Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 11 October 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members
Councillor Adrian Warwick (Chair)
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Piers Daniell
Councillor Jan Matecki (substitute member)
Councillor Sue Markham
Councillor Peter Gilbert

Officers
Rob Powell, Strategic Director for Resources
Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Democratic Services Officer
John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Andy Carswell, Democratic Services Officer
Olivia Cooper, Service Manager - Contract Management and Quality Assurance
Steve Smith, Assistant Director - Commissioning Support Unit
Nichola Vine, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Legal and Democratic)

Others Present

Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder – Fire & Rescue and Community Safety)
Councillor Andy Jenns (Portfolio Holder – Customer and Transformation)
Councillor Martin Watson (Portfolio Holder – Economy)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Roberts, Spencer and Tromans. Councillor Matecki was attending as a substitute for Councillor Spencer. Apologies were also received from Ben Brook, Sarah Duxbury and Andy Felton.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair informed members that Dave Pemberton would be retiring soon, and on behalf of the Committee he would like to wish him well. The Chair introduced members to Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, who had just joined the Democratic Services team as a Senior Officer, and welcomed her to Warwickshire County Council.

(4) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June were approved as an accurate record.

2. Public Question Time

No questions had been received.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holders relevant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Sarah Boad said she had seen an item on Warwick Hospital on the news recently, and this had featured members of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service helping to take a patient home. She said the piece reflected well on WFRS and congratulated staff. Councillor Andy Crump endorsed Councillor Boad's comments, saying WFRS staff were able to help in ways that other emergency services could not and staff were very professional.

4. Council Plan 2022-2027 - Quarter 1 Performance Progress Report

The item was introduced by Steve Smith (Assistant Director, Commissioning Support Unit), who told members a new performance framework had been introduced and it had been considered at September's Cabinet meeting. The framework looked at the progress of 81 key business measures, of which 27 fell under the remit of the Committee. The framework encompassed the new Integrated Delivery Plan, which looked at 224 actions and projects taking place across the Council Plan. Of those, 60 were of relevance to the scope of the Committee. Steve Smith said the information was available for members to view on Power BI. Also included within the framework was an update on the current financial management situation. This included a commentary that highlighted the key risks that were of relevance to the Committee.

Steve Smith drew members' attention to the performance of the 21 key business measures that were available at the end of quarter one. Of these 15 were on track to be met and six were not. More data was now available that would show if the performance level was improving over time, remaining static, or declining. Some areas of particular focus were highlighted in the main report. Two of the key business measures not on track related to the number of fire-related deaths and injuries, which had already passed the yearly target. Councillor Sarah Boad noted the latest figure and target for fire-related deaths listed in the report was zero, but said this information was unhelpful as it was unclear what the cumulative total was for the year. It was agreed a cumulative total would be included going forward. Responding to a point raised by the Chair, Steve Smith confirmed that in cases of fire-related deaths officers had to wait to receive the report from the coroner to confirm the cause of death.

Steve Smith reminded members that a summary of the progress being made was shown in the report appendices. The majority of activities and actions were on track to be met, but those areas

that represented the greatest amount of risk or were most likely to be compromised had been highlighted in the report. Members' attention was also drawn to the forecast financial performance in terms of either being on budget or showing an underspend of at least two per cent. Steve Smith informed members that an item on the cost of living crisis was due to be considered at the next Cabinet meeting.

Responding to a question from the Chair, Steve Smith said a new solar energy provider had been found and the backlog of cases was now being worked through.

Members noted the contents of the report.

5. Year End Performance Progress Report

Steve Smith introduced the item and explained it was being considered under the previous performance framework matrix and a different Council Plan. Of the 17 key business measures relevant to the Committee ten were on track and seven were not. Members' attention to the breakdown of performance under the different indicators and their trajectory.

The Chair said it was important to keep monitoring the capital budget, particularly in relation to increased rates of inflation. He said there was pressure to maintain the budget to avoid slippage, as there was the potential for the Council to be exposed to greater risks associated with inflation. Steve Smith said contingency based on the best available cost estimates was being built into the plan as part of the capital monitoring framework, as the situation was changing rapidly.

Councillor Boad noted the table on page 44 of the agenda regarding response times to incidents. She said risk-based targets were now in place, and stated her belief that these were much more sensible and meaningful compared to a simple time-based approach. Councillor Boad noted the report commentary regarding Covid and its impact on performance.

Steve Smith said more details about the performance of each measure, and what was required to get them on track, was available to view in Power BI. This was in response to Councillor Matecki noting there was a significant number of performance measures that were not on track to be met.

Regarding response times Councillor Andy Crump said a lot of risk analysis work had taken place to develop the Prevention Strategy to make premises and properties safer. A fire crew could attend an incident within ten minutes, which would be within the target response time, but it could already be too late for the crew to help. Councillor Crump said the Prevention Strategy was being kept under constant review to ensure the correct level of resources were in the right place. Councillor Pete Gilbert said it was also important not to lose any more services.

Councillor Martin Watson said some performance indicators were not on target against what had been anticipated at the start of the year. For example the indicator relating to the Recovery Investment Fund was not on track because less money than had been expected at the start of the year had been loaned out.

Members noted the contents of the report.

6. WFRS Performance Summary Report 2021/22

The Chair said that Ben Brook was unable to attend the meeting as he was involved in a training exercise. Members did not raise any comments or questions when asked by the Chair.

Members noted the contents of the report.

7. Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2021-2026

The item was introduced by Olivia Cooper (Service Manager, Contract Management and Quality Assurance), who told the Committee that officers were confident they had engaged with the appropriate number of people to produce the strategy, which was scheduled to be considered by Cabinet for approval. She said a good procurement management strategy was fundamental in helping officers who commissioned services from a third party ensure good value for money and quality of service. The intention of the strategy was to help procuring managers understand what was required to ensure things were done in a legally compliant manner that would ensure local and corporate objectives would be delivered, particularly during a time of high inflation rates and market volatility. It would also be for the benefit of suppliers in understanding what was expected and required of them. Olivia Cooper said a draft version of the strategy had been ready in February 2020, but after it was reviewed later in the year the decision was taken to refresh the strategy. External organisations were involved in the review.

Olivia Cooper said the new strategy was supported by three pillars. The first was customer value: this was to ensure the service was provided at the quality needed to meet customer needs in line with the strategic objectives of the Council, and staff had the appropriate skills for procurement and contract management. The second pillar related to commercial value, which was intended to ensure value for money while embracing innovation in delivery of services. The final pillar was ensuring the social value policy that was adopted in 2019 was met in terms of recognising a third party's contribution to society. This could be in terms of how and when it spent money but also how it met the Council's objectives, such as those relating to climate change.

Olivia Cooper said the strategy was intended to run for five years, which included a detailed two-year delivery plan. Savings of £947,000 had been identified and anticipated.

Responding to a question from Councillor Piers Daniell regarding how value would be measured, Olivia Cooper said the three factors outlined through the three pillars would be balanced and considered at the tendering stage of any future procurement. A potential supplier's ability to meet other Council strategies would also be considered, as would ability to improve social value without significantly adding to the overall cost. Olivia Cooper stated her belief that social value done wrongly could potentially cost a lot of money. There would be a move away from focusing on compliance, as there would be an expectation that any procured contract would meet legal compliance. Responding to a question from Councillor Boad, Olivia Cooper said the proposed strategy allowed for flexibility throughout its intended five-year life. She said for example that the public procurement regulations, which were anticipated to be brought in next year, were considered when drawing up the strategy. Responding to a point raised by Councillor Matecki, Olivia Cooper said examples of good practice from the private sector were also considered.

Rob Powell (Strategic Director, Resources) said going forward there would an increased emphasis on social value and it was expected there would be differences in how commercial value was considered. He said currently two thirds of the Council's budget was spent in collaboration with

partners and third parties and it was important to get spending rates right, and ensure partners were delivering what was being asked of them.

Members unanimously resolved to recommend the strategy to Cabinet for approval.

8. Work Programme

Councillor Boad noted the school admissions service was due to be discussed at the next meeting. She said there had been numerous negative comments about the service on social media, and noted that the Leader had recently apologised for its performance in the media. Councillor Boad said it was important the matter was discussed properly at the next meeting.

Members noted the contents of the work programme.

9. Any Urgent Matters

There were no additional urgent matters for discussion.

The meeting rose at 2.34pm

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Chair