
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)

Report of the meetings held on 8th October and 5th November 2015.

Matters for Information

25. PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE – SIX MONTH REVIEW

The Panel has received a six month review report on projects at the delivery stage, as requested by the Project Management Select Committee.

An update on the In-Cab Technology project had been requested by the Select Committee; however, this project has been placed on hold until a review of the Waste Service's core processes and systems has been completed. Members have been informed that the Operations database containing all details of the collections service (property details, bins and routing and rounding schedules) needs to be replaced as soon as possible as it is now an unsupported system. The replacement database will enable links to be made between the Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and the In-Cab Technology. Procurement of In-Cab Technology is expected to commence in early 2016, and it is likely to be introduced around the Autumn of 2016.

Members have received an update on project activity over the last six months, including an overview of compliance with corporate project management guidance and the recording of information on Sharepoint project sites. The Panel has received a demonstration on how the Sharepoint site has been used to manage the new website project and to share information.

Members have examined security in relation to the Sharepoint site. Anyone on the Council's network can access the site but access to individual project sites, libraries and individual documents can be restricted by amending permission settings. All information about a specific project is generally viewable and editable by members of the Project Team. There is also a clear audit trail, which can identify who has made changes to documents and when.

Although employees have access to the network, public sector network restrictions require the Council to follow a code of compliance, which prevents Councillors from having access to it. Information for Members is included on the extranet site and

performance reports provide them with additional information. Officers can provide Members with information on request.

The Panel is of the view that the Council has improved in how it manages projects.

26. SHARED SERVICES UPDATE

The Panel has received a presentation on Shared Services by the Corporate Director (Services). The timing of the presentation was considered to be opportune following the completion of consultation and transfer of staff on 1st October 2015. The partnership with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils is branded as “3C Shared Services”.

Transition planning activity to date and next steps planned in integrating services have been explained to the Panel. Information on the Governance model, the role of Members and the sovereignty guarantee has also been covered in the presentation. Members have queried whether the sovereignty guarantee would only last for the initial five year life of the partnership or cover its whole life if it continues thereafter. The Panel has been advised that this suggestion would be considered when setting the governance arrangements took place, and it would need to be agreed by all authorities.

The Panel has questioned whether a March 2016 target for ICT is too ambitious. Members have been informed that the transition target is March–May 2016, when a new structure to deliver ICT services should be in place. Delivery of items in the service catalogue will take longer. There are around 60 posts in the new ICT shared services.

The flexibility for withdrawing from or adding other local authorities into the shared services arrangements has been discussed. The Panel has been informed that the partnership agreement is for five years with a review in year three and an exit strategy is included. Flexibility already exists so the scope of shared services could be widened relatively easily. Others could be involved on either a partnership or a contractual basis, as appropriate. The partnership agreement includes a disagreement resolution process.

27. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2015/16 BIENNIAL REVIEW

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the Council’s borrowing and investments for the period 1st April to 30th September 2015. Having commented on a loan by the Council and on the spread of the Council’s investments, Members have received additional detailed information on the terms of those investments.

28. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16 QUARTER 2

The Panel has reviewed progress against the Council’s Key Indicators for 2015/16 in the period 1st July to 30th September 2015, the status of current projects and financial performance on revenue

and capital spend as at 30th September 2015. 83% of the key actions are on target. This is the first time the complete set of integrated performance information had been submitted to the Panel. At the suggestion of the Chairman, it has been decided that key areas will be allocated to Members of the Panel who will then focus on them. This task will be completed at the next meeting.

The Council appears not to be achieving some Development Management targets but it has made savings by holding open a number of posts in that section. It is accepted that the service has experienced problems but the vacant posts have not necessarily caused them. Development Management is subject to review and practices have been changed, which have resulted in more effective recruitment. The appointment of a Planning Services Manager (Development Management) is the first step and he has been given a number of key additional roles. Improvements in performance have already been achieved.

With particular reference to fast track pre-application advice, although the target had been missed, it is most disappointing that only one such enquiry has been received. An Officer recently has been appointed who will be solely responsible for this service. Members have commented generally on the need to improve communications between Development Management and other sections within the Council and with developers. They have been advised that measures have been taken in these areas and that ambitious targets had been adopted, which are achievable.

The Panel has established that One Leisure's financial targets are to achieve commercial rates of return on the capital employed within five years.

On the uptake of activities for young people, it has been reported that the Youth Service had taken over the referral process but, following cuts to the service, this had ceased. The Council is looking into taking this over. It has been suggested that the Police and Crime Commissioner might provide funding for youth services.

Through the Financial Performance Monitoring Suite for September 2015, Members have considered a proposal to use an underspend in the current year to bring forward the procurement of an upgrade to the Capita payments system. On the grounds that it will improve resilience and the disaster recovery arrangements, the proposal has been supported.

29. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS STRUCTURE

In conjunction with the other two Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Panel has endorsed a new structure for the Overview and Scrutiny function and has accordingly recommended that the necessary amendments are made to the Constitution. The new arrangements better reflect the Council's strategic priorities and will permit more cross-remit working. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen jointly will determine how work is allocated.

30. ONE LEISURE NEGOTIATIONS

On the understanding that reports on progress and on the terms of any agreement reached are submitted to Overview and Scrutiny, the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to authorise the One Leisure Business Development Manager – Development to undertake negotiations on behalf of One Leisure.

Other Matters of Interest

31. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the contents of the Notice of Key Executive Decisions which has been prepared by the Executive Leader.

Having been acquainted with the circumstances surrounding the submission of an urgent item to the Cabinet relating to the procurement of a new financial management system, the Panel has been informed that the procurement will be undertaken jointly with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, who have already made decisions in principle to procure a new system. The new system will enable improved and more efficient financial reporting. The Panel has discussed the costs involved, the implementation date and how the new system will be financed. The target for implementing a new system is October 2016.

32. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) – PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies at each of its meetings.

33. WORKPLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Following a suggestion accepted by the Social Well-Being Panel the previous week, it has been agreed to appoint Members to a Joint Working Group to collate the views of interested parties and partner organisations on the County Council's budget proposals and to make a co-ordinated response to the consultation from a Huntingdonshire perspective. It will also enable Members to look at the actions the Council and other organisations might need to take if the proposals are implemented.

34. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest editions of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

G J Bull
Chairman