

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 16 March 2017** at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Simon Cole
Vice Chairman Ruth Bowman

Chris Barker
John Bloodworth
Rona Burt
Brian Harvey

Christine Mason
David Palmer
Nigel Roman
Reg Silvester

Also in Attendance:

Stephen Edwards, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance

141. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes declared.

142. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received.

143. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2017, were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

144. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

145. **Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance**

[Councillor Brian Harvey arrived at 6.13pm, during the consideration of this item.]

Councillor Reg Silvester arrived at 6.15pm, during the consideration of this item.]

As set out in the Council's Constitution, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member would be invited to attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee. Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, members were asked to consider the responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, who had been invited to the meeting.

The Committee was reminded that on 10 March 2016, the Committee received a presentation from the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, setting out responsibilities covered under the portfolio.

At this meeting, the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance had been invited to the meeting to provide a follow-up presentation on his portfolio. Report No: OAS/FH/17/007 set out the focus of the follow-up presentation, which was to:

- Outline the main challenges faced during the first year;
- Outline some key successes and any failures during the first year and any lessons learned; and
- Set out the vision for the Portfolio through to 2019, and whether on target to meet that vision.

Councillor Stephen Edwards opened his verbal update by thanking the Committee for the invitation and introduced two new members of staff under his portfolio areas, Leah Mickleborough, Service Manager (Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer) and Kevin Taylor, Service Manager (ICT). He then provided a number of examples covering HR, Legal and Democratic Services by outlining challenges faced; successes and lessons learnt; and the vision through to 2019, such as:

- Staffing: attracting high calibre people to the organisations; recruitment of key technical staff; and staff turnover - 8.74% (challenge);
- Member Development: looking to improve training sessions to attract members. Across St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council since April 2016, only 25% of members had not attended any training (challenge);

The Cabinet Member sought ideas from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on how to attract members to attend training.

- Loss of the four year financial settlement grant from Government (challenge);
- ICT security (challenge);
- Balancing the budget (success);
- Appointed Service Manager for ICT (success);

- New Shared Legal Service (success);
- Continue to deliver a self-sustaining Medium Term Financial Strategy (vision);
- New and extended income streams (vision);
- Internal Audit providing ongoing assurances (vision).

The Assistant Director (Resources and Performance) informed the Committee that the West Suffolk Information Strategy programmed to be presented to the Committee in November 2017. Officers would be seeking nominations at the Committee's April 2017 meeting for members to sit on a Joint Task and Finish Group to help shape the Strategy.

Members discussed the update and asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Member and officers, to which comprehensive responses were provided. Discussions were held on the difficulties around recruitment; employee recruitment packages; the councils pay-line and how it would meet the living wage by 2020; and the councils employer brand.

In particular the Committee discussed the importance of member development, which was the duty of all members to keep their training up to date, and questioned what was being done to encourage members to attend training events/development sessions and whether on-lone training modules had been considered.

The Assistant Director (HR, Legal and Democratic Services) informed the Committee that timings of training events was an issue for members. The current member development programme needed to be refreshed and reviewed to include a range of options to suit all members. It was suggested that Member Development could be a future piece of work for scrutiny to review with the Joint Member Development Group.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the follow-up update on his portfolio.

There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the portfolio update and discussion held on future scrutiny reviews for Member Development and a Joint Task and Finish Group for the West Suffolk Information Strategy.

146. **Decisions Plan: April 2017 to May 2017**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/17/008, which requested that Members peruse the Cabinet Decisions Plan for the period April to May 2017, and identify where it would like further information on or the item might benefit from the Committee's involvement.

The Committee considered the Decisions Plan, and asked questions to which officers provided responses.

The Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Ruth Bowman informed the Committee that she would be interested in the Committee having the opportunity to look at the "Renewable Energy Provision for the Mildenhall Hub". The business case was currently scheduled to be presented to Cabinet on 20 June 2017. If the Committee was in agreement, Councillor Bowman would complete the suggestion form to ensure all information was provided to enable the Committee to scrutinise the proposed renewable energy provision for the Mildenhall Hub, and would also contact the Director, Alex Wilson who was leading on the project to discuss practicalities.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED

That subject to the completion of the suggestion form by Councillor Ruth Bowman, the expected decision relating to the "Renewable Energy Provision for the Mildenhall Hub, be included in the Committee's future work programme for June 2017.

147. Work Programme Update

The Committee received Report No: OAS/FH/17/009, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2017-2018 (Appendix 1).

The Committee noted earlier discussions held under the Annual Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance presentation regarding:

- 1) The possibility of working with the Joint Member Development Group on a future detailed piece of work on Member Development; and
- 2) Officers seeking nominations at the Committee's April 2017 meeting for members to sit on a Joint Task and Finish Group to help shape the West Suffolk Information Strategy.

The Committee considered its work programme, and there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of work programme update.

The Meeting concluded at 6.40pm

Signed by:

Chairman
