

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 16 NOVEMBER 2021 FROM THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2021

CP57: Cabinet Report – Review of the Corporate Business Plan

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The Senior Policy and Performance Officer presented the report which appended the revised Corporate Business Plan for the period to the next local elections in 2023 which would be considered by Cabinet on 16 November 2021.

The Panel was reminded that the six priority areas from the previously agreed plan had been retained and were set out at section 1.3 of the report, the detail beneath those priorities had been re-cast and that formed 12 objectives and 47 key initiatives.

The Senior Policy and Performance Officer explained that the Plan would focus the activities for the remainder of the Administrative term and progress updates would be presented to the Panel.

The Leader commented that he had nothing further to add but that he was available to answer any questions from the Panel.

The Leader responded to questions from Councillor Morley in relation to governance and communication of the Corporate Business Plan. The Leader invited Councillor Morley and the Panel to forward wording in relation to governance and Cabinet would look at that.

The Leader gave the Panel assurance that the Corporate Business Plan would be communicated widely.

The Chair thanked the Senior Policy and Performance Officer for attending and presenting the report.

RESOLVED: The Panel recommend to Cabinet the approval of the Corporate Business Plan.

CP58: Cabinet Report – Update to the Major Projects Board Terms of Reference

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The Assistant Director, Property and Projects presented the report and explained that the Council set up a Member Major Projects Board (MMPB) during 2019 to provide more formal over-sight and monitoring of the delivery of the Council's major projects and the programme of major projects.

It was highlighted that the operation and effectiveness of the Board had been hampered particularly by the Covid-19 pandemic, with many projects being stalled or delayed and Board meetings being cancelled.

The report sought to provide a greater degree of clarity in respect of the role of the MMPB and particularly its relationship with other existing Panels and Committees within the Council. The revised Terms of Reference for the Member Major Projects Board were set out in the report.

Councillor Joyce referred to page 10, 2.1(b) operate on behalf of the Cabinet, ... and commented that it naivety for the Labour Group to act on behalf of a Conservative Cabinet and added it should read operate on behalf of the Council. The Monitoring Officer explained that as it was a sub-committee of Cabinet it could only act on behalf of the Cabinet and not Council but that the alternative was to have a free standing committee.

The Chair added that 2.1(b) would remain, in principle, operate on behalf of Cabinet and that it was proposed there would be three representatives from other political groups and asked if those representatives were allowed to be on scrutiny panels and would they be in effect be scrutinising themselves. The Monitoring Officer advised that there would be a conflict so would not be able to sit on a scrutiny panel. The Chair asked the Leader if this was considered a possible problem. In response, the Leader thanked the Assistant Director, Property and Projects and the Monitoring Officer for the report and that the Chair had raised a good question.

The Leader further added that Cabinet was trying to give some clarity because at the first meeting of the MMPB there were some issues around the role and remit of the Board and its importance to move forward. The Leader provided context and provided an overview of importance of the development of projects, scrutiny and what was missing and why the MMPB was set up.

Councillor Morley commented that Cabinet was marking its own homework and asked how the scrutiny panels would be linked into the MMPB and enable to panels to carry out scrutiny effectively. Councillor Morley added that a governance review was required across the board and was not content or convinced this was a step in the right direction and would look for some comfort that it would feed into the various scrutiny panels with relevant data and performance modules based upon project management methodology which was used throughout the country but may not be by this Administration.

The Chair commented understood why the council lost track of events because of the Pandemic but was looking for reassurance that whilst work in recent months that people go back to the report to the Audit Committee in May 2019 and to the flowchart presented to Audit Committee, because going on as the council was, was accepted that it was not acceptable and mistakes were made and how did the council avoid them in the future. The Chair asked if Cabinet had considered that the council should have a MMPB and an additional scrutiny body as he was not convinced of the make-up and Cabinet marking their own homework was going to prevent a similar set of events that occurred two or three years ago.

Councillor Long stated that he could see where the Panel was coming from regarding Cabinet marking their own homework. The most important thing that the council needed to get right was the methodology by which Cabinet approved a project to commence. Beyond that what process monitors it to ensure on track, time and budget to delivery right outcomes at the end. With regards to some projects the appropriate place, in his opinion, to be scrutinised was the appropriate panel.

Councillor Devereux commented that he recalled the earlier discussions at Cabinet where it had been decided that a MMPB was required and implicit in that decision was that there was process which managed the programmes of work and that they all conformed to a consistent process. In his view what was needed was a Project Assurance Board which sat over the top look what happening across the authority to ensure projects were delivered on time, within budget, right outcomes, etc and were there were lessons to be learned that could feed in going forward to the management activity. In conclusion, Councillor Devereux explained that a simple board was required to give Members confident that the right things were happening at the right time.

In response to observations made by the Chair, the Monitoring Officer explained that as an alternative to setting up a new scrutiny panel, the panel could look at reviewing the terms of the reference of the current scrutiny panels to consider whether you think they go further, far and specific enough to cover what was required to be scrutinised. The Chair expressed concern that this was a lesson learnt as to what happened previously that Councillors were not scrutinising efficiently enough, not doing their job properly and was the fault of Councillors that things went wrong and that they needed to change that. The Chair noted Councillor Devereux's reference to scrutiny and that the one thing MMPB did not do was scrutinise.

Councillor Blunt added that one thing that was lacking was the major project was set up and went through processes but there was not a way of presenting the project back to his need Cabinet and that this proposed role of the MMPB would enable this. Councillor Blunt commented that a continuous process of re-looking at any issues, monitoring, etc. and that he was suggesting it was a scrutiny body but a sub-committee of Cabinet. Cabinet needed to look at projects and enable the relevant Portfolio Holder to provide feedback on a particular project.

Councillor Joyce explained that the council needed some way to keep eye on major projects, the scrutiny system in place was a good system, but did not work, the right questions were asked and answers given. Councillor Joyce provided background information on the reasons why MMPB was set up. Councillor Joyce added that Cabinet took decisions on behalf of the council and if the MMPB was going to work in whatever form, then input was required from the opposition and that the aim was to make it work for the council.

In response, the Leader explained that he understood the points raised by Councillor Joyce and that the intent of the MMPB was to make it clearer to the opposition and would allow the Cabinet and three members of the opposition to see the projects and timelines, etc in that meeting which gave an opportunity would be making recommendations to Cabinet and made known to people. The Leader added that he took on board the comments from Councillor Joyce and undertook to look at the

wording if it did cause Councillor Joyce difficulty, but in relation to principle and ethos put opposition members into the MMPB process to provide an overview of projects.

Councillor Joyce referred to 2.1(b) and suggested that the following words be taken out – operate on behalf of the Cabinet.

The Chair added that the Monitoring Officer had outlined what the situation was and asked Councillor Joyce if the above wording was deleted then there was a solution.

The Monitoring Officer explained that Councillor Dark had explained that he was happy to take away the comments made by Councillor Joyce and have a look at them before the Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Long stated that there had not been MMPB meetings during the Pandemic as he took a decision that it was not important was therefore a deliberate decision taken by myself in consultation with the Chief Executive not to hold meetings as there were more pressing duties for officers to be undertaking during the national Pandemic.

The Chair added that he was looking for confirming referring back to original problem encountered by the council and why the Audit Committee report came forward with a recommendation for such a board and liked the suggestion from the Monitoring Officer to review the terms of the reference of the scrutiny bodies as they did not do their job and would not put forward a proposal but would leave Cabinet to consider those points during their informal discussions.

Councillor Morley commented that would like some form of reporting module that set out performance, time and costs and a better defined management methodology that enable scrutiny panels to scrutinise effectively. In response, the Leader provided reassurance that a mechanism would be explored as to how projects could be monitored in the first meeting of the MMPB which included opposition Members and report back.

The Chair asked the Leader if the Cabinet would discuss the points raised by the Panel in the Cabinet meeting and that it was not just rubber stamping exercise. It had been an important debate and important that the council needed to get it right.

Councillor Joyce, seconded by Councillor Moriarty that 2.1(b) be amended as follows

(b) To provide assurance that the council's major projects programme is run in accordance with the Officer Major Projects Board Terms of Reference.

And on being put to the vote was lost.

Councillor Patel, seconded by Councillor Manning proposed that the recommendation set out in the report, but on being put to the vote was lost.

RESOLVED: The Panel did not support the recommendation to Cabinet as set out in the report.

