

SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023

10.00 am - 1.50 pm in the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury,
SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak

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Present

Councillor Claire Wild (Chairman)

Councillors Joyce Barrow (Vice Chairman), Julia Buckley, Roger Evans, Robert Macey, Alan Mosley, Peggy Mullock, Chris Schofield and David Vasmer

20 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

There were no apologies for absence.

21 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of interest

22 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2022

The minutes of the meeting that had been held on the 30th November 2022 had been circulated

Councillor Schofield pointed out that he had been present but had been omitted from the list of those attending the meeting.

Subject to the above amendment the minutes were confirmed as a correct record.

23 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

24 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members

25 Alternative Budget Proposals 2023/24

Members had before them the report of the Executive Director – Resources which set out the alternative budget proposals of the opposition groups.

The Chair commented that all the opposition budgets were predicated on the cancellation of the North West Relief Road (NWRR) which would result in a £20million pressure in the revenue budget.

Councillor Roger Evans commented that refusal of the NWRR planning application would place council in grave financial position and suggested that if the Council abandoned plans for the NWRR and just proceeded with the Oxon Link Road this would eventually release money to cover the outstanding finance. He asked what contingencies did the administration have of the planning permission was refused?

The Executive Director – Resources stated that if the NWRR didn't get planning permission there would be a need to disaggregate the expenditure to show which parts were associated with the NWRR, Oxon Link Road and other projects. There would be some one-off funding which could be capitalised depending on what parts of the project were taken forward. He added that when it was understood which parts of the project were not being taken forward, the costs associated with this would be taken into the revenue budget and that these could be addressed through using reserves.

The Assistant Director – Finance and Technology commented that he had been advised that it would be very difficult from an operational perspective to disaggregate the two schemes. In response to a question from the Chair, the Assistant Director – Finance and Technology confirmed that if the NWRR did not go ahead the expenditure to date could not be capitalised and would transfer to the revenue budget creating a pressure of £20 million.

The Executive Director – Resources advised the meeting that the provisional annual settlement had been received after the cabinet which had agreed the budget, and it was better than was originally envisaged. He reminded members that the Council would not receive the full details till then end of January and that there were a number of other grants and funding that would not be confirmed until later in the year. In response to a question the Executive Director- Resources confirmed that details of the preliminary settlement were available from the Government website.

Councillor Roger Evans then presented the Liberal Democrat alternative budget.

In response to proposals around health and adult social care the Executive Director – People informed the meeting that the subject of care home capacity had been discussed at HASC and that the Council were working with the market to develop this. She went on to say that the Councils policy was to treat as many people as possible at home. With regard to the proposal around the hospital at Bishops Castle, the Executive Director of Health, Wellbeing and Prevention advised the meeting that work was ongoing through the ICS to look at this, and any proposals would be brought to a future meeting of HASC.

With regard to the proposal around collection of dry recycling the Assistant Director – Finance and Technology informed the meeting that he had been advised that currently the waste contracts would not allow for this type of collection, and that there was a reluctance within the marketplace to carry out the type of collection suggested.

Councillor Julia Buckley then presented the Labour alternative budget.

In response to proposals around payments to social workers the Executive Director – People informed the meeting that there was currently a welcome payment for new

starters and a retention payment for qualified social workers. She added that the turn over of staff was currently low but acknowledged that the spend on agency staff was high but that work was ongoing to reduce this. She also acknowledged that there was a disparity between salary levels paid in Shropshire and those paid in neighbouring council and informed the meeting that work was ongoing to address this.

With regard to the proposal to recruit more educational psychologists the Executive Director – People advised the meeting that the number of education psychologists employed by the council had risen from 9.9 fte in 2020 to 15 fte in 2022. In response to a request from Councillor Buckley the Executive Director – People agreed to circulate details on the timescales for the production of IEP reports.

With regard to the proposal around solar panels on council sites it was agreed to ask the Place Overview Committee to look at this.

With regard to the proposal around the effect of extensions on council tax the Assistant Director – Finance and Technology explained that the change in council tax banding brought about by improvement to the dwelling could only be applied when there is a change in ownership of the property. The Executive Director – Resources advised the committee that there was a team within the Revenues and Benefits team which carried out inspections and that where an improvement had been made, a note is made on the system and a revaluation for council tax purposes carried out at the point of sale.

With regard to the proposal around the council tax rebate for those on benefit, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources suggested that this should be looked at by the Social Task Group looking at the cost-of-living crisis.

Councillor Duncan Kerr then presented the Green alternative budget.

With regard to the proposal around the rebanding of some car parks in Shrewsbury, the Chair suggested that this should be looked at as part of the Car Parking Strategy review.

With regard to the proposals around therapeutic services available to children who have been exposed to domestic abuse, the Executive Director People advised that this was being address through extra funding for the Stepping Stones project. She added that domestic abuse was a key priority of the Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership. The Chair commented that this was a topic that the People Overview Committee could look at.

Group Leaders thanked the Assistant Director – Finance and Technology for his help and assistance during the alternative budget process.

26 **Work Programme**

Members agreed that consideration of the work programme should be deferred to the next meeting.

Members had before them the terms of reference for a Task and Finish Group on Bullying and Harassment. It was agreed that the terms of reference should be accepted and that a Task and Finish Group on Bullying and Harassment should be established.

27 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 [3] of the Council’s Access to Information Rules, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item.

Councillor Roger Evans asked that it be recorded that he had voted against this resolution.

28 Call In - Acton Scott Historic Working Farm

Members had before them the exempt report of the Assistant Director Homes and Communities which set out a response to the call-in by the Liberal Democrat Group, made in respect of the Cabinet decision of 14 December 2022 to surrender the lease of Acton Scott Historic Working Farm (ASHWF).

Members received a presentation from the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital which set out responses to the points made in the call in and following discussion it was **RESOLVED**

To accept the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Roger Evans asked that it be recorded that he had voted against this resolution.

29 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 1 March 2023 at 10.00 am

Signed (Chairman)

Date: