

SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2018

2.00 - 3.14 pm in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes

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Present

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)

Councillors Gwilym Butler (Vice-Chair), Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Alan Mosley,
Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Dave Tremellen and Leslie Winwood

40 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor Hannah Fraser, Councillor David Vasmer attended as substitute.

41 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

In relation to Agenda Item 7, Councillors Gwilym Butler and Clare Wild requested that it be noted that they were private sector landlords.

42 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2018

Consideration of the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2018 was deferred to the next meeting on 23rd January 2018.

43 Public Question Time

Ms Jackie Jeffrey of Citizens Advice Shropshire asked the following question,

In considering the Welfare Reform Report and its recommendations we ask that the committee also consider our evidence and recommend a review of the Council Tax Support Scheme definition of a vulnerable person and extend 100% Council Tax support to all ESA claimants, and all Universal Credit claimants claiming the ESA element from 2019/20.

The Chair confirmed that the supporting documents she had provided with her question [copy attached to signed minutes] had been circulated to Members before the meeting. The Chair referred Ms Jeffrey to the written response which was also circulated to Members [copy attached to the signed minutes]. Councillor Wild read out the final paragraph of the written response.

44 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

45 **Digital Transformation Programme**

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

46 **Meeting Housing Need in Shropshire**

The Director of Place introduced this report. The report followed the 'Meeting Housing Need in Shropshire' report considered by Cabinet on 7th November [attached to the report, Appendix A] and housing workshops held with Members in October 2018. Members noted that although housing development continued in Shropshire, developers tended to favour the more profitable larger executive style property. Early analysis suggested that the market place was failing to deliver the right type of housing in the right place to meet local need.

The Director of Place observed that Shropshire required well designed housing stock to meet future need. The provision of which would support the Councils other priorities and assist with the growing pressures on core systems and healthcare by enabling an increasingly elderly population to remain in their own homes for longer through the use of advanced technology.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Place explained that should a local housing company be established by the Council it would look to employ the services of local builders and tradesmen and in this way further support the local economy. He continued that all building would be done to the Shrewsbury Test standard.

A Member observed that with regard to energy efficient building, Shropshire Council could not impose additional standards on developers as these were governed by Building Regulations. The Director of Place agreed that this was the case but where Shropshire Council provided the land for development they could impose conditions, he continued that market moderation would ensure good quality housing.

In response to a Member's question the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Housing confirmed that the housing need statistics given in the report were accurate and the fluctuations were as a result of the introduction of a new system to calculate housing need more accurately.

The Director of Place observed that the housing needs would be met using existing and tested delivery methods. The aim of the project would be to meet housing need and provide local people with housing choice, whilst establishing a managed portfolio of property that would generate a return which could be used to support the Council's priorities.

He continued that it was important to work with Town and Parish Councils to meet the needs of rural areas and develop and maintain sustainable communities. In response to a Member's query he agreed that the project would work in partnership with private sector funding and it was the intention to be flexible in the approach so that small developments could be achieved as well as larger ones. He added that other authorities had already embarked on projects such as this and good practice could be observed.

Members noted that an outline business case would be considered by Council at its December 2018 meeting and a final business case would be prepared for the February 2019 meeting of Council

RESOLVED: that a Meeting Housing Need in Shropshire rapid action task and finish group be established to investigate the three key decision areas of:

- Strategic aims,
- Development scope and ambition; and
- Governance.

47 **Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group Report**

The Chair of the Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group introduced the report. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the work of the Group had been completed earlier in the year.

In response to a Member's question the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance confirmed expected non-mandatory savings of £2m from the Public Health budget. He continued the information within the Group's report which would not impact on or alter the contents of his financial report to be considered by Cabinet at the end of November. Members noted that all Adult Social Care Services would be reviewed in the New Year.

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance advised that localising Council Tax support had had a significant impact on the revenue and benefits services. Following a devolution of the Council Tax support scheme and 10% reduction in funding from Central Government the Council had made the decision that all low income households of working age people would be liable to pay a minimum Council Tax contribution of 20%. It had been recognised that this might lead to families experiencing financial difficulties and the Discretionary Housing Payment [DHP] was utilised to assist those residents where Housing Benefit or Universal Credit payments had been reduced due to a reason set out in the approved list. DHP had not previously been linked to benefit payments. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group observed that the Group had found the need for the Council and partner organisations to work together to ensure that all who were entitled to this payment were aware of it. Ms Jeffrey of the CAB commented that it was important that there was a clear and open application policy for DHP.

A Member observed that new applicants had to wait to wait for 23 days for their claim to be processed and he understood that both Telford and Wrekin and Powys Councils had a quicker turnaround time. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group responded that as Universal Credit was further rolled out, this issue would be monitored. The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance advised that processing time correlated with available resources.

In response to a Member's question, the Chair of the Task and Finish Group advised that the public question received from the CAB would not be included in the Group's recommendations as the subject matter was already contained with them.

RESOLVED: that Shropshire Council be recommended to:

- Produce a single process and procedure for managing applications discretionary hardship support;
- Works with partners to develop a single strategy for supporting people receiving benefits;
- Focuses any welfare strategy on supporting people into work; and
- Explores with partners ways be better co-ordinate its work to support individuals and families.

48 **Work Programme**

In response to a Member’s question, it was explained that legal advice had confirmed that the Quarter 2 Financial Report had to be first considered by the Cabinet Committee before being brought before the Scrutiny Committee. Members noted that the report’s status remained as a ‘draft report’ until it had been confirmed by the Cabinet Committee and as such could not be considered by any other Committee.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group would be meeting with the Directors and Portfolio Holders and it was anticipated that the Group would be in a position to produce a report for consideration in January 2019.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer continued that work was continuing on the Corporate Plan and that the Committee might be minded to establish a Task and Finish Group to Identify Performance Measures.

Members were reminded that the Corporate Peer Workshops had been arrange. All Members had been invited and would take place in early December 2018.

RESOLVED: that the Corporate Performance Management Framework Measures Task and Finish Group be established.

49 **Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee**

In light of changes to dates in the Forward Plan for Cabinet to consider Financial Reports, the Chair requested that the Statutory Scrutiny Officer reviewed the dates of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee meetings scheduled for 23rd January 2018 and 6th March 2019, to ensure that it was still in sync with the Financial Strategy timetable.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: