

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL

Held in the Council Chamber, The Symington Building,

Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough

19th January 2017

Commencing at 6.30p.m.

Present:

Councillor Spendlove-Mason, Chairman.

Councillors (panellists): Champion, Chapman, Dann (ex officio), Galton, Dr Hill, Nunn and Mrs Wood.

Councillors (guests): Brodrick, Graves, Hallam, King, Mrs Page, Pain, Rickman and Rook.

Officers: K. Cowell, B. Jolly, G. Keeping and S. Riley.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATIONS OF SUBSTITUTION

Apologies for absence were received from:

Panellists: Councillors Bilbie, Hadkiss and Knowles.

Guests: Councillor Bannister

Councillor Chapman substituted for Councillor Bilbie, Councillor Galton substituted for Councillor Knowles and Councillor Nunn substituted for Councillor Hadkiss.

MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel held on 15th December 2016 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Pain stated that he was the director of a local taxi firm and would not therefore participate in answering any questions raised by the Panel in relation to taxis.

Councillor Pain also stated that he was Lead Member for Waste at Leicestershire County Council and would not therefore participate in answering any questions raised by the Panel in relation to waste.

CORPORATE PLAN AND CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN

S. Riley, Head of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer, presented the Panel with draft versions of the Council's Corporate Plan, Corporate Delivery Plan and Strategic Performance Dashboard for the 2017-18 period. Following this meeting, the documents were due to be considered by the Executive on 14th February 2017.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the Corporate Plan and Corporate Delivery Plan outline the Council’s vision, priorities, Critical Outcomes and Key Activities. Both documents are underpinned by the Council’s vision, which is: ‘Working with communities in a vibrant, safe and prosperous District.’
- (ii) Both the Corporate Plan and the Corporate Delivery Plan are structured around the delivery of the Council’s three priorities:
 - Working with communities to develop places in which to live and be happy.
 - Provide public services which are effective and deliver value for money.
 - Encourage a vibrant and sustainable business community intent on prosperity, employment and learning opportunities.
- (iii) the Corporate Plan for 2017/18 is the overarching public document which sets out the Council’s vision for the district, its ambitions and priorities and how it will work with its partners and the community to ensure that living in, working in, and visiting the district is the best possible experience. It is based on information about the area and customer feedback and identifies how the Council will achieve its vision.
- (iv) the Corporate Delivery Plan for 2017/18 is the Council’s annual high-level plan that sets out how it will deliver its vision and priorities through Critical Outcomes and Key Activities during the forthcoming financial year.
- (v) the Corporate Delivery Plan identifies high-level expected outcomes of the Key Activities, which will add depth to what the Critical Outcomes will mean for communities in the District. It also contains the headline performance measures for each Key Activity.
- (vi) the number of Key Activities proposed in the 2017/18 Corporate Delivery Plan is currently around 62. The Corporate Delivery Plan is a dynamic document and the development of the Key Activities is an iterative process.
- (vii) reporting mechanisms for the Corporate Delivery Plan will remain the same during the 2017/18 year. Monitoring of performance will take place through the internal Performance Improvement Board. Performance Reports will be submitted to the Executive and Scrutiny on a quarterly basis.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present, to be presented to the Executive at its Meeting on 14th February 2017. The following questions and comments were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<p><u>Priorities for 2017/18 - vulnerable people</u>: it was noted that vulnerable people were no longer specifically mentioned in the priorities for 2017/18, although the issue was still covered among the Key Activities. What was the reason for this priority being dropped?</p>	<p>A decision had been taken to include issues relating to vulnerable people within the priority “working with communities to develop places in which to live and be happy”. However, this area of work is still covered by Critical Outcome CO6 “The Council will support those most in need”, detailed in the Corporate Delivery Plan.</p>
<p><u>Priorities for 2017/18 – encourage a vibrant and sustainable business community</u>: what steps are being taken to help businesses within smaller communities become aware of and access the Council’s services?</p>	<p>The Council does the best that it can, within the resources available, to communicate its offer. Around 4000 businesses now receive the Council’s online newsletter. Mentoring to businesses is offered through a contract with Oxford Innovation. There have been 400 attendees at the Pioneer 10 sessions. Apprenticeships are being encouraged within the District. Over 90% of the activities identified in the Open for Business Strategy have now been completed and an Economic Development Strategy is being developed. It is part of the role of Councillors to help to make the Council’s offer known to businesses in their Wards.</p>

<p><u>KA 01:04 - to ensure that Harborough's requirements are adequately addressed in the ... Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire</u>: the requirements are not specified in the summary of Critical Outcomes and Key Activities.</p>	<p>The details are included in the "Critical Outcomes and Key Activities in Detail" section of the Corporate Delivery Plan.</p>
<p><u>KA 03:03</u>: The Key Activity current reads "<i>Support the delivery / development of new or refurbished open space in accordance with the adopted open space</i>". Is a word missing?</p>	<p>The wording should be "<i>... in accordance with the adopted Open Space Strategy</i>".</p>
<p><u>KA 06:04 – training for taxi drivers to identify signs of child sexual exploitation</u>: what is the background behind this Key Activity?</p>	<p>This Key Activity is being focussed at an early stage on taxi drivers due to the release of a Government report regarding a case where a District Council was found to have not provided a robust framework for reporting sexual exploitation and had been suspended from being able to issue taxi licences until this was addressed.</p>
<p><u>KA 06:08: to work in partnership to minimise the impact of incidents of flooding</u>: planning applications for more than ten dwellings require expert advice to be sought from Leicestershire County Council (LCC) as lead Flood Authority, while those of fewer than ten are now purely a matter for the Planning Authority. Can further consideration be given as to how expert advice should be obtained for small sites where there is no responsibility for LCC to have an input?</p>	<p>It was AGREED that Officers would provide a full response to Panel members and feed this into the Executive's discussions on the Corporate Plan and budget.</p>
<p><u>Strategic Performance Dashboard</u>: why are some targets marked "TBC"?</p>	<p>Some targets are dependent on the budget and will be confirmed once the budget has been agreed. The target relating to short-term sickness is new (it was formally included with long-term sickness) and will be based on Quarter Three data, when this is available.</p>
<p><u>Strategic Performance Dashboard - Businesses who respond to Council surveys rate Council services as 'good' or 'very good'</u>: is the target the percentage of all businesses, or of those that respond? Is 25% too small a percentage?</p>	<p>The target is currently 25% of responses received. It was AGREED that steps would be taken to make sure that the wording for the target was clear and consideration would be given to amending the actual percentage figure, if appropriate.</p>
<p><u>Strategic Performance Dashboard – Council Tax collection rate</u>: the target is given as 98.6%. Has this changed from 2016/17?</p>	<p>The Revenues and Benefits Partnership is performing well and this target should be achieved in the current year. The target is being continued into 2017/18.</p>

The Panel RESOLVED that the report be forwarded to the Executive with these Minutes attached, for information.

COUNCIL BUDGET 2017/18

Members considered draft Budget proposals for the 2017/18 year. S. Riley, Section 151 Officer, outlined the main aspects of the revenue and budget funding proposals for the 2017/18 year. The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present, to be presented to the Executive at its Meeting on 14th February 2017.

The following questions and comments were recorded:

Question/ Comment	Response
<p><u>Increase in Council Tax-base:</u> the tax-base is stated as having increased by 694.5 Band D equivalents from 2016/17, which has in itself generated £111K additional Council Tax.</p> <p>(i) what proportion of the increase is due to the fact that some people who have received discounts in the past have now been found to have been ineligible for them?</p> <p>(ii) if it has become clear that individuals have been misleading the Council, what further action is being taken?</p> <p>(iii) is the £111K benefit just enjoyed by Harborough District Council, or is it shared with other preceptors?</p>	<p>(i) the £111K increase is primarily driven by an increase of 557 properties from last year. The single-person discount review, carried out every two years by the Revenue and Benefits Partnership, identified over 500 people who potentially were not single-person occupiers. These have been contacted and the removal of the exemption has been back-dated by two financial years.</p> <p>(ii) the back-dating of the removal of the relief has been effective in itself, but the Council reserves the right to pursue prosecutions, based on the evidence available. A report on the outcome of the Single-person Discount Review summarises the action that has been taken in particular cases. It was AGREED that the Summary of the report would be circulated to Panel members.</p> <p>(iii) the £111K relates to Harborough District Council only. It was AGREED that the figures for other preceptors would be shared with Panel members.</p>
<p><u>Cost Centre 10043 - Town Centre Support:</u> is this cost centre still covered under "special expenses"?</p>	<p>It was thought that Harborough Town Centre Support had been taken out of Special Expenses. <i>[post-meeting note: it was confirmed following the meeting that Harborough Centre Support is completed under the budget in 10043 and the cost centre named will be changed to S.E. Town Centre Support to make this clearer, that this budget is a Special Expense]</i></p>
<p><u>Cost Centre 10065 – British Farmers Market:</u> what do the expenditure and income entries relate to?</p>	<p>They relate to market events held on The Square in Market Harborough, which generate a net income.</p>
<p><u>Cost Centres 10161 – Residual Waste Collections and 10162 – Recycling Collections:</u> does the figure for Residual Waste Collections include an element for County Council disposal fees? In future, might a distinction be made in the figures between green and blue-lid recycling collections?</p>	<p>The renegotiation of the waste contract led to a reduction in core costs of collection of £300K. It is an integrated environmental services contract, and allocations between the different types of bin are 'notional' and are refined each year to better inform the costs of the various elements of the service.</p>
<p><u>Cost Centre 10235 – Corporate Asset Manager:</u> what does the budget allocation relate to?</p>	<p>This cost centre is an aggregate for the whole Corporate Asset Management / Facilities Team and not just the manager. It was AGREED that the cost centre title would be altered to reflect this.</p>

<p><u>Reserves / borrowing:</u> given the level of reserves set out in Appendix D to the report, why has borrowing been identified in Appendix E as a means of partly funding the capital programme for 2017/18 to 2019/20?</p>	<p>For several years the Council has been able to partly fund the capital programme, through the use of internal investments. However, each year the Council has to set a Capital Financing Requirement, which in effect gives it permission to borrow as and when it might be required. The figure for borrowing included in the budget at this stage is intended to allow this option to be taken, if required. The actual decision on whether or not to rely on borrowing is made when needed and takes into account the availability of other less expensive sources of funding, including the use of reserves.</p>
<p><u>Capital Programme – Move on Space:</u> it is noted that the capital budget includes a figure of £4,790K for the Move on Space. Could an update on this be provided?</p>	<p>The proposed joint partnership with LCC is not being pursued. The Council is, however, still exploring avenues for delivering this project, using other sources of external funding.</p>
<p><u>Capital Programme – Harborough Innovation Centre (HIC):</u> given that the building is only five years old, why does the capital programme include items relating to the café and a draught lobby?</p>	<p>Some issues have been identified with ventilation and air-conditioning at the HIC. The draught lobby is intended to improve the energy efficiency of the building. The café proposal is to develop the existing facility. The figures included to address these proposals are indicative at this stage and all will be subject to the development of full business cases, which will need to be approved.</p>
<p><u>Capital Programme – Car Parks</u> The Capital Programme includes two entries for car parks: under “Investing in Quality Facilities” and again as a separate heading “Investment in Car Parking”. (i) Does “Car Park Improvement (Mill Hill)” refer to the staff carpark? (ii) What location is intended to be covered by the item “Coach Parking”?</p>	<p>(i) The Mill Hill item covers parking around the Symington Building, including the staff car park, as outlined in the Council’s Car Parking Strategy. (ii) Coach Parking is again detailed in the Car Parking Strategy.</p>
<p><u>Capital Programme – Supporting the Vulnerable:</u> funding for Lightbulb/Social Care Capital Projects has been identified as increasing year on year over the period of the programme, while that for Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) is to remain the same. (i) what is the reason for this? (ii) has the level of support from the Better Care Fund been confirmed yet?</p>	<p>(i) The £350K figure is an assessment of DFG need for the next three years. This will be funded through the Better Care Fund at a higher level than in previous years. This has meant that the Council has been able to allocate funding, that has in the past been used to top up the DFG budget, towards Lightbulb/Social Care Capital Projects. Overall this represents a 61% increase in the funding available for supporting vulnerable people. (ii) The Better Care Fund is scheduled to be agreed in January / February 2017, but in the meantime, the Council has received a reliable indication that its funding will be in the region of £350K to £360K.</p>
<p><u>Dry Recycling Credits:</u> next year the Council will lose the dry recycling credit. (i) what processes will be gone through in order</p>	<p>(i) The Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved in February 2016, has already taken account of the reduction in the dry</p>

<p>to address the financial impact of this loss? (ii) has the Council received any assurance from LCC that the Council's operational costs will not increase (e.g. through increased travel distance) if the materials have to be delivered outside the District?</p>	<p>recycling credits. From 2018, the arrangement for the sale of recyclable materials will change. (ii) There are no assurances that HDC will not incur extra costs, however all District Councils are in active dialogue with LCC, which is aware of the impact the changes would have on the whole waste system. There has been discussion that the bulking-up facility may be retained, which would reduce the impact of costs of additional travel.</p>
<p><u>Fuel costs:</u> is there any collaboration between local district councils regarding the purchase of fuel? If so, is there any possibility of allowing rate payers to buy into such a scheme?</p>	<p>The Council secures value for money by purchasing its fuel through contracts with the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation. There has in the past been debate about councils securing fixed wholesale prices for household energy needs, but volatility in the market has meant that there is not currently considered to be a role for local authorities in this area.</p>
<p><u>Reporting return on investments/capital:</u> how are Councillors informed of the return on investment for major projects?</p>	<p>The Corporate Delivery Plan and Strategic Performance Dashboard, discussed earlier, provide a number of performance measures for major projects. If a different approach to reporting is felt appropriate, this could be raised by Scrutiny through the Scrutiny Work Programme.</p>

The Panel RESOLVED that the report be forwarded to the Executive with these Minutes attached, for information.

MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY

None were reported.

The Chairman thanked members of The Executive for their attendance at the meeting.

The Meeting ended at 8.03p.m.