

RESOURCES AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2018

PRESENT:- Councillors Brian Mattock (Chair), Steve Weisinger (Vice-Chair), Toby Elliott, Claire Ellis, Emma Faramarzi, Des Moffatt, Andy Spry and Robert Wright

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary Friend and Timothy Swinyard.

15. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

16. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th October 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Members noted that the methods for prioritising telephone calls from vulnerable residents and those organisations who assist vulnerable residents (Minute 11 refers), and the problems regarding the sharing of data arising from the transfer of library services to alternative providers within the Borough (Minute 12 refers), will be considered under the Swindon Programme item at the meeting of this Committee on 16th January 2019.

17. Public Question Time

Mr Roy Worman, Haydon Wick, asked questions at the meeting in respect of:

- a) How much debt the Council has under a Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBO) loan, and what the interest rates are.
- b) Public involvement in the consideration of proposals through the Cabinet process which are worth more than £10m.
- c) The procedure for councillors and the public to assess a local authority's total risk exposure as a result of its investment decisions, using quantitative indicators included in the Capital Strategy.

The Chair responded at the meeting.

18. Draft Capital Strategy

The Committee considered a report regarding the updated 2018 CIPFA Prudential Code which sets out the requirements for a Capital Strategy to be approved by Council before the end of the 2018/2019 financial year. The report included the draft document taken to Cabinet on 17th October 2018 as Appendix 3 to the Budget Management Update report, and also highlighted the key requirements of the Capital Strategy.

The Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer) introduced the report and confirmed that the draft Capital Strategy ties together all future capital investment requirements, along with borrowing requirements, and includes references to

processes and governance. The draft also allows for more scrutiny of the Council's commercial investment programme, and section 7 in particular sets out a framework around prioritising capital investment proposals which is not restrictive.

Following the presentation of the report, the Committee discussed the following points raised:

- The definition of 'commercial sensitivity' as used within the draft.
- The importance of considering wealth generation and future returns to help improve Swindon, alongside the four priorities set out in the Council Plan 2016-2020.
- How the concept of a 'digital city' has led to a reinterpretation of town centre regeneration in to town-wide regeneration, and the subsequent clarity required on how money is spent within particular budgets.
- How the Council adopting digital changes within its working practices will affect future capital investments and policy development.
- The sufficiency of using the Cabinet Member Decision Note process to approve investment proposals worth less than £10m.
- The lack of member-wide involvement in specialist Cabinet Member Advisory Groups.
- The process of determining members for newly created Boards on projects of significant size.
- The platform provided by the Council to attract external funding for investing in buildings such as the Health Hydro.
- Introducing a weighting on risk factors within the draft to highlight the importance that attracting external funding has in ensuring the survival of heritage buildings in Swindon.
- Whether Cabinet Member Advisory Groups are 'a relevant committee' when considering the effective scrutiny of proposed investments as part of the due diligence process.
- Whether the profit from capital works undertaken by Public Power Solutions are factored in to considerations of its benefit to the Council, the funding provided by the Council for the capital works compared to external funding sourced, and the revenue profit being made by the Council.
- When Whitehall will be imposing prudential borrowing rules in relation to any increase in borrowing for capacity for the housing rent account.
- The frequency of meetings, and the availability of minutes from the Commercial Investment Strategy Board, and the Cabinet Member Advisory Group which scrutinises the Board's decisions.
- The effectiveness of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from a financial perspective since its introduction, and the possibility of returning to negotiating Section 106 Agreements for all assets required within the Borough including community facilities.

Resolved – (1) To note the contents of the draft Capital Strategy, submitted for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 17th October 2018, and the approach taken to the capital investment criteria detailed in section 7 of the strategy.

(2) That officers be requested to investigate the frequency of meetings and the availability of minutes from the Commercial Investment Strategy Board, and the Cabinet Member Advisory Group which scrutinises the Board's decisions.

(3) That officers be requested to determine the effectiveness of CIL since its introduction.

19.**Presentation - Autumn Budget**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer) highlighting the main Autumn Budget announcements that may affect the Council as follows:

- £45m of additional funding for Disabilities Facilities Grant in 2018/19 (the Council received £96k the previous year).
- £420m in 2018/19 to tackle pot holes and other minor road highways works (the Council received £1.241m the previous year).
- £400m of in-year capital funding allocations to schools in 2018/19 (the Council received £50k per secondary school and £10k per primary school the previous year).
- £650m of extra Social Care funding for English Local Authorities in 2019/20 (it has been confirmed the Council will receive £1.3m).
- An additional £84m of Children's Services funding over 5 years across 20 councils (there is currently no further information available regarding this).
- For two years up until the next Revaluation in 2021 all retail premises with an RV below £51,000 will have their bills reduced by one third. It is expected that Local Authorities will be to be compensated for this measure through s31 grant.
- £675m of co-funding will be provided through a new "High Streets Fund" to assist with rejuvenation of High Streets and, in particular, changing unused business and commercial property into residential accommodation.
- Additional funding for the Housing Infrastructure Fund of £500m will be provided.
- The government will abolish the future use of PFI and PF2, saying there is compelling evidence that it does not deliver value for taxpayers or genuinely transfer risk to the private sector.

Following the presentation, the Committee discussed the following points raised:

- The likelihood of the quoted figures remaining stable following the Brexit vote in December.
- The removal of National Non-Domestic Rates on public toilets, and the possible extension of this to public libraries which would assist with funding shortfalls.

Resolved – (1) To note the contents of the presentation.

(2) That the Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer) be thanked for their comprehensive and informative presentation.

20.**Workforce Modernisation Programme - Leadership and Culture**

The Committee considered a report outlining the Council's current programme of leadership development for staff and managers across the Council. The report highlighted how, in order to become a modern, efficient and effective organisation and deliver the ambitious Vision for Swindon set by members for delivery by 2030, the Council requires brave, resilient and connected leaders across all levels of the Council in order to drive the cultural change required.

The Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement and Communications introduced the report and confirmed that the Council had improved its leadership

and management development programmes since 2015, and invested significant officer time and resource in to the development of the following four programmes: Swindon Manager; Aspiring Leaders; Future Leaders, and; the Senior Leadership Programme. She referred to staff survey results which indicate a friendly but ineffective management approach across the Council, and advised that a work stream had been included in the Swindon Programme to address this perceived deficit in management competency. The Committee also noted that the programmes ensure staff are supported in updating their skillsets as the requirements of local authorities shift.

The Committee received a presentation from the Organisational Development and Learning Development Lead Officer on the Council's approach to making sure it has, and continues to develop, the skills set needed for modern, effective and efficient management and leadership. She highlighted the following points:

- That business research continues to reaffirm that the biggest driver of organisational performance and employee engagement is line management behaviour.
- That peer reviews and consultancy feedback have indicated that the Council needs to focus on performance, and equip leaders to rise to the challenge of delivering public services in a decreasing budget context.
- How the Swindon Manager programme assists managers to manage themselves, people, activities, and partnerships and relationships. Each has competencies specified within them, linked to the performance framework cycle.
- How the Aspiring Leaders programme runs for four months, and has two cohorts of 16 per year. The Committee noted that all employees are eligible for this programme, which is internally facilitated and has both theoretical and practical components set by one of the Swindon Programme Boards.
- How the Future Leaders programme runs for nine months, and has one cohort of 16 per year. The Committee noted that the programme is open to middle management level or above, is accredited, and has both academic and practical components set by the Corporate Management Team.
- How both the Future Leaders and Aspiring Leaders programmes have an application process, coaching and psychometrics, and real business challenges.
- How officers have worked closely with stakeholders to design the Senior Leadership Programme, in collaboration with Footdown.
- The robust evaluation of the programmes, including with Bath Spa University as an independent academic partner.

Following these presentations, the Committee discussed the following points raised:

- The criteria used to determine the appropriateness of an organisation, in terms of officers working with them on a temporary basis as a developmental opportunity.
- The competitive application process undertaken by those applying for the programmes.
- Ensuring trust in the programmes where there may be a negative perception amongst staff surrounding the unsuccessful completion of a course.
- How psychological and philosophical ideas differ amongst people, leading to multiple understandings of how to achieve results, and whether the most appropriate learning paths have been selected for the programmes as a consequence.

- The assessment of a person's capacity to undertake the demands of a given programme alongside daily workload pressures, and their self-discipline for completing learning tasks.
- The inclusion of specific training and development for social workers in children's and adults services, given the current problems of recruitment and retainment in this area.
- How confidence is encouraged in those staff members undertaking the programmes to ensure they feel they have made the right choice.
- The efforts being made to resolve the issue of staff finding they are unable to put in place what they have learnt from the programme, and who could also be viewed as a threat to their own leadership.
- Plans for improving the training and developmental offer to councillors.
- The qualitative evaluation of changes to behaviour as a result of having completed a programme.
- The promotion of the training and developmental offer at the Council as part of the recruitment process.
- How the current four programmes on offer differ from previous programmes run by the Council, and how they will elevate the organisational level.
- The use of the 'intend to' model of leadership within the programmes.
- The processes in place to help staff members who have been pushed to become a manager, but wish to return to being non-managers, and how those in non-management positions can be recognised and rewarded for doing a good job.
- The need for cross party support to improve the training opportunities for councillors to help them undertake the roles and responsibilities of the post, recognising that Council officers may not be viewed as the most appropriate trainers.
- The effectiveness of circulating presentations, like the one delivered by the officer at this meeting, for discussion at political group meetings which may help raise awareness of topics and improve the natural demand for being 'kept up to speed'.

Resolved – (1) To note the planned rationale, content and delivery of the Council's leadership development programmes.

(2) That the Organisational Development and Learning Development Lead Officer be thanked for her comprehensive and informative presentation.

(3) That a report be submitted for consideration by this Committee in twelve months' time, providing an update on the improvements being achieved in relation to the amounts being spent on these programmes.

(4) That a report be submitted for consideration by this Committee at a future meeting, providing an update on the plans for improving member training and development.

21.

Work Programme 2018-2019

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Law (Interim Monitoring Officer) setting out the topics for inclusion in the Committee's 2018/2019 Work Programme, as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 11th June 2018, and updated during the course of the Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the Work Programme for 2018/19 be noted.

