

Shadow Scrutiny - 14 March 2019

Present: Councillor P Murphy (Chairman)

Councillors S Coles, B Maitland-Walker, D Mansell, P Pilkington, R Ryan, N Thwaites, P Watson, R Woods and G Wren

Officers: Shirlene Adam, Neil Anderson, James Barrah, Paul Harding, Matthew Parr, Marcus Prouse and Clare Rendell

Also Present: Councillors P Berry, M Dewdney, A Hadley, L Lisgo and J Warmington

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

57. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Councillors C Booth, R Lillis and F Smith-Roberts.

58. Minutes of the previous meetings of the Shadow Scrutiny Committee.

(Minutes of the Meetings of the Shadow Scrutiny Committee held on 4 February 2019 and 5 February 2019 – circulated with the Agenda.)

Resolved that the Minutes of the Shadow Scrutiny Committees held on 4 February 2019 and 5 February 2019, with amendments, be confirmed as a correct record.

59. Declarations of Interest.

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member or Clerk of a County, Parish or Town Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Maitland-Walker	All Items	Carhampton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Murphy	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All Items	Dunster	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr P Watson	All Items	Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Milverton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Warmington	All Items	Bishops Lydeard & Cothelstone	Personal	Spoke

60. Public Participation.

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the Agenda.

61. Transformation and Implementation Plan

Considering the report previously circulated, the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the Transformation Programme and the Implementation Plan.

The Programme Commentary provided an update on:-

- Phase Two Recruitment;
- Transition Resource;
- Workflows;
- Firmstep Training;
- Accommodation (Workstream Completed);
- Website;
- New Council;
- Technology and Process Design;
- People Workstream; and
- Current Roles to fill.

Within the Programme Commentary, an update on the priority tasks was presented to the Committee and included Phase Two Recruitment and Risk Areas.

The Implementation Plan Update highlighted the following for the period:-

- Finalising drafts of the 'phase 3' parts of the new SWT constitution - All chapters to be refined and consolidated before going to Shadow Council on 26 March for approval;
- Approval of 2019/20 budget and Council Tax;
- Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rate and Rent annual billing 2019/20 for SWT has taken place;
- Notified tenants, Council Tax payers, Rate payers and leaseholders of the change of Council;
- Worked with the DWP to ensure smooth transition to SWT with no impact on our customers or our HB subsidy;
- Finalised banking arrangements for SWT along with VAT registration confirmation;
- Car Parking – planning ticketing & Signage alterations;
- Preparations for the May elections; and
- Appointment of external auditor for SWT

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- Concern was raised on the DLO redundancies and the recruitment process.

The DLO work force were only just going through their recruitment stage now and officers hoped that there would be a balance between the amount of redundancies and the retention of knowledge and experienced officers.

- Further concern was raised on where the money was coming from to fund the redundancies as DLO were mainly from Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC), did that mean that TDBC would be paying the total cost. *The cost would be proportioned out between the Housing Revenue Account and the General Account. A full breakdown would be distributed to the Committee.*
- Members queried whether the Id Verde contracted officers were included in the process. *No they were not affected as they were contractors and outside the scope.*
- Concern was raised on the use of agency staff and whether there was a limit to how many the Council would use. Members furthered queried when all the posts would be filled. *There was no set limit for use of agency staff because officer workloads were constantly evolving, so agency staff were used to assist with that. Officers hoped that majority of the vacant posts would be filled by the end of March 2019, but some might take a bit longer.*
- Members hoped that all the vacant posts would be filled no later than the end of June 2019. *Officers agreed with the statement.*
- Member queried whether there were any 'trouble shooting' systems set up to monitor the new technology that had been implemented. *There wasn't a 'trouble shooting' system in place, however, it was part of the process and officers would track and report back with any issues.*
- Concern was raised on why the DLO work force had been included in the Transformation Project. *The DLO work force had been added as part of the authority wide Transformation Project and the DLO work force were a massive part of the front facing function of the Council.*
- Concern was raised on the financial risk reported on the unforeseen reduction in funding. *That risk had been identified earlier in the year and was based on the uncertainty of what the Council grants were likely to be and the impact on the budget. The risk had now been closed since the Council Tax had been set.*
- Concern was raised on the lack of resource in the Planning Department. *Officers would provide a written answer to the Committee.*
- Members requested clarification on the terms waterfall and scrum. *An explanation was given to the Committee.*
- Concern was raised on the technology used for Members and whether it was adequate for the role. *Officers would check on the issues raised.*
- Concern was raised on what information Members could give whilst out canvassing. *Officers suggested that Members used the Member Case Manager for any queries they needed assistance with.*

Resolved that the Shadow Scrutiny Committee noted the update report.

62. **Revised Corporate Equalities Objectives for the New Council**

Considered report previously circulated, which advised that both TDBC and WSC were partners on the Somerset Equalities Officers Group (SEOG) which had suggested five Equality Objectives which they recommended all the District Councils should consider and sign up to.

The five Objectives were:-

Objective 1: Councillors and officers would fully consider the equality implications of all decisions they made.

Objective 2: Those with protected characteristics feel empowered to contribute to the democratic process and any Council activity that affected them; their input was used to inform the planning and delivery of services.

Objective 3: Communities with protected characteristics were able to access services in a reasonable and appropriate way.

Objective 4: Actions were taken to identify and reduce any inequalities faced by our staff or our potential employees.

Objective 5: To work in partnership to empower and enable communities to tackle identified inequalities including:

- Improve the opportunities for integration and cohesion.
- Improve understanding of mental health and access to support.
- Work with the Gypsy and Traveller community to improve the provision of pitches.
- Work with communities and voluntary sector groups to address inequalities experienced by low incomes families and individuals.

The Objectives aimed to improve the lives of the residents in the District and support the Council's legal requirements outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members requested clarification on whether the Council had a policy and that would include more detailed objectives.
Yes that was correct.
- Members queried the equality implications and when they received reports there would be an equality impact assessment.
Yes that was part of the action plan so officers could monitor and implement.
- Concern was raised on Objection Three and that it could be interpreted in different ways.
The Officer was happy to take suggestions on the wording and gave an explanation to the Committee.
- Members were happy to see the impact assessments included and that they would strengthen the rigour of the reports presented to Members.
- Members queried whether there would be a monitoring officer for each department.
No, the Performance and Governance Function would monitor.

Resolved that the Shadow Scrutiny Committee recommended:-

- 1) To adopt the refreshed Corporate Equality Objectives that now included the SEOG Equalities Objectives that had been subject to extensive public consultation;
- 2) That officers of the Council would work together to identify the actions that they would take to deliver the Objectives and those would be reported back to Scrutiny during 2019/20; and
- 3) That officers work on a refreshed 'equalities policy', and that this be brought back to Scrutiny during 2019/20.

63. **Assets of Community Value Policy and Process**

Considered report previously circulated, the purpose of the report was to consider the Asset of Community Value Policy and Process for the New Council.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members requested clarification on whether after five years, they would need to renew the asset.
Other Members confirmed that yes a renewal needed to take place and should be included as part of the process. The Officer would add that into the document.
- Members highlighted that a request for Ward Members support had not been included.
That would be added to section 6.4 of the report.
- Members highlighted the timings used within the report and that Ward Members normally had five minutes to speak at meetings.
That would be amended.
- Members queried how the process would work within the unparished area of Taunton.
Community groups could submit an application, not just for Parish or Town Councils.
- Members queried whether the community group had to be from the area the asset was located.
No they could apply for any asset.

Resolved that the Shadow Scrutiny Committee reviewed and approved the proposed Asset of Community Value Policy and Process.

64. **Shadow Scrutiny Work Programme.**

Considered the Scrutiny Work Programme previously circulated.

Members were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance and Democracy Specialist.

During the discussion, the following point was raised:-

- Members had a discussion on whether to hold a meeting in April 2019 to have a formal report presented on the Transformation Project.
The recommendation was voted against.

Resolved that the content of the Work Programme be noted.

(The Meeting ended at 7.55 pm)