

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019

2.00 - 3.35 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 Joyce Barrow, Roger Evans, Hannah Fraser, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley,
Peggy Mullock, Dave Tremellen and Leslie Winwood

33 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

None were received.

34 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

35 Minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2019

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2019 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

36 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

37 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

38 Draft Asset Management Strategy

The Assistant Director Commercial Services introduced the report which outlined Shropshire Councils draft Asset Management Strategy. He reminded Members that they had considered an earlier version of the draft and their comments and suggestions had been incorporated into the current version of the draft strategy.

Members noted the targeted objectives of the report and that it contained the Council's high-level objectives and was supported by the Corporate Development Plan. The Assistant Director Commercial Service continued that the strategy took a Portfolio approach based on five key areas:

- Operational;

- Heritage;
- Development and regeneration
- Investment portfolio - supporting the Commercial Strategy; and
- Portfolio Holdings – which set included the approach to disposal of assets.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Director Commercial Services explained that factors other than purely the financial value would be taken into account before the decision to dispose was made and it was important that all factors were considered for effective property management.

The Assistant Director of Commercial Services responded to a Member's comments about the Council role as custodian of community and heritage assets, and the importance of supporting regeneration projects which were not commercially viable but had a positive impact for local communities or supported environmental issues, He explained that the strategy sought to balance financial benefits and other less tangible benefits when reviewing investment and assets. He added that it was recognised that discussions with local communities about acceptable return were important and underpinned decisions. He continued that new technology was being investigated to improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings. Members suggested that this needed to be referenced more strongly in the strategy.

The Chair suggested that the excellent partnership working relationships enjoyed by the Council and the need for flexibility to decide on investment and working arrangements with these partners to support economic priorities should be set out more prominently in the report.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Asset Management Strategy be noted and the suggestions made during the discussion be discussed with the Portfolio Holder and incorporated into the Cabinet report.

39 Digital Transformation Programme Update

The Head of Technology gave a presentation on the Digital Transformation Programme [copy attached to the signed minutes]. Members noted that excellent progress had been made with the Digital Transformation Project and the installation of new technology was driving staff to work differently. Weaknesses in staff IT skills had been identified and training courses were being provided to address these. Digital skills were being embedded into the performance management structure.

In response to a Member's query, the Director of Workforce and Transformation responded that the programme was about enabling staff to work more efficiently and effectively which would increase productivity which would lead to reduced costs.

Members raised concerns that staff working in local communities were struggling with inadequate equipment and had not received adequate training on the new working arrangements. The Digital Transformation Programme Manager explained that the new technology was being introduced over a 3-year period and meetings

were taking place with staff so that they could raise any issues they were encountering to enable further support or additional equipment to be provided. He confirmed that the project team were actively working with schools experiencing issues with the Business World system and feedback from schools had been positive. A Member commented that all new systems required time to bed in and for teething problems to be resolved.

The Chief Executive noted that the Peer Review that had recently been undertaken had expressed surprise at the progress that the project had made and the state-of-the-art technology which had been introduced. He continued that some of the criticisms made of the new systems had been caused by problems arising during recent severe weather conditions which had resulted in an emergency situation. The new systems had worked well in the circumstances, but all systems had a point where they would become overloaded. In that situation the Council had to prioritise its resources to resolve the emergency situation.

Members requested training be offered to all Members on the new systems they would be expected to use.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Workforce and Transformation explained that as the new technology became embedded in working practices evidence of improvement in service delivery would become available in data format which could be presented to the Committee.

The Head of Technology confirmed that he anticipated that the My Shropshire Portal was nearing completion with the addition of new features, and Members would be able to use it to see issues raised by residents relating to their Ward areas. The Portfolio Holder for Organisational Transformation and Digital Infrastructure advised that training would be offered to all Members on how to use the portal once all features were available.

RESOLVED:

That the Digital Transformation Programme – Business Case Review/Benefits Realisation report be noted.

40 Future Work Programme

Members considered the future work programme and discussed the issue of climate change and the Council's approach to it. Members noted that a Climate Control Member and Officer Group had been established and the Climate Change Strategy was to be considered by Council at its meeting on 19th December 2019.

Members expressed concern that they had not had the opportunity to scrutinise quarter 2 finance and performance reports. The Chairman agreed that she would consider holding an additional meeting for this purpose.

RESOLVED: That the issue of climate change be added to the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee work programme.

41 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee

Members noted that the next meeting of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee would be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 29th January 2020.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: