

OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

Thursday, 30th June, 2022

Present:-

Councillor Flood (Chair)

Councillors Brittain
Catt
Dyke

Councillors Fordham
Kellman
Snowdon

Councillor Jean Innes, Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers +

Rachel Appleyard, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

Gemma Masoud, Head of HR +

Andrew Mitchell, Head of Digital and Technology +

Rachel O'Neil, Service Director – Digital, HR and Customer Services +

Attended for Minute No. 19 +

11 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Blakemore, Borrell, Caulfield, L Collins, Coy, T Gilby and Hollingworth.

13 FORWARD PLAN

The Forum considered the Forward Plan. A concern was raised that key decisions were not being published on the forward plan with enough notice to allow for pre-decision scrutiny. The Chair explained that a compromise was needed as it was not always possible to have advance notice of upcoming decisions and reiterated that scrutiny members could speak with the Joint Chairs between meetings if any items were added to the forward plan that scrutiny may wish to be involved in.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

14 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Scrutiny Monitoring Schedule was considered. The Chair noted that HS2 was the only item for monitoring by the Forum and an update had been scheduled for later in the year.

RESOLVED –

That the Scrutiny Monitoring Schedule be noted.

15 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY FORUM

The Forum considered the Work Programme for 2022/23. The Chair noted that, following a recent East Midlands Scrutiny Network (EMSN) meeting, a new approach to budget scrutiny would be trialled which would involve splitting into groups to focus on key themes.

Members also discussed the timing of the Climate Change Action Plan update and asked whether an interim update on actions 44 and 45 of the plan, the commissioning of two reports on becoming climate neutral which were due to have been completed, could be provided in September ahead of the full update in November to allow for timelier engagement with scrutiny.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Work Programme be noted.
2. That the new approach to budget scrutiny be trialled.
3. That an interim update on the Climate Change Action Plan be requested for the September meeting.

16 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS

The Chair and Senior and Democratic Scrutiny Officer attended the EMSN meeting on 24 June, 2022 which was held in person at Erewash Borough Council. The meeting focussed on budget scrutiny and included

a presentation from West Northamptonshire Council followed by a group activity to share best practice ideas for scrutinising budgets.

The next EMSN would be held in Oakham, Rutland on 30 September, 2022. All scrutiny members were invited to attend.

RESOLVED –

That the update be noted.

17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum held on 12 May, 2022 were presented.

***RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

18 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer presented the draft Scrutiny Annual Report which detailed the work of the council's Overview and Scrutiny function during 2021/22.

It was requested that the Forward Plan information in section 3 of the report be amended to reflect the resolution at the Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee where concerns were expressed about the timing of items being added to the Forward Plan impacting the ability for effective pre-decision scrutiny (Minute No. 46, 2021/22).

RESOLVED –

That the Scrutiny Annual Report be approved for submission to Full Council subject to the amendment to the Forward Plan section of the report.

19 CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND CUSTOMERS - ICT AND DIGITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers, Service Director – Digital, HR and Customers, Head of Digital and Technology and Head of HR attended to present a report updating members on the ICT and Digital Improvement Programme.

The Service Director explained that since the last report to the Forum in January 2020, there had been some staff changes and two new officers had been appointed to the posts of Head of Digital and Technology, which included ICT, and Head of HR, which included organisational development.

The ICT and Digital Improvement Programme began in 2018 when it was approved by Full Council to return the Arvato service back in house. The programme was ambitious and would see investment over a period of time to improve and enhance the technology that the Council used to deliver services.

The ICT programme consisted of four workstreams:

1. People – focusing on insourcing ICT, increasing ICT skills and knowledge, creating a digital change team and redesigning sections of the organisation to deliver savings achieved through channel shift, automation, and new ways of working.
2. Digital – focusing on implementing the Salesforce Platform, implementing the ‘My Chesterfield’ digital portal, implementing e-billing within Revenues and Benefits services and consolidating more services into the Customer Services function.
3. Applications – focusing on reviewing, replacing, or upgrading ICT applications and implementing a systems integrations tool.
4. Enabling technology – focusing on replacing ageing and unsupported ICT infrastructure, increasing ICT security, migrating ICT infrastructure to the cloud, implementing Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft Teams, implementing a single-sign-on solution and replacing telephony infrastructure.

The Service Director explained that a number of emergency upgrades to systems and changes to plans in order to work in an agile way were required to respond to the challenges of the Covid19 pandemic. This enabled the Council to continue to deliver services to customers and drive transformational change whilst working from home.

Appendix 1 of the officer's report showed the status of all projects in the improvement programme at a glance. The majority of the projects were blue or green which identified them as either completed or close to completion. Six projects were labelled as amber as they had been planned and resourced but were to be delivered later in the year. One project was labelled red as it was still to be scheduled for delivery. Additional projects had been added into the programme including energy rebates and covid business grants as a result of the pandemic, and updating the staff caution list database. The Service Director explained that more consideration was needed regarding the impact of new services that generated customer contacts, such as the covid business grants and energy rebates, as these were additional activities which impacted on the delivery of the improvement programme.

The budget for the project was included in Appendix 2 of the officer's report which showed that the programme was within budget and the savings were above target for the current stage of the programme delivery. A more detailed summary of where the savings had occurred was provided in Appendix 3 of the officer's report.

The Service Director updated members on the uptake of online services and included a breakdown of the progress being made in Appendix 4 of the officer's report. Members were informed that more customers were switching to digital channels and a detailed marketing plan was successfully encouraging an increase in usage of the 'My Chesterfield' digital portal.

Since the launch of 'My Chesterfield' in November 2020, 27k residents had signed up to the digital platform and the target was to increase this to 30k residents by November 2022. From the analysis of customer contacts, the services which had the most online access received fewer customer contacts, therefore it was the services where there was little or no online access that needed to be targeted next, such as housing.

The Service Director explained that the internal ICT projects were on track and the migration to the cloud was on schedule for completion by the end of the financial year. The majority of internal systems were now up to date and those that required updating would be moved to the latest versions by the end of the year. Members were informed that, following the insourcing of the ICT service, there was a need to review the skills and experience within the service to build a high performing team. New skills and knowledge had been brought into the team through recruitment

to new roles however there was a challenge in retaining staff as local authorities were struggling to compete with pay in the private sector.

Members congratulated the Service Director for the achievements of the teams involved in delivering the improvement programme, particularly in responding to the additional projects added as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.

Members queried the savings figures in table 1 and paragraph 3.6 of the officer's report and the Service Director explained that the figures detailed the savings for each year, not the cumulative savings. At the end of 2021/22, savings of £675k had been achieved during that year, however, since 2019/20 over £1m of savings had been achieved which was ahead of target. Members asked whether the figures included savings from staff reductions and expenses from staff taking voluntary redundancy or early retirement. The Service Director advised that staff savings did not form part of this programme, instead it came under the organisational development programme, and there was a separate reserve fund for expenses related to voluntary redundancy or early retirement. The council was on track to achieve the savings required through natural wastage rather than redundancy.

Members were interested to hear about the challenges the council faced when recruiting staff. The Service Director explained that most staff who returned inhouse through TUPE were keen to remain with the council, however, the challenge was retaining new staff who were recruited externally and brought the benefit of new skills and experiences to the team. The Service Director advised that there was a challenge to recruit officers with the right skills without a market supplement which caused additional budget pressures, therefore recruitment would be looked at across the council as part of the People Plan. Members noted that local government brought advantages, such as the ability to progress within the local government family, and suggested that these advantages should be emphasized more when recruiting.

Members asked whether the statistics from 'My Chesterfield' would show the demographics of the users to identify if there were sectors of the population who were or were not accessing online services. The Cabinet Member commented that affordability was a barrier to people accessing online services. Members reported that it was often quicker to get responses through reporting issues online and there was a risk of residents in the more deprived areas not receiving the benefits of online

services. Members also noted that calls to environmental services had significantly reduced and were now received mostly through 'My Chesterfield'; they suggested reviewing how that shift had been achieved in order to support the roll out of 'My Chesterfield' for other council services.

With regard to Appendix 1 of the officer's report, Members asked whether there had been any post evaluations of the projects that had been completed to understand if they were successful. The Service Director advised that a lessons learnt activity was undertaken after each project in consultation with the teams involved in the project.

The Chair thanked the officers and Cabinet Member for attending the meeting and answering their questions, and asked for the thanks of the Forum to be passed onto the staff who had supported the delivery of the improvement programme. The Chair welcomed the opportunity for the Forum to be involved as a consultee in the development of the new ICT Strategy.

RESOLVED –

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum be involved as a consultee in the development of the new ICT Strategy.