

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Friday 20 April 2018 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor R Crute (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Patterson (Vice-Chairman), E Adam, A Batey, M Clarke, H Liddle, L Maddison, J Robinson, F Tinsley and J Turnbull

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bell, D Boyes, J Makepeace, C Martin, O Milburn, H Smith, C Potts, L Pounder, J Rowlandson, M Wilkes and A Willis.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor P Crathorne substituting for Councillor C Potts, Councillor A Hopgood substituting for Councillor C Martin and Councillor R Manchester substituting for Councillor H Smith.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising:

Item 6, paragraph 5 – in relation to Councillor Batey's request for clearer information to be provided as part of the council tax billing. The Head of Strategy advised that a response had been provided from the Head of Finance and Transactional Services who had indicated that although there were some issues with billing, including time of and information contained, he would endeavour to review for 2019/20 billing.

Item 7, in reference to discussions around savings proposals, the Head of Strategy advised that a seminar on the MTFP was to be arranged for members in July 2018.

Item 7, paragraph 5 – in relation to Councillor Wilkes' comments regarding use of reserves the Head of Strategy advised that the Head of Corporate Finance had provided a response to Councillor Wilkes outlining that the Budget Support Reserve (BSR) could only be used to fund one-off items of expenditure and although reserves could be used to delay implantation of savings, ultimately all savings would have to be realised at some point.

Item 8, paragraph 4 – in relation to Councillor Adam's comments regarding Single Use Plastics (SUP's) the Head of Strategy provided a progress update, highlighting work being undertaken by the task group which included representation from procurement and the Environment Partnership. In addition Councillor Adam would be attending the first meeting of the group and progress updates would be scheduled through the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Adam noted that he would be speaking at the first meeting to outline the work of scrutiny and it was hoped that he would be able to attend further meetings as the work of the task group progressed.

Item 9, paragraph 3 – in relation to the query raised by Councillor Wilkes the Head of Strategy advised that the Durham City Sustainable Transport Strategy would be considered at the same time as the County Durham Plan.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 4 - 2017/18

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which sought to inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) ('RIPA') during the period 1 January 2018 and 31 March 2018 (Quarter 4) to ensure that it was being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Legal Manager Governance and Elections advised that as an update to the circulated report, it should be noted that a tri-annual inspection had been undertaken by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners and had proved to be extremely positive. The full inspection report would be provided to the Board for information in due course.

Resolved: That the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 January 2018 until 31 March 2018 and resolve that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

6 Update on the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan 7

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided an update on progress made at the end of December 2017 on the delivery of the 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP7) (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Transformation provided an overview of progress to date advising that by the end of December 2017 over 94% of the savings target for MTFP7 had been

met with just over £22 million of savings having been achieved. This formed part of the overall savings target for the period from 2011/12 to 2019/20 of around £250 million.

It was further reported that consultation with the public and stakeholders remained an important element in the MTFP programme and a wide-ranging consultation exercise had been carried out during October and November 2017.

Further details were provided in respect of HR implications and the number of ER/VR applications accepted during the period and since 2011. It was noted that since 2011, 2720 posts had been lost through ER/VR, deleted posts and compulsory redundancies. Information was also presented regarding the percentage of staff who had left, who were male and female. It was noted that the proportion of female leavers was higher than the overall organisational breakdown. Details were also presented regarding compulsory redundancy and it was noted that the proportion of male leavers in this category was higher than the overall organisational breakdown.

It was further reported that the total number of staff redeployed was 442, since the process started.

The Head of Transformation went on to advise that whilst the Government's austerity programme was due to continue for several more years, the Council continued to be in a strong financial position despite ongoing challenges mainly as a result of the robust management process supporting the MTFP.

Councillor Crute commented that he noted the disparities between male and female leavers and asked whether this was as a result of the nature of services/posts which had been affected. The Head of Transformation advised that this was the case.

Councillor Tinsley noted that the authority continued to employ people however no data had been presented to highlight the gender split of employees coming into the organisation. The Head of Transformation advised that this could be provided for a future report.

Councillor Robinson commented that he would like to place on record the Boards thanks to all the staff across the authority for all of their hard work in achieving the savings in such a timely manner. He further noted, that had the council been a major company it would be likely that some form of government intervention would have taken place. In addition, he added his thanks to those staff who had been redeployed and had helped in the council achieving its MTFP savings.

Councillor Crute reiterated the above comments and agreed that staff should be thanked for their work during extremely challenging times.

Councillor Hopgood commented that pre 2008, during the shadow authority year it was reported that the council would have to lose 1200 posts as part of the amalgamation of 8 authorities. She therefore queried, of the figures presented, which and how many posts were lost as a result of Local Government

Reorganisation and austerity. She further queried how the workforce had changed in this period and also made reference to apprenticeships, noting that it was important that young people were being trained for the jobs that were available.

Councillor Crute commented that a lot of these issues had been covered by the Economy & Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee including opportunities and challenges for employers and employees. Further discussion took place regarding the work undertaken by the committee in 2012 and Councillor Crute suggested that it would be useful to look back and review those recommendations. Councillor Batey, as Chair of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, noted that this piece of work had highlighted the mismatch of careers advice in schools and further education in relation to the positions available and she feared that this had not changed since that time.

Moving on, Councillor Tinsley referred to his comments made at the previous meeting relating to economic inactivity. He added, that he had found in his division many residents finding the DWP a hostile environment and many people were slipping through the net, unrecorded by the government.

Councillor Turnbull asked whether figures could be provided on how many posts had been filled where staff had left the authority as a result of ER/VR. As a point of clarification, the Head of Transformation advised that in cases of VR the post became redundant and was not filled. He did however advise that he could, for a future report, provide a breakdown of where people had left the authority and what skill or workforce pressures there were in these areas.

Councillor Crute suggested that the report and recommendations of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 2012 relating to employment and skills, be reviewed.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

7 County Durham Partnership Update

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which updated Members on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership (CDP) including the board, the five thematic partnerships and all area action partnerships (AAPs). The report also included updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Manager Partnerships advised that the County Durham Partnership continued to lead on and address key strategic issues including; the Aykley Heads development, the History Centre at Mount Oswald and the relocation of County Hall as well as the winter pressures facing the NHS, nationally and locally.

In addition, she advised that the Prioritising Prevention agenda also remained a key area of work with progress being made in identifying the key area of focus following

detailed work from the identified workstreams and with some national support from the Local Government Association.

She further provided an update on all AAP's under the five thematic areas of priority including; mitigating the effects of social isolation and supporting children and young people particularly through projects regarding mental health and wellbeing. In addition, she went on to provide an overview of activity from across the broader partnership networks including the recent VCS conference and successful funding secured for those people leaving the armed forces who may need accommodation.

Councillor Crute commented that he was pleased to note the strong relationship between the Safe Durham Partnership and the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been recognised by the Local Government Association Peer Review.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

8 Update in relation to Petitions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided information on the quarterly update in relation to the current situation regarding various petitions received by the Authority (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Senior Committee Services Officer advised that since the last update 5 e-petitions had been submitted. Of these, 3 did not qualify under the Council's Petition Scheme and 1 was withdrawn. There were currently 2 e-petitions live on the website and in addition, 2 new paper petitions had been submitted, 1 of which had now been completed.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

9 Notice of Key Decisions

The Board considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided a list of key decisions that was scheduled to be considered by the Executive (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved: That the content of the report and update be noted.

10 Information Update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided an update of overview and scrutiny activity from 19 March to April 2018 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Hopgood asked whether it would be possible for the report to be sent to all members in future as it would be useful for those members who did not sit on an overview and scrutiny committee.

Councillor Crute noted that the report was publically available and members would be able to access it they wished to do so. He therefore felt that there was no specific need to circulate it.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.