



Business & Transformation Scrutiny Panel

Date: Thursday, 31 March 2022

Time: 16:00

Venue: Flensburg Room

Present: Councillor Ruth Alcroft, Councillor Trevor Allison, Councillor James Bainbridge, Councillor Ms Jo Ellis-Williams, Councillor Mrs Ann McKerrell, Councillor Mrs Linda Mitchell, Councillor Mrs Christine Finlayson (for Councillor Michael Mitchelson), Councillor Colin Glover (for Councillor Dr Les Tickner)

Also Present: Councillor Ellis - Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

Officers: Deputy Chief Executive

BTSP.27/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Michael Mitchelson and Councillor Dr Les Tickner.

BTSP.28/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted.

BTSP.29/22 PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was agreed that the items in Part A be dealt with in public and the items in private be dealt with in Part B.

BTSP.30/22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED - 1) It was noted that Council, at its meeting on 1 March 2022, received and adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2022/ The Chair signed the minutes.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

BTSP.31/22 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been subject of call-in.

BTSP.32/22 CORPORATE PROJECT STATUS REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented an update against corporate projects currently being undertaken in the Council (CE.01/22).

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the One Public Estate project had recently received an additional £100,000 in funding across Cumbria through the Opportunity Development Fund.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- What were the implications of not delivering the e-purchasing / ledger update?

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was in the design phase and options were being prepared for a blue print of services. Discussions on how the project would be best advanced would then take place. The system that was in place was usable until decisions were made after Vesting Day.

- What was the impact on the Council of potential delays arising from Covid in the redevelopment of the Sands Centre and the impact of the increase in inflation?

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the risks to the Council had been mitigated due to the nature of the contract and any impact would be on the contractor. In response to a further question the Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the issues regarding staff were contractor and sub contractor issues and not GLL. Although this risk had been identified in the report it had not materialised, however, it had been left in due to the recent increase in Covid 19 cases.

RESOLVED - That the Panel noted and commented on the most recent summary of projects and governance arrangements in place as contained in appendix 1, and the actions being taken to support projects with issues (CE.01/22)

BTSP.33/22 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an update on the management of the Council's Corporate Risk register (CS.15/22).

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the new addition to the register for the impact of the LGR Programme on Carlisle Plan delivery and associated corporate services.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- There was concern regarding the 'preparing for the future funding of local government from 2022' risk and its reliance on the outcome of the Fair Funding review.

The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged concerns regarding the future funding especially of the new authority, the outcome of the Fair Funding review was an unknown and this was reflected in the high risk score. He informed the Panel that the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources met very regularly with other Section 151 Officers to discuss the development of the new Council budgets and Medium Term Financial Plans from 2023.

In response a further question the Deputy Chief Executive commented that the officers within the Financial Services team had the strength and depth of knowledge to support the Corporate Director in the LGR work. He acknowledged that there were challenges on resources due to ongoing key projects but in terms of operational functions, having sufficient resources was not a risk.

- A Member commented that the Council's budget had been agreed with some confidence, however the risks set out in the report caused concern. Was there anything else that the

Council should be undertaking to prepare?

The Deputy Chief Executive noted that the unknown nature of the LGR programme at this stage was a risk however there was nothing additional at this stage for the Council to plan for. The lack of clarity at this stage was the unknown outcome of government settlements.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder commented that the Council was in a fortunate financial position, he reminded the Panel that the finances of three district councils and part of Cumbria County Council would come together and this would reduce the risk.

- A Member highlighted the risk of financial impact on the Council's budget due to Covid and asked if it was related to inflation or a deficit in the collection fund.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that the risk was high due to the loss of income, inflation rates and the impact of these which had not yet materialised such as a potential increase on debt management or recovery.

- Key officers were involved in the work of the LGR programme, who would monitor the impact on the delivery of essential services and resources?

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that there had been an intensive period of information gathering at the start of the year, this had eased and the programme was now in the design phase preparing blueprints for the configuration and structure of services. The Senior Management Team monitored the situation closely and did not feel that there was an impact on services at this stage however there was a back fill capacity available to use should it be required. The risk was in place to ensure that there were options in place to mitigate the risk should it materialise.

-What was the risk to the economic regeneration projects if the new authority did not place the same political importance on them?

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded the Panel that the Programme Management Board had staff dedicated to the projects, those staff were not involved in the LGR work.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that all areas in the new authority had been successful in the Town Deal and Future High Streets Funding and would all want their projects to progress. The merging of the authorities would potentially result in an increase of project resources.

RESOLVED – That the Panel scrutinised and commented on the current Corporate Risk Register (CS.15/22)

BTSP.34/22 SQUAD WORKING

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted an update on the delivery and use of Squad Working principles and groups within the Council (CS.18/22).

The Deputy Chief Executive detailed some examples of how Squad Working had been used within the authority.

In discussing the report the Deputy Chief Executive clarified that the terminology used in the delivery of the principles had been purposefully different to previous principles to ensure that new practices were used and considered. The Squad's were built on the skills of individuals and those that had the capacity to undertake the short but intensive work.

RESOLVED - That the Panel had reviewed the progress made on Squad Working (CS.18/22) and requested further information be circulated to the Panel detailing the projects that Squad Working had been used for and the outcomes.

BTSP.35/22 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The draft Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021 - 22 had been circulated (OS.09/22).

The Panel had been asked to consider the final section of the report 'Potential items for Scrutiny 2022-23'. The following suggestions were set out in the report:

- Sickness absence and staff wellbeing
- Local Government reorganisation
- Talkin Tarn Management Arrangements - site visit / potential for a Task and Finish Group.

The Panel asked that the paragraph on public engagement in scrutiny be changed to past tense as virtual meetings were no longer allowed to be used for formal meetings.

RESOLVED - That the Panel had considered and commented on the draft Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual report 2021-22 (OS.09/22).

BTSP.36/22 OVERVIEW REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer submitted the report OS.08/22 providing an overview of matters relating to the work of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel and the Panel's Work Programme.

The Chair informed the Panel that the resolutions regarding Talkin Tarn had been delayed until the next municipal year.

The Panel discussed the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Officer provide the Panel with information regarding the role of scrutiny during the LGR process and the proposed scrutiny structure and role for the Shadow Authority.

RESOLVED - 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel be noted (OS.08/22).

2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Officer provide the Panel with information regarding the role of scrutiny during the LGR process and the proposed scrutiny structure and role for the Shadow Authority.

BTSP.37/22 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

BTSP.38/22 ICT SERVICES PROJECT STATUS REPORT

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of paragraph 3)

The Infrastructure and Service Desk Manager submitted an update on the ICT Services Project Status (CE.03/22). The report had been updated to offer the Panel an up to date snapshot of the current status of the ICT Services projects along with recent project activity; RAG rating; issues and emerging risks; key activities for the next period and requests for change.

The Panel acknowledged the improvement in the report and how the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) would impact ICT services and recruitment.

RESOLVED - That the Panel had scrutinised the ICT Services Project Status report (CE.03/22).

The Meeting ended at: 17:30