

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Monday, 30 November 2015, County Hall Worcester - 10.30 am

Present:

Minutes

Mr C B Taylor (Chairman), Mr S R Peters (Vice Chairman), Mr S C Cross, Mrs P E Davey, Mr C G Holt, Mr R C Lunn, Mrs E B Tucker and Mr P A Tuthill

Also attended:

Mr A I Hardman, Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Finance
Mr M L Bayliss, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning
Mrs L C Hodgson, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Localism and Communities

Sander Kristel (Director of Commercial and Change), Neil Anderson (Head of Community and Environment), Peter Bishop (Strategic Commissioner, Service Transformation), Steph Simcox (Head of Finance and Resources - Children's Services), Suzanne O'Leary (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Samantha Morris (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Available Papers

The Members had before them

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated)
- B. Presentation Handout – Communities
- C. Presentation Handout – Commercial, Change and Finance
- D. The Minutes for the meetings held on 7 September 2015 and 4 November 2015

Copies of documents A-C will be attached to the signed Minutes.

149 Apologies and Welcome

None.

150 Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

151 Public Participation

None.

152 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meetings held on 7 September and 4 November 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

153 Corporate Plan and 2016/17 Budget: Commercial and Change and Communities

In attendance for this discussion were:

Communities – the Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Localism and Communities and the Head of Community and Environment.

Commercial, Change and Finance – the Leader of the Council (with responsibility for Finance), the CMR for Finance, Transformation and Commissioning, the Director of Commercial and Change, Strategic Commissioner – Service Transformation and the Head of Finance and Resources.

The Panel was asked to consider the budget challenges facing services in 2016/17 and how these were being addressed, the review of the medium term financial plan, what risks it contained, its feasibility and whether it would enable the Corporate Plan to be implemented. The Panel Chairman would then feed back key points from the Panel's discussion to the 2016/17 Budget Scrutiny Challenge Group on 2 December.

Copies of presentation slides were circulated.

Communities

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- With effect from 1 January 2016, Communities was transferring from Business, Environment and Community (BEC) Directorate to Children's Family and Communities Directorate and the Head of Community and Environment was transferring directorates also.
- The Services transferring to Children's Family and Communities were Strategic Libraries and Learning Service, Bishops Wood Visitor Centre, Public analyst and Scientific Services, County Enterprises, Libraries Services and Improvements, Countryside Greenspace, Trading Standards, Museums Service, Worcester Youth Music Service and Registration, Coroner Services and CIMU. Archives and Archaeology would stay with BEC and Volunteering would remain in Commercial and Change (COaCH) Directorate.

- Responsibility for the Hive would be with COaCH Directorate in terms of looking for savings and with Strategic Libraries and Learning Service for day to day responsibility.
- The Libraries Service would be subject to further re-modelling/service transformation. There was no intention of closing any libraries but it was intended that there would be more working with partners to share buildings to ensure a viable service. There were 21 libraries at the start of the process and it was intended that there would still be 21 libraries remaining at the end of the process. Services would however be delivered in a different way by working in partnership, with volunteers to maximise the use of buildings.
- All libraries except for Rubery Library had been re-modelled. It was proving to be a challenge in terms of finding a suitable partnership.
- The redevelopment scheme transforming the former Parkside Middle School into a one-stop shop for council services, including the register office, Job Centre Plus base, council offices, a new chamber for the district council, a customer service centre, a community hall and the new library had opened on 30 November 2015.
- Wythall and Bewdley were other examples of libraries working in partnership.
- The Mobile Library Service had been reviewed after 6 months and seemed to be working well.
- It was suggested that the Library Service was a good news story and some publicity to promote this should be considered.
- Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee and County Regulatory Services (Trading Standards and Animal Health Services) were being brought back in house to the County Council from 1 April 2016. Although the Service had been successful in making the savings envisaged on reviewing the future sustainability of the Service, it had been decided that bringing back in house would be better for its ongoing viability.
- The point was made that through the Commissioning Cycle, services would continue to be reviewed to ensure that they continued to be delivered in the best way.
- The Arts Service was currently going through the Commissioning cycle – £25k savings were required by April 2017.
- The Savings targets were and would continue to

be challenging.

Commercial, Change and Finance

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- The goals for Commercial, Change and Finance were to:
 - continue to support the whole organisation and the commissioning process; in supporting the Commissioning process it was important to continually review and look for savings
 - develop a buoyant market place for service providers
 - Promote World Class Worcestershire as a great place to live, work and visit
 - develop an increasingly self-sufficient council
 - lead the way in delivering integrated services
 - find the best outcomes for the council, residents and businesses
 - develop and agile workforce
 - tell people about the organisation
 - digital tools fit for the future.
- Although prevention was part of demand management, demand could also be managed in other ways, for example encouraging residents to use online services.
- The County Council needed to be less silo-based and better at partnership working.
- The staff review process was being looked at to ensure that it was fit for the organisation evolving; it was thought that a more continuous approach to staff reviews was the way forward.
- In terms of data retention for the Council, it was confirmed that if data was decommissioned it would be archived where necessary but it was also important to consider the data retention policy and whether it was necessary to keep data in the first place.
- Flexible working wasn't just about homeworking but working in other buildings. Technology accessibility, mobile data and Broadband throughout the County was vital for staff to be able to access the Council's systems.
- It was confirmed that the Medium Term Financial Plan was on target, but the detail was still awaited (due 23 December). The gap was still £3m and

suggestions for plugging the gap were still being worked on.

- There was concern about what would happen if there wasn't any funding allocated to the Education Support Grant.

Following the discussion, the Panel agreed that the following points would be fed back to the 2016/17 Budget Challenge Group by the Chairman on 2 December 2015:

- The Panel felt clear on the direction of travel for the Commercial, Change and Finance Directorate and Communities (which was moving out of BEC and into Children's Family and Communities Directorate) and had confidence in what they were being told.
- There was still a funding gap of £3m.
- Final details on Government settlement was due 23 December but there was concern about what would happen if there wasn't any funding allocated to the Education Support Grant
- The proposed reconsideration of the staff review system to have a more ongoing approach rather than 6 monthly reviews was supported.
- It was suggested that the Councillors Budget Briefing on 17 December before Cabinet was too late and didn't allow sufficient time for members to reflect on what they were being told before the Cabinet meeting took place.

The meeting ended at 11.40 am

Chairman