

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Monday, 30 October 2023 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M L Ayling (Chair)

I Ashraf, K Khan, R A Lanzer, T Lunnon, J Millar-Smith, A Pendlington, S Piggott, S Raja and J Russell

Also in Attendance:

Councillor B J Burgess, M G Jones and T Rana

Officers Present:

Siraj Choudhury	Head of Governance, People & Performance
Ian Duke	Chief Executive
Heather Girling	Democratic Services Officer
Simon Jones	Head of Digital and Transformation
Emma Nash	IT Programme & Project Manager

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor H Hellier

1. Disclosures of Interest and Whipping Declarations

No disclosures or whipping of interests were made.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 25 September 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were asked.

4. Review of the Transformation Plan

Commission Members considered report [CEX/066](#) of the Chief Executive, along with associated appendices [A](#) and [B](#). The Commission has within its function to review the council's transformation programme, measures, and performance information (including budgetary information) together with service reviews.

The Transformation Plan had been revised a number of times since 2020, and the latest version aimed to reflect the completion of major items like the New Town Hall whilst incorporating new projects driven by more recent ambitions and a changing landscape. The Transformation Board monitored progress at regular intervals reporting back through the organisation.

Transformation Plan (V2 – [Appendix A](#)) included:

- Channel Shift - The Channel Shift group and Digital Services team continued to work with services to make transactions available online, allowing customers to complete tasks quickly and easily which could improve the customer experience. Significant progress had been made in this space as the ratio of manual transaction had fallen to 47%. The shift to self-serve had resulted in more capacity for staff to spend with those customers with a greater need.
- New Ways of Working - This encouraged greater flexibility and efficiencies in how work was being delivered, particularly around technological changes such as enabling IT infrastructure, largely aligned to the new town hall and improvements at the satellite sites. Further work was progressing around Information Management and Mobile Working Phase 3.
- People Strategy – The People Board, with staff and Unison representation continued to meet regularly to create options for the organisation. An appraisal system, Plan, Do, Review (PDR) had been launched alongside a suite of HR training for managers. The HR policies were currently being reviewed in light of the transformation achieved by the council and new ways of working. The recruitment offer continued to be developed along with the current managers' training programme.
- Service Redesign - The 2020 plan identified a number of corporate policies and services to be reviewed to ensure increased efficiencies and introduce more effective ways of working and those in progress would be delivered shortly with new service reviews being included in the revised plan.
- Commercialisation (PIPES model) - The Commercialisation (Profit, Income, Productivity, Efficiencies, Savings) model crossed all of the work on the Transformation Plan and provided the platform to do things differently. Many initiatives to assist with budget pressures had been implemented (such as Tilgate Park weddings).
- Assets – This stream ensured that the council's land and property assets were utilised in the most efficient and effective way. The main focus had previously been on Metcalf Way and the depot which was now in progress. Other elements included the marketing of the commercial office space for the Create Building.

Following the discussion with the Chief Executive, Head of Digital and Transformation and IT & Transformation Programme Manager, Councillors asked the following questions:

- Clarification sought and obtained on the number of transactions and transaction type. It was confirmed that activities needed to be fully integrated into back-office systems, removing the need for double handling of data and '*hand off*' between departments. It was acknowledged that the cost of living had impacted on how

customers interacted with the council. It was important to identify the priorities, benefits and efficiencies within the *end to end* processes.

- Recognition that moving services online was dependent on many factors which would ultimately result in efficiencies.
- Noted that in terms of commercialisation, the Create Building was an asset which was currently being marketed to its full potential. The Commercialisation Group reviewed all ideas in terms of community value and in order to increase income streams. This included the Bright Ideas Scheme from staff which had generated over 180 ideas including the Hound Ground at Tilgate Park.
- Acknowledgement that since the pandemic the cost of printing had increased due to the volume being produced and analysis was currently being undertaken.

[Appendix B](#) set out the 3rd Transformation Plan which was set to run until 2026. It was noted it was an evolving document, acknowledging that the previous plan had resulted in significant internal change for the council. Version 3 continued to build on the modernisation journey with more of an external focus on community needs, involving 6 main workstreams:

- Our services to customers – This included an internal and external focus. There was an increased expectation of service access 24/7 and work in this area supported this requirement. It enabled the council to take a proactive approach to ensure that those customers requiring face to face appointments and the most vulnerable were supported.
- Supporting our communities – The impact of the cost of living was now being felt throughout the community and pressures were extending to all residents. It was planned to create a working group with representation across a number of service areas to take a data led, customer engagement focused approach to understanding risks and addressing need to see what more could be actioned.
- Our people – A number of individual projects resided within this stream that aimed to ensure the council recruited the *right* people with the *right* values and behaviours, whilst ensuring they further develop the *right* skills to deliver the wider agenda.
- Our assets – The Corporate Assets Board provided a programmed focused approach for key projects.
- Commercialisation – The Commercialisation agenda continued to use the PIPES model (profit, income, productivity, efficiencies, savings). This workstream was an important enabler to deliver the council's financial pressures and underpinned all aspects within the Transformation Plan and service delivery. It was regularly reviewed to focus on the priorities impacting the council.
- Service redesign - This addressed services or functions where it had been decided to undertake a review or there was a requirement for services to be more adaptive and efficient to manage increasing demands.

Councillors then raised the following queries:

- Clarification sought and obtained on the proposed 'supporting our communities' working group. It was highlighted that it would provide further opportunities to work with partners, identify any risks/gaps to provide further support and provide services in a different way.
- Acknowledgement that the recruitment and retention was currently being prioritised throughout the organisation. Work had been carried out in terms of marketing and adapting the current recruitment material. Furthermore, essential learning and opportunities were being deployed and offered to managers and employees.
- Recognition that in terms of service redesign it was important to look at services in a holistic sense and *end to end* process. Each service was fully analysed and costed with a business case in order to be fully considered prior to being taken through the appropriate governance route. It was noted that it was important to

create and embed a culture of *going forward* to be more flexible and adaptable whilst providing support for all staff as the Council continued its journey to transform and develop.

- Acknowledgement that the establishment of digital meter readings would assist in providing real time data on usage, Co2 emissions and how/where/when energy was being provided.

RESOLVED

That the Commission noted the report, with the views expressed being acknowledged and documented by the officers.

5. Cabinet Member Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Resources

The Commission noted the update given by Councillor Rana and questioned her on a variety of issues relating to the [portfolio](#).

The following topics were discussed:

- Acknowledgement that the Resources Portfolio covered three divisions of the council and multiple service areas: assets and people, IT and data, performance, customer services and complaints, democracy and governance, legal and health and safety.
- Noted that the major milestone had been the completion of the new town hall and one commercial tenant had signed and it was anticipated they would be in place prior to Christmas. Negotiations were taking place with other potential tenants.
- Recognition that whilst the council received a significant amount of complaints, (the majority relating to Crawley Homes), very few complaints proceeded to the Local Government Ombudsman and those that did, did not generally succeed.
- Acknowledgement that the work within Governance, People and Performance continued and it was noted that the first recording of a [Full Council](#) meeting in the new town was undertaken in October and was available to view. Furthermore, the Data Team handled a large volume of Freedom of Information and Subject Access requests. No data breaches had been significant enough to report to the Information Commissioner.
- Noted that there were challenges with recruitment and retention, which was an issue in local government and in the wider public sector. As featured in the Transformation Plan, work was underway to improve the 'Crawley offer'.
- Recognition that the Legal team had made progress in recent years to modernise and change its working arrangements by implementing a case management system. Digital signing and document sealing would be introduced shortly.
- Noted that last year was the first full year of the external arrangement for Internal Audit and regular progress reports were received. The council's Risk Strategy was also updated last year, and this was frequently reviewed.
- Noted that the installation of the self-pay kiosks had enabled the council to still accept cash payments.
- Confirmation provided that currently the focus and challenges had been on the new town hall, Transformation Plan, together with HR matters. It was felt the most impactful had been the new town hall in addition to the Transformation Plan, as a result of the projects and modernisation journey.

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission thanked Councillor Rana for attending and for the informative discussion that had ensued.

6. Forthcoming Decision List - and Provisional List of Reports for the Commission's following Meetings

The Commission confirmed the following reports:

1. 2023-2024 Budget Monitoring – Quarter 2
2. Budget Strategy 2024/25 – 2028/29
3. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2023-2024
4. Station Gateway - Phase 1
5. Western Boulevard Scheme - Crawley Growth Programme
6. Crawley Innovation Centre - Proposal to Allocate Additional Towns Fund Monies–
PART B

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.10 pm

M L Ayling (Chair)