

# Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee held on Tuesday 21 February 2017 at 10:00 in the Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton.

## Present

Cllr T Lock (in the Chair)

Cllr M Lewis (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr D Greene  
Cllr P Ham

Cllr G Noel  
Cllr A Wedderkopp  
Cllr D Yeomans

**Apologies:** Cllr T Napper and Cllr M Rigby.

**Cabinet Members present:** Cllr D Fothergill.

**Other Members present:** Cllr A Dimmick.

### 311 **Declarations of interest** – agenda item 2

There were no declarations of interest.

### 312 **Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2017** – agenda item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2017 were accepted as being accurate by the Committee and were signed by the Chairman.

### 313 **Public Question Time** – agenda item 4

313.0 There were no members of the public present.

### 314 **Council Performance Monitoring report – Q3 2016/17** – agenda item 5

314.0 The Committee considered this report from the Strategic Manager – Performance that provided an overview of the Council's performance across the organisation. It was noted that the report had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 6 February with no further actions being agreed/requested.

314.1 Attention turned to the details of the performance summary up to 30 September and information contained in Appendix A and A1 and the changes to the content of the information contained within the performance wheel were noted. The report also contained an update on the current status of the Core Council Programme and focussed on financial benefits achieved and those expected.

314.2 There was a brief discussion of the overall position of the Council's finances, during consideration of target C4 – Managing our business and the Director of Finance and Performance explained that the Council's projected overspend continued to reduce and the current figure represented 2.9% of the overall

budget.

- 314.3 During discussion of the report it was noted that work was underway to align the reporting of the Vision Volunteer projects with the Corporate Performance report, and these would be considered later during the meeting. It was noted that overall 58% of objectives were judged as green and on target; 17% were amber and at risk of missing target with 25% judged as missing target and shown as red.
- 314.4 There was also a question about air quality, during consideration of P7 – Protecting our environment, and particularly the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) that used the A38 through the centre of Taunton. In response the Interim Director of Economic and Community Infrastructure Operations explained that the A38 was a designated Freight Route and the vehicle emissions were not within the parameters for the P7 target. It was noted that each District Council monitored Air Quality locally.
- 314.5 The Committee accepted the report and the Chairman sought and received assurances that Officers across the Council were effectively and regularly taking action to improve and manage the budget situation as the Committee remained concerned with the projected overspend.

**315 Vision Volunteers Update – agenda item 6**

- 315.0 The Committee heard from the Service Manager, Business Change who introduced the report which provided an update on the County Plan Vision Projects based on the feasibility and scoping work carried out by the vision volunteers. Members were reminded how the projects came about following the publication of the County Plan in January 2016 which set out the visions for a University for Somerset, a Garden Town in the county, creation of new business parks and a push on energy initiatives.
- 315.1 A call for 'vision volunteers' was made following this and close to a hundred volunteers came forward. Following a launch of workshops the volunteers formed four self-organising project teams to progress the four vision projects. Work had continued across the year with the help of mentors and pitches had been made to the Leader and Chief Executive.
- 315.2 The significant contribution the volunteers had made to the vision projects was recognised and members noted the contribution made by all those who had volunteered and welcomed the progress made. Consideration turned to the project proposals and these were reviewed in turn beginning with Business Parks, Energy Initiatives, Garden Town and the University for Somerset.
- 315.3 The following points were made during the debate:
- It was hoped that the Council could go beyond just facilitating and actually influence the way forward for the University project.
  - Courses should be offered to attract young people into Somerset as well as to encourage some to stay.
  - It would be good to be ground breaking and offer a high level of expertise at

the University.

- The aspirations of young people should be captured and these should help structure the courses offered.
- It was essential to design courses for the future.
- This was a great opportunity to promote Somerset.
- It was noted that Taunton and Bridgwater colleges welcomed the Council as a partner in the University project.
- The high quality of the Open University's training system and whether links could be made with its courses.
- The need to invest in the University project.
- It would be good to see the empty fire control centre in Taunton being utilised and brought into productive use. The Council had tried to bring this forward before in liaison with central government.
- There were a number of other under-used buildings in the county which could be turned into business spaces.
- The Council needed to look very carefully at all its assets which could be used to support the vision priorities
- Partnership working with the district councils was essential.
- Better communications was an essential component for the location of businesses.
- Funding was critical for small businesses.
- There was concern that large 'out of town' retail parks might attract trade away from small town businesses.

315.4 The Chairman thanked all the officers involved in these projects and wished to reflect on the positive comments made by other Members for the Committee about the work done to date. The update was accepted and it was agreed to receive a further update in the spring.

### **316 ICT update – post Southwest One update – agenda item 7**

316.0 The Committee received a presentation from the Commercial and Business Services Director and the Strategic Manager ICT to update Members on the transformation themes to improve the Council's Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

316.1 It was stated that building the technology foundation had enabled the Council to achieve the safe return of Southwest One I.C.T services, including robust back up and disaster recovery assurance for the organisation's business critical systems. The Council's I.C.T service desk had also been successfully launched and had delivered the migration of Outlook mailboxes to the Cloud, allowing for the decommissioning of expensive servers.

316.2 Members heard that progress continued in preparation for the continuing further roll out of smartphones to more front line services and pilots for testing new technology and applications. In addition, the SharePoint roll-out plan to enable the Council to manage its information efficiently with a reduction in physical and virtual space was underway.

316.3 The presentation focused on the 3 areas Productivity; Resilience and Compliance and highlighted the Council's determination to ensure that its new ICT systems and technology were set up to support the delivery of the Council's corporate objectives. Members heard that significant strides had already been made over the last 3 months during the transition from Southwest One to ensure separate and robust systems.

316.4 The Chairman noted that although the Council's ICT structure was not seen by the public, its successful operation had a direct effect on all local communities, and the Committee would continue to take a keen interest in this important area of Council business. The Committee accepted the presentation.

**317 Scrutiny for Policies and Place work programme – agenda item 8**

317.0 The Committee considered and noted the Cabinet Forward Plan of proposed Key Decisions.

317.1 The Committee considered and agreed its own work programme and the future agenda items listed.

**318 Any Other Business of Urgency – agenda item 9**

318.0 The Chairman, after ascertaining there were no other matters arising, thanked all those present for attending the meeting.

(The meeting ended at 11:37)

**Tony Lock  
Chairman  
Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee**