



Committee and Date

Transformation and
Improvement Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

10 April 2024

TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2024

In the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

10.00 am - 12.00 pm

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick Democratic Services Officer

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Present

Councillor Claire Wild

Councillors Roger Evans (Vice-Chair), Jeff Anderson, Joyce Barrow, Thomas Biggins, Julia Buckley, Rob Gittins, Alan Mosley, Dan Thomas and David Vasmer

49 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Peggy Mullock (substituted by Councillor Jeff Anderson).

50 Disclosable Interests

No declarations were received.

51 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Members received the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2024.

A query was raised regarding a report to Cabinet; however it was confirmed that this would be discussed outside the meeting with the Chief Executive.

The Chair proposed an amendment to the minutes to remove the wording after the recommendation within minute 46 – Alternative Budget Proposals 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2024 as amended.

52 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

53 Member Question Time

There were no member questions.

54 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2023/24

The Executive Director of Resources presented the report which highlighted the following key issues in Q3:

- a. Revenue spending reductions of £39.8m: The MTFS agreed by Full Council (2 March 2023) included £51.4m of planned spending reductions £39.8m which represents 77% of the year-end target.
- b. Spending pressures in demand-led services of £28m: Despite the good progress on spending constraint already identified (above), demand-led services are forecasting significant overall budget pressures of £28.495m in the year, pressures which are expected to persist into the coming year. After planned application of £20.5m of reserves set out in the reports for Q1 and Q2, the net budget pressure in People directorate is reduced to £7.995m.
- c. An overall forecast for services of £14.533m: Taking achieved savings and wider service pressures together, the overall forecast indicates net pressures in services of £14.362, which rises to £14.533m after taking into account changes to funding and corporate budget pressures.
- d. The above to be applied to the General Fund Balance, now £16.2m, at year end.

Members sought clarification on the Dedicated Schools Grant funding and High Needs Block. Members were advised that this had been included for transparency as many other Councils had a large overspend which was currently being dealt with by the statutory override provided until March 2026. If this was removed, any overspend would fall within the general fund. It was confirmed that Shropshire Council do not have this deficit.

In response to a query about the level of reserves, members were informed that budget contributions had been included to bring the level of reserves back up to £30million in the next financial year. It was expected that the general fund balance would be higher than projected.

Members requested more information with regards to the adult social care discharge fund and whether the Council is receiving any excess expenditure back from the ICB and if PWC were looking into this. The Executive Director for Resources advised that he would investigate and report back.

Members were advised that the largest overspend in the Resources Directorate was for housing benefit, which was due to being unable to reclaim housing benefit subsidy to the level that housing homeless individuals would be. Work is ongoing to find cheaper solutions to this matter to reduce this overspend.

Members queried the methods used in the demand management in Adults and Children's Social Care and whether these were working. It was felt that the Council needed to understand where the pressures are coming from before agreeing how the demand should be managed. This could be due to an increase in the number of people accessing services, an increase in the complexity of needs or an increase in the unit cost. It was confirmed that this data could be provided following work with the People Overview and

Scrutiny Committee. It was felt that this data should be brought back to this committee to then forward to either Health Overview or People's Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate.

Members noted that work was ongoing as part of the transformation programme.

Members felt that the data requested would form part of the performance monitoring (agenda item 7) and it was therefore:

RECOMMENDED:

That additional performance indicators relating to demand within adults and childrens will form part of financial monitoring in the future.

55 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital introduced the report which raised 12 exceptions. Members noted that there were now 86 Key Performance Indicators which have been added to the Shropshire Plan report.

Members requested an update on the conversion of streetlighting and it was confirmed this would be investigated after the meeting.

Members noted that responding to FOI requests within statutory timescales was at 75% instead of the target of 90%. Members were advised that a decrease had been reported whilst the team were in the process of implementing a new structure.

It was questioned as to what is an appropriate number of KPIs for the size of the organisation. It was noted that there would be between 10-15 KPIs per "healthy" area of the Shropshire Plan, however the quality of the KPI was most important.

Concern was raised with regards to the delays in issuing EHCPs for the second quarter running. Members were asked to contact the Portfolio Holder for further information.

With regards to staff sickness rates, it was acknowledged that there were different targets between summer and winter and it was imperative that staff are reassured of the support available to them.

Further to the discussions under the previous agenda item, it was

RECOMMENDED:

That KPIs be created for the number of service users, the complexity of needs and unit cost for each service user and to work on the detail with the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities, and Culture and Digital, which would be emailed out to the committee.

56 Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish Group

Councillor Ruth Houghton, Chair of the Task and Finish Group, introduced the report which outlined the work of the group to date.

Thanks were given to colleagues in HR and to the scrutiny officers. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities thanked the Chair and the task and finish group for their work.

It had been noted that there was no such policy to protect Members and it was confirmed that the task and finish group should continue their work to review support in relation to Bullying and Harassment for Members.

Acknowledging the above, Members agreed the recommendations as laid out in the report.

57 Transformation and Medium-Term Financial Strategy Task and Finish Group

Councillor Roger Evans, Chair of the Task and Finish Group, presented the report and thanked members and officers for their support.

Members felt that a number of the recommendations had either been covered, or could be covered by other task and finish groups.

The Chair felt that the work of the task and finish group had enabled members to have a wider understanding of the work of the transformation programme.

It was acknowledged that task and finish groups are not recorded which restricts member attendance and awareness of certain subjects. It was agreed that more work should be done with the Assistant Director of Transformation to get more value from PWC.

RECOMMENDED:

That the report be noted and ask that scrutiny chairs look at the cost and benefit of task and finish groups.

58 Work Programme

Members noted that a session on the work programme had been scheduled for an alternative date.

59 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on 10 April 2024.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:

