

Time Commenced – 18:01
Time Finished – 19:31

Executive Scrutiny Board

18 December 2023

Present: Councillor Poulter (Chair)
Councillors Amin, Bolton, Care, M Holmes, J Khan, Lindsey,
Mulhall, C Wright

In attendance: Andy Brammall – Director of Digital and Customer Services
Heather Greenan – Director of Policy, Insight and
Communications
Lee Haynes - Head of Digital Enablement & Automation,
Digital & Physical Infrastructure & Customer Engagement
Alex Hough – Head of Democracy
Steven Mason – Democratic Services Officer
Toni Nash – Head of Finance
Pete Shillcock – Group Accountant

48/23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Eyre and Rawson

49/23 Late Items

There were none.

50/23 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

51/23 Minutes of the meetings held on 4 December 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023 were agreed.

52/23 Forward Plan

The Board considered the contents of the Forward Plan published on 7 November and 12 December 2023.

No items were added to the future work programme.

Resolved to note the Forward Plan.

53/23 Council Cabinet Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations

The Board considered a report which allowed the Scrutiny Board to receive responses from Council Cabinet on recommendations made at the previous Board meeting on 4 December 2023.

The Board resolved to note the report.

54/23 Council Cabinet Agenda

The Board considered a report the Council Cabinet Agenda. Members considered the Council Cabinet agenda in its entirety for the meeting scheduled for Wednesday 20 December 2023.

Key Decision

Transforming the Council Using AI Technology

The Board received a report of the Cabinet Member for Cost of Living, Equalities and Customer Inclusion and the Director – Digital & Physical Infrastructure and Customer Engagement on Transforming the Council Using AI Technology.

The Executive Scrutiny Board resolved:

- 1. to recommend to Council Cabinet that a troubleshooting point of contact be established between Councillors and an appropriate IT officer; and**
- 2. to note the long-term potential of AI to transform services but urge caution in terms of outcomes and financial savings during financial year 24/25. Robust performance and financial reports and updates on the use and roll out of AI need to be taken, as a standing agenda item, to all relevant Overview and Scrutiny Boards throughout the 24/25 financial year. Personnel Committee and Unions should be engaged in regard to how the council workforce may change in the future as a result of AI.**

Budget and Policy Framework

Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27 – Update and proposed Consultation

The Board received a report of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategy, Governance and Finance and the Director of Financial Services on Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27 – Update and proposed Consultation.

The Executive Scrutiny Board resolved:

- 1. to agree that it has been unable to fully and effectively scrutinise item 9, the MTFP 24/27 on the Council Cabinet agenda. Officers were unable to provide the meeting with any details of the proposals contained in the report. Details will not be provided until the next Scrutiny meeting on the 15th of January. The report clearly lacks sufficient detail on some of the proposals, there is a distinct lack of new proposed savings, the use of reserves and the over reliance on unproven AI are of very serious concern and need to be scrutinised in considerable detail. The timing and depth of the Scrutiny function of the Council should not be restricted and at a time when the finances are in such a precarious position, the MTPF should be fully examined. It is not appropriate that Scrutiny should be limited to questions put in advance to enable a suitable response to be prepared. The report and proposals contained in the MTFP item, does not represent an adequate consultation report for the public to be able to consider and give an informed response to the process; and**
- 2. to note that regional LGA scrutiny training recommended that good budget scrutiny should be throughout the year, including scrutiny of the budget development process during the summer and autumn and requested that for the coming year Council Cabinet engage much more closely with the Scrutiny function throughout the year in the development of the 25/26 Budget.**

MINUTES END