to engage with people and communities to help inform planning and decision making, as well as helping to evaluate and understand the impact of decisions.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications directly related to this paper.

5. Summary of the feedback from Scrutiny Committees

- 5.1 At this stage of the development of the Financial Strategy Members understood that the detail of potential changes to the way that services are provided was not available. However, understanding the scale of the challenge and the Sustainable Business Model was useful, and allowed high-level issues to be identified.
- 5.2 Because of the relationships and interdependences between the breadth of the services that the Council provides, Members highlighted their concerns about the risk of unforeseen consequences of reducing or changing a service, and the knock-on to other services. Preventative services were highlighted as good examples of this, whether in Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care Early Help, or even further increasing recycling to reduce the amount of waste.
- 5.3 Ensuring that infrastructure continued to be developed and invested in would be key to helping to retain and attract businesses to Shropshire. The county was ideally placed between the Northern and Midland 'powerhouses' and could benefit from the development of both. Members felt that the Council needed to be proactive and tactical in the way that it responded to the opportunities to generate income to off-set the reduction in Revenue Support Grant. For example there needs to be ways of encouraging working age people to move to or remain in the county to achieve a more balanced demography.
- 5.4 Getting the Adult Social Care funding on to a sustainable footing needs to be progressed and a system wide view needs to be taken, including across the local NHS, in order to come up with a robust long-term solution.
- 5.5 Members were concerned that people receiving services should continue to receive services of the same quality however they were provided in the future. New ways of quantifying this were needed.
- 5.5 The Big Conversation was discussed at all of the Committees. There was concern raised about whether there had been Member involvement in developing the survey, but there was also recognition that there needed to be robust engagement to inform the decisions that need to be taken over the coming years. Communities needed to understand the choices and challenges in more detail, and community involvement in their local area needed to be stimulated; a key role of the local Member.
- 5.6 Scrutiny involvement in the Big Conversation was also discussed. Scrutiny has a role to play in engagement, and there will be opportunities for Scrutiny to form Task and Finish Groups to look at the emerging topic and issues arising from the first phase of the Big Conversation.
- 5.7 Scrutiny will also be well placed to take part in the next phase of the Big Conversation beyond April 2016, helping to progress the engagement activity and provide constructive. This work on the Big Conversation will compliment the role that Scrutiny will also fulfil as it understands the impact of decisions that are taken and in doing this they will be able to draw on the information and feedback collected through the ongoing Big Conversation to do this.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Financial Strategy – Cabinet 28 October 2015

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

David Turner

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Feedback from Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 2 – Feedback from Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 3 – Feedback from Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 4 – Feedback from Young People’s Scrutiny Committee

**FINANCIAL STRATEGY FEEDBACK TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30TH NOVEMBER 2015**

The Committee noted the content of the Financial Strategy but commented that without detail it was difficult to scrutinise the Strategy or anticipate its impact on services.

Members expressed concern regarding unintended consequences which were likely to arise from the protection of some services at the expense of others. Members commented that only having the finance to fund statutory requirements would preclude preventative work being undertaken. This approach could result in higher expenditure.

The Chairman commented that the Committee already closely oversaw all the areas within its remit and had been working closely with Officers where redesign work was being undertaken. Once more detail was known a meaningful work plan could be developed.

Comments on the Big Conversation:

Members recognised the importance of this and hoped that there would be meaningful engagement from the public.

Bullet Points from Enterprise and Growth Discussion of the Financial Strategy

The Committee expressed concern regarding the impact of reduced investment on the County's infrastructure. Members observed that this could lead to the County becoming unattractive to businesses at a time of increased reliance on Business Rates to generate income. Members agreed that the County needed to attract more businesses and retain existing ones.

Members recognised that the Marches LEP were actively working on infrastructure improvement projects and were taking a proactive approach to applying for European funding.

It was agreed that the provision of Broadband and a good mobile phone signal coverage was essential for business development and retention in the County.

Members recognised the need for a strong Business Strategy to promote business growth within the County. They noted that the Business Growth Redesign work had started this process. Members commented that the Council needed to actively prepare for the changes in funding structures.

The Committee noted that that Shropshire was ideally situated between the Northern and Midland Powerhouses and could benefit from the development of both.

Members asked for reassurance that small businesses should still continue to receive support through the small business rate relief.

Comments on the Big Conversation:

Members asked that The Big Conversation be publicised in a simple way and include information on all the services provided by the Council, as well as stating what the Council had already achieved.

Members commented on the recent Fire Authority Consultation, which they saw as a model of good practice and observed that lessons could be learnt from it.

Some concern was expressed on the lack of involvement of the Group Leaders from the development of the questionnaire.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY FEEDBACK TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM THE HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2015

Financial Strategy

The Committee praised the quality of the Financial Strategy document.

The Committee considered both the risks of not getting Adult Social Care funding on to a sustainable footing and the turmoil within the local NHS, which could have a serious financial impact on the Council.

More than 50% of the Council's budget is spent on supporting the most vulnerable people in the county. An aging population and the increase in complexity of needs will continue to impact on resources.

Shropshire's Adult Social Care Service is one of the lowest spending in the country for older people, learning disability and mental health, and there is little more to take out, whereas some other higher spending Councils still had potential to remove costs.

A system wide solution was considered to be the only way forward and the Council should be prepared to play an active part in that system.

Early Intervention and Prevention

The Committee was particularly concerned that early intervention and prevention was not included in the list of protected services going forward.

Members were concerned that reducing focus in these areas risked storing up problems in both the near and long term future.

Public Health

Services linked to public health in Council core budget included emergency planning, community safety and registrars/coroners. Maintained but not protected.

Big Conversation

Some Members expressed concern regarding lack of Member involvement and input into the development of the Big Conversation questionnaire. The need for the 'which electoral division do you live in' question was queried.

Others felt that there might not be a big response and that people were not likely to respond unless they were already service users.

Future Scrutiny Involvement

Members wanted to be informed as soon as possible of any proposed changes and the likely impact on the most vulnerable people in Shropshire.

**FINANCIAL STRATEGY FEEDBACK TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2015**

Early Help

The Committee voiced concerns that Early Help was not included in the list of protected services going forward.

This service helps other services within Children's Safeguarding to run more cheaply and cost effectively. Movement away from preventative measures will most certainly have repercussions elsewhere within the service. Prevention considered to be a difficult term to quantify; this would be included as part of the Big Conversation.

The failure to include this area within the list of protected services calls into question the whole Children's Safeguarding Strategy.

The Committee understood that the Council was legally required to have Early Help in place but it was for each authority to determine the appropriate level for themselves.

Big Conversation

Some concern was voiced on the lack of Member involvement and input into the development of the Big Conversation questionnaire. Local members would be involved in their own areas. Hoping to generate the same level of feedback as that engendered by the unitary debate. Recognised that feedback from local people was essential given the huge budgetary implications for the Council.

Some Members voiced concerns on the projected level of services to be decommissioned by the Council and considered that these decisions would have serious repercussions both now and in the future. The Portfolio Holder urged all to become involved in the Big Conversation to ensure that savings were found safely and that children and young people would be kept safe in future.

Future Scrutiny Involvement

The Chairman considered that the key role of the Committee in future would be scrutiny of the changes, once decided. She also drew attention to the Committee's key 'overview' role.

The Committee recognised that the fast pace of events represented a challenge in establishing a meaningful route for scrutiny involvement. Members also recognised the need to consider how scrutiny could have a meaningful role in future at an earlier stage in the process.

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