

AT A MEETING of the POLICY AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on Thursday, 24 July 2014.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Elaine Still

Vice-Chairman
p Councillor Keith Evans

Councillors:

p Ray Bolton	p Andy Moore
p Adrian Collett	p Patricia Stallard
p Criss Connor	p Mark Staplehurst
a Keith House	a Bruce Tennent
p Robin McIntosh	p Ken Thornber
p Anna McNair Scott	a Sharyn Wheale

Also in attendance:

Cllr Roy Perry, Executive Member for Policy & Resources and Leader of the Council

43. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Keith House and Cllr Sharyn Wheale. Cllr David Harrison, the liberal democrat substitute Member, attended the meeting in place of Cllr House.

44. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 4 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

45. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Policy & Resources Select Committee meeting held on 10 April 2014 were confirmed as a correct

record and signed by the Chairman.

46. **DEPUTATIONS**

No deputations were received at this meeting.

47. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed Members to her first meeting as Chairman, particularly Cllr Anna McNair Scott and Cllr Ken Thornber who had been appointed to the committee since the last meeting. She thanked Cllr Jonathan Glen for his Chairmanship of the committee over the past year.

The Chairman went on to report that following approval at County Council on 30 May of changes to the Select Committees, the duty to scrutinise Crime & Disorder issues that was previously the responsibility of the Safe & Healthy People Select Committee was now the remit of this committee. It was planned that an item on this would be brought to the Autumn meeting of this committee.

Update work programme

48. **UPDATE ON JOINT WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES**

The Director of Policy & Governance gave a presentation to update the committee on the work with communities discussed at the previous meeting (see Item 6 in the Minute Book).

Members heard:

- That this work was part of a corporate work stream designed to manage demand, improve outcomes and make savings
- That pilot work was taking place in rural communities in Test Valley (Ampfield, Stockbridge, Abbotts Ann and Grateley) to identify what helps make rural communities sustainable
- Another aspect being explored was linking voluntary sector capacity with commissioned services for domiciliary care (care at home), with pilot work due to take place in Rushmoor
- That pilot work was taking place in Havant on service provision in urban communities and there was good commitment from partners to address the issues
- It was recognised that attempts to improve the situation in deprived areas such as Leigh Park had been made over many years with little success, and therefore to make a difference public sector agencies would need to do things differently to how they had been done in the past
- That the issues being tackled were unlikely to change quickly, therefore this was anticipated to be a longer term project

- That partners were committed to collectively employing an individual to help drive this work forwards
- That there had been some success in data sharing, and some interesting results from overlaying data from different agencies

Following questions, Members heard:

- That in Havant the Plaza provided a 'one stop shop' where the public could get face to face advice on a range of public services. While this couldn't be replicated everywhere, consideration was being given to whether existing public sector assets could be used to provide a public facing 'way in' to public services. It was noted that libraries could provide information on other public services, and that the Culture & Communities Select Committee was currently undertaking a review of the future vision for the library service which would consider this
- That it was acknowledged the public often did not realise which services were provided by the district council and which services were the remit of the county council. The Executive Member for Policy & Resources reported that he had written to the district and borough councils to seek their collaboration in addressing this, and that the Hampshire Partnership provided a forum that brought together the districts and the county to help address collective issues. Members also noted that the publications produced by councils and their websites provide information on the services provided, therefore this information was available to the public
- That the intention to support communities to be self reliant would be delivered through identifying existing community spirit and capacity and supporting people to help themselves, which may involve providing training, rooms, or facilitation
- Members commented that as this work progressed it would be helpful to understand the anticipated outcomes and how success might be measured

RESOLVED:

That the officer be thanked for the update, and the committee receive a further update on this work in the future.

49. **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive (see Item 7 in the Minute Book) providing the Annual Performance Report for 2013/14 against the Shaping Hampshire Plan.

Work programme be updated

Members heard:

- That the Council had established internal performance management arrangements, following the removal of the majority of national performance processes (while over 100 measures were still reported on, and external inspections still took place for some services such as social care)
- Performance updates were provided twice a year to Cabinet, with separate reporting on safeguarding issues
- That overall performance was strong, and the self assessment had concluded the council to be 'good' with 'outstanding' features, and this assessment had been backed up by the Ofsted inspection of children's social services and Local Government Association Peer Review earlier in the year
- That how the council could improve the coordination of, and learning from, complaints had been identified as an area to be developed, and further information on this could be provided to the committee
- That Ofsted would be reporting soon on progress in children's services on the Isle of Wight following the county council's involvement. It was anticipated this would show improvements, and this would be included in next years performance report

Following questions Members heard:

- That the counties costs for supporting children's services on the Isle of Wight were being reimbursed 100% including a contribution towards management costs/overheads

Members commented:

- That it was encouraging the council was maintaining good performance, and the style of the report was welcomed
- That joint working should include working with parish councils not just district councils

RESOLVED:

- That the Committee note the performance outcomes for 2013/14
- The following aspects be added to the committees future work programme for further investigation:
 - roll out of superfast broadband
 - the Digital Strategy
- The outcomes of discussion of the report by this committee be reported to full Council

Work programme be updated

Report to council be updated

50. **FINAL ACCOUNTS**
51. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE**
52. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW**

(Items 8, 9 and 10 in the Minute Book were taken together)

The Committee considered three reports of the Director of Corporate Resources, supported by a presentation (see Items 8, 9 and 10 in the Minute Book). The reports provided an update on the financial position for the County Council, including the 2013/14 end of year financial report (reviewed by Cabinet on 23 June 2014), the update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (agreed by Cabinet on 21 July 2014) and the Capital Programme Review (agreed by Cabinet on 21 July 2014).

Members heard:

- That it was now government policy not to bail out banks in financial crisis, therefore banks would be using 'bail in' and taking a percentage from investors should they get in financial difficulty. Therefore this presented a risk to the county council's investments, so the new strategy was to spread the councils funds in different areas and include bond investments (with length of bond based on credit rating)
- That a limit of £90 million had been set for investment in bonds and around £10 million for pooled property funds
- There would be a £25 million budget gap in 2014/15 due to the previous Medium Term Financial Strategy including an assumption of a 1.9% council tax increase
- Savings would be retained for investment in future change, and reserves would continue to be added to, with the understanding that these were likely to be drawn on in future years to balance the budget when further reductions in government grant were experienced
- The Council held reserves amounting to £480 million, of which £50 million was schools reserves (which the schools control), £247 million was committed to existing spend programmes, and £150 million was earmarked for particular purposes, leaving £27 million remaining as the general fund balance
- That austerity was anticipated to continue until 2020 for local government, and that no growth in funding was predicted in the years to follow
- It was predicted there would be a budget deficit of £98 million in 2017/18, therefore planning would be starting for how to meet this gap, with an initial report expected to Cabinet in October 2014
- The main change in the Medium Term Financial Strategy compared to previous years was that in future no capacity would be built in for demand

pressures in children's and adults social care. In future these services would be expected to change how they operate in order to manage within their set budgets

- The capital programme had been reviewed and the programme over the next three years would be the biggest the council had ever had
- Additional funds had been added to the capital programme in December 2013 for the superfast broadband programme, which had since been match funded by the government. This would include consideration of alternative methods to provide broadband in 'hard to reach' areas

Following questions Members heard:

- That £11.5 million had been received from the government towards the costs of dealing with the flooding experienced in winter 2013/14
- That new build schools would become academies, therefore it was a dilemma for the council how much to invest in such capital projects when the school would not be local authority run (as central government funding and developer contributions did not tend to cover the whole cost of the build)
- Of the £10 million budget gap anticipated in 2015/16, half was expected to be met by additional savings from the 'housekeeping' workstream, with the remainder drawn from the grant equalisation reserve
- It was acknowledged that there was a degree of risk with the assumptions made in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. These assumptions formed the strategy on which budgets would be based, however each budget would be prepared each year based on latest information available
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy did not allocate additional funds against the implications of the Care Act, as it was government policy to fund new burdens

Members commented:

- That it was a risk to plan on the basis of no further budget increase for social care, given the predicted continued increase in demographic pressures. It was confirmed that the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee would monitor the strategy to achieve this. Members noted the council had a strong record of delivering efficiencies

RESOLVED:

- The committee thank the officer and note the reports.
- That an update on planning for the 2017/18 budget gap be added to the work programme

Work programme be updated

53. **CONSULTATION WORKING GROUP OUTCOME**

The Committee considered a report of the Working Group on consultation (see Item 11 in the Minute Book) regarding the outcomes of their work on development or corporate policy regarding how the county council consults.

Members heard:

- That it was becoming more common for local authorities to be challenged regarding consultation processes when individuals or groups were unhappy with a decision, therefore it was important consultation was undertaken appropriately
- The draft policy had been prepared to support consistency of practice across the council, while retaining the flexibility to allow for consultations on different scales for varied purposes
- Legal advice had been taken into account in how the draft policy was worded
- It was proposed that a guidance document for staff support the policy, providing a checklist of what should be considered when planning a consultation

Following questions Members heard:

- That if the policy was adopted, this would make a public commitment regarding the situations in which the county council would undertake consultation
- That it was planned to undertake internal communications if the policy was adopted to communicate the policy to staff, including workshops for officers who regularly undertake consultation
- That the policy could be reviewed after a year to assess the impact and if it needed amending following experience
- That the research and intelligence team provided advice to officers preparing consultations regarding the style of questions
- That the proposed policy included commitments to publish information on the findings of consultation as part of decision making processes

Members commented:

- That it would be helpful to involve Members in the development of consultation documents, to bring a lay perspective of how the content is likely to be perceived by the public. It was responded that Executive Members would be involved in major consultations, and that this could be made clearer in the staff guidance document
- Members of the working group expressed their support for the proposed documents. Other Members welcomed the opportunity to bring consistency to how the county council consults, and welcomed the

reference in the staff guidance document to involvement of the relevant local Member at an early stage

RESOLVED:

- The draft consultation policy given at appendix one to Item 11 be recommended to Cabinet to be adopted as part of the corporate governance framework
- If adopted, that the supporting staff guidance at appendix two be published on the intranet to support officers in upholding these commitments, and a programme of support for staff be put in place to embed the policy across the Council
- That the Select Committee review implementation of the policy in a years time

Recommendations be passed to Cabinet

Work programme be updated

54. **APPROVAL OF TASK & FINISH GROUPS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Policy & Governance (see Item 12 in the Minute Book) regarding a number of task and finish groups planned by other Select Committees. The terms of reference were brought to this committee for approval as part of its role to coordinate the scrutiny function.

RESOLVED:

- That the following task & finish groups being undertaken by the Culture and Communities Select Committee are noted:
- Countryside Access Strategy
- Library and Information Service Vision and Strategy
- That the proposed arrangements for the following task & finish groups of the Economy Transport & Environment Select Committee are endorsed, including the appointment of Members from the Policy & Resources Select Committee to Highways Phase 2 (Cllr Ray Bolton, Cllr Adrian Collett, Cllr Andy Moore):
- Highways 'phase 1' (trailing new ways of working during the extension of the Highways Contract)
- Highways 'phase 2' (the future for highways maintenance)

55. **WORK PROGRAMME AND ONGOING WORK ACROSS ALL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Members noted the work programme for the Committee and the overview of scrutiny activity across all Committees (see Item 13 in the Minute Book).

RESOLVED:

That the work programme is agreed, subject to any amendments arising from this meeting.

Chairman, 23 October 2014