

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING O&S COMMITTEE

25 JUNE 2019

Title:

BUDGET STRATEGY WORKING GROUP BRIEFING

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Merryweather]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1) bring to the attention of the O&S members the work of the Budget Strategy Working Group set up by the Value for Money and Customer Service O&S Committee in October 2017 in order for the committee to nominate a member(s) from its Committee to join the Group.
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How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The work of the Budget Strategy Working Group will contribute to meeting the second Prosperity goal within the Corporate Strategy, which is to 'deliver sustainable and affordable services that meet the needs of our residents and businesses, while balancing the budget'.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no direct implications arising from this report. Consideration of the impact on equality and diversity will be made at appropriate points throughout the work of the BSWG.

Financial Implications:

Detailed within the report. A budget to carry out the participatory budgeting survey was identified within the 2017/18 budget.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Regarding workstream 3, any new methods of working and/or changing of methods of service delivery would need to be checked by the Legal team in advance.

1. Background

Establishment of the Group

In October 2017 the Value for Money and Customer Service O&S Committee resolved to set up a 'cross party' working group in order to drive forward the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) action plan and to drill down into areas identified for detailed examination to make recommendations directly to the Executive on service and policy issues¹.

¹ Budget Strategy Working Group Proposal paper, VFM CS O&S Committee, October 2017

The objective of the working group, reflected in its defined work streams, is to strategically support the MTFP initiatives by implementing a support strategy that investigates the reduction of costs through efficiency measures (doing better) and divesting services (doing less) alongside a transformation programme of “doing things differently” and “doing different things”. The intended result being to deliver a mix of quick wins whilst working on longer term outcomes.

The Group was set up under Scrutiny’s policy development role and enables councillors and officers to work together to consider the long term strategic approach to continue delivering corporate objectives and services with reduced funding.

The VFM CS O&S Committee received the proposed (and subsequently agreed) [scope](#) for the working group in March 2018 (attached). The scope outlined 5 work-streams that form the work of the Group.

Progress so far

Work-stream 1: Assessment of Council services (completed summer 2018)

The purpose of work-stream 1 was for the Group to understand the services provided by the Council, why we provide them (including whether they are mandatory or discretionary) and whether or not the costs of these services are being recovered/can be recovered.

For this work-stream Heads of Service completed ‘service profiles’ which detailed the individual functions of their services including if there is a requirement to provide the service, discretion the Council has to decide the level provided and information on fees and charges (if appropriate).

The Group reviewed and analysed all of the major general fund income streams representing over 90% of the total £16.8m income received in 2017/18. The Group then categorised the individual income streams by their income contribution potential and inherent risk.

A [progress update](#) was taken to the VFM CS Committee in September 2018 detailing the outcomes of work-stream 1 and seeking endorsement from the Committee on the approach of work-stream 2.

Work-stream 2: Demand management (initiated with consultation due summer 2019)

Whilst work-stream 1 provided the Group with the knowledge of the services the Council delivers, work-stream 2 is designed to identify customer need and demand for Council services through a community engagement exercise. It is important to obtain an objective picture of the public’s priorities for our services so that the impact of these services on residents’ lives is understood. This information and knowledge is absolutely vital to be able to achieve the objectives of the Budget Strategy Working Group.

Work-stream 2 has been initiated and a company has been appointed to undertake the community engagement exercise in the form of a survey of Waverley residents. The questions from a similar previous exercise (carried out in 2007) were used to draft the proposed approach and work-stream 2 is expected to pick up again in summer 2019.

Work-stream 3: Service delivery (to begin as soon as the group is appointed)

The purpose of work-stream 3 is to consider opportunities for alternative ways of working and recommend areas for efficiency reviews in order to achieve the necessary savings anticipated as a result of the reduction in funding.

Working with Officers, Members could explore how services are delivered to establish the opportunities for:

- client self service capabilities – coordinating community activities such as litter picking, woodland projects, easier IT access for transactions and information sharing using smart phone and internet media
- commissioning service providers on a payment by results basis such as voluntary sector organisations
- standardising and simplifying operational procedures to reduce complexity
- a more holistic perspective to reduce silo service delivery, be more flexible, scalable and respond to changing circumstances
- identify the opportunities for partnership working with other stakeholders, new alliances and commercially based service delivery models.

Work-stream 4: Procurement and project management

The aim of work-stream 4 will be both to identify opportunities to improve the value for money of current procurement and to ensure the Council's project management methodology is effective.

The Council procures various services, both externally and internally, and the purpose of work-stream 3 is to ensure value for money is achieved during both the procurement process and project execution.

In addition to direct service provision expenditure, a significant amount of General Fund expenditure is incurred through third parties such as the voluntary sector. The Council provides assistance through direct grant (some under service level agreement), rent reduction grants and business rates relief. The Council does not have an overarching strategy linking this significant expenditure to the Council's priority outcomes. It is recommended that a review of how value for money and maximising the benefit to the Council is achieved, and to identify how and what the Council can do to assist the voluntary organisations to be more self sufficient and deliver outcomes for clients in line with the Council's priorities.

Work-stream 5: Resource and asset utilisation

Work-stream 5 will look at how the Council makes use of its assets, including staff and the Burys site.

Given the recently adopted HR Strategy, there is scope for the Council to consider creating a working culture that makes better use of recent developments in technology and develop a more agile workforce.

The future of the Burys site is currently under consideration and the Group has a role to look strategically at the future of the site and potential development opportunity.

Conclusion

Whilst the Group has completed a significant amount of work already, it is important that this piece of work is pursued in order to meet its original objectives.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) Nominates a member(s) to join the Budget Strategy Working Group to represent its committee.
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Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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