OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

At a meeting of the Commission held on
10 February 2020

(Present) Councillor Bowden (Chairman)
Councillors Gomez-Aspron, Greaves, Haw, D Long, T Long,
Maloney, McDonnell, O'Keefe, Osundeko, C Preston,
L Preston, Sweeney and Wiseman

(Not Present) Councillor Jones

Mr D Thorpe - Church of England
Mr C Williams - Roman Catholic Church

(Also Present) Councillor Baines, Leader of the Council
Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member, Finance

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jones, Mr D Thorpe and
Mr C Williams.

27 MINUTES

* Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2019, be
approved and signed.

28 DECLARATION OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No Declarations of Interest from Members were made.

29 PUBLIC NOTICE OF KEY DECISIONS

A report was submitted which updated the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on Key
Decisions that the Cabinet expected to make. Members were informed that there were a
number of Key Decisions expected to be made within areas which would be subject to
each Scrutiny Panel's key policies and strategy reviews.

A brief description of each Key Decision had been included in the report for Members to
consider and identify any issues of particular relevance to be taken into account in the key
policy/strategy reviews.

A Public Notice of Key Decisions published on 28 January 2020 was attached at Appendix
1 to the report.

* Resolved that the report be noted.

30 BUDGET SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT

The Chair presented the report on the Budget Scrutiny Task Group which provided the
Overview and Scrutiny Commission with an overview of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group’s
examination of the Council’s budget setting process and its findings and conclusions.

Councillor Bond, Cabinet Member Finance was present at the meeting to present information on the budget setting process and answer questions from Members.

As part of its Terms of Reference, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission is required to approve the statement which would be submitted to Cabinet and Council as part of the 2020/21 Budget.

At its meeting on 30 September 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission agreed to establish a cross party Budget Scrutiny Task Group to review the Council’s budget setting process for 2020/21 to ensure its undertaking had been robust.

The Task Group held three meetings during January 2020 to review the budget setting processes undertaken by each of the three directorates of Corporate, People and Place.

To document its findings and conclusions, the Task Group developed a statement on the budget setting process and recommended the Overview and Scrutiny Commission adopt this statement and it be submitted to Cabinet and Council for consideration during determination of the 2020/21 Council Budget.

The proposed Statement of the Commission on the Budget Setting Process to be adopted and submitted to Cabinet and Council for consideration was detailed within the report.

* Resolved that:

   (1) the report be noted;

   (2) the proposed statement on the budget setting process as set out in paragraph 4.1 to 4.7 of the report be adopted; and

   (3) the Commission’s statement on the budget setting process be submitted to the Strategic Director of Corporate Services for inclusion in reports on the Council’s Budget for 2020/21 to be considered by Cabinet on 26 February 2020 and Full Council on 4 March 2020.

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(3) the Commission’s statement on the budget setting process be submitted to the Strategic Director of Corporate Services for inclusion in reports on the Council’s Budget for 2020/21 to be considered by Cabinet on 26 February 2020 and Full Council on 4 March 2020.

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 30 September 2019, it was agreed that the Commission would be the most suitable forum to receive overarching updates on progress towards the implementation of the One Council Modernisation Programme; with a view to aspects of the programme being submitted to the relevant Panels as and when applicable.

Caroline Barlow, Director, Customer & Digital was present at the meeting to provide a verbal update report on ONE Council.

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 July 2019, the One Council Modernisation programme was considered and approved by Cabinet. The One Council programme had been broken down into eight work streams:

- One Resident – One Customer;
- One Message;
- One Budget;
- One Digital;
- One Space;
- One Practice;
- One People; and
- One Outcome.

Members were advised following approval by Cabinet, work had been undertaken to identify the size and scope of the project and what was to be delivered and by whom. It was reported that eight lead officers had been identified and appointed and the priorities of each of the eight streams have been developed using the strategic priorities of the Council.

This work had been culminated into a final programme scope entitled ‘One Council Plan
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on a Page’. It was reported that this scheme was an internal programme of modernisation which set out the priorities for Corporate Services over the coming year and formed a key component of the Council Plan and would be shared with all staff via the Council intranet.

The progress and work undertaken under each of the workstreams was highlighted as follows:

One Resident – One Customer
- Funding agreed to replace Website, Content Management System and Intranet;
- Visits undertaken to view other Local Authorities web providers;
- A report on the preferred provider to be presented to Cabinet in February 2020;
- Draft Customer Services and Standards developed; and
- Alexa, AI and Chatbots trials being undertaken on the Council’s website.

One Message
- Development of new staff Intranet;
- All About Us Staff Briefings implemented;
- Ongoing work on reducing digital exclusion; and
- Regular Leader and Chief Executive Communications implemented.

One Budget
- Implemented new style of financial reporting supported by Local Government Association;
- CIPFA Finance Business Partnership Qualification obtained;
- Council Budget for 2021; and
- Enhanced Income Generation work begun to explore commercial opportunities.

One Digital
- Approval of three-year rolling programme on IT hardware allowing for strategic planning;
- Move to Surface Pros with Office 365 and SharePoint to enable Agile and collaborative working;
- Nortel telephony replacement roll out to be complete end of May 2020;
- Lotus Notes mail migration to Microsoft Outlook by Summer 2020; and
- IT Communication improvements.

One Space
- Completed Strategic Draft Assessment Management Plan;
- Improvement Plan for Hardshaw Brook Depot developed;
- Agile Champions identified; and
- Consultation on Earlestown Town Hall and Gamble Building begun.

One Practice
- Producing a New Council Plan and identified key strategic priorities going forward following two workshops that had taken place in November 2019 with Senior Leadership Team and Labour Group;
- Review of Service Plans to reflect key areas of the Council;
- New style Policy Cabinet; and
- New Senior Management Structure and appointments.

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One People

- Employee Survey undertaken with 1,117 returns highlighting key staff issues;
- Workplace Health and Wellbeing Group re-established with a review of Terms of Reference and membership including Staff Champions;
- Establishment of Focus Groups for Agile Working, Green initiatives, Networking & Support and Health & Wellbeing; and
- Mental Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan including Work Place Mental Health Aiders Scheme undertaken.

One Outcome

- Review of Performance Monitoring Reports with LGA;
- Development of Health of Organisation Dashboard; and
- Complaint Processes and policies reviewed.

Comment was made that the One Council was an opportunity to raise Health and Safety Standards throughout the Council and thus improve efficiencies and ratings. It was acknowledged that although Health and Safety was a driver and concern within all work streams, with the examples of One Space’s Improvement Plan for Hardshaw Brook Depot and One People’s Workplace Health and Wellbeing Group being given, it could be made more explicit.

* Resolved that the verbal update be noted.

33 VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION AT WORK, ENSURING THE SAFETY OF OUR EMPLOYEES - UPDATE

Caroline Barlow, Director, Customer and Digital presented the update report on Violence and Aggression at Work, Ensuring the Safety of our Employees.

The current policy position of the Council was set out in the Violence & Aggression Policy, which was last updated in December 2018. This Policy set out how the Council had a Zero Tolerance approach to Violence and Aggression to staff and included employee and employer responsibilities in this area, alongside a separate Lone Working Policy.

The current system included two reporting mechanisms for employees: Accident Reporting where a physical injury had occurred and Incident Reporting which included incidents of violence and aggression.

The Panel was advised that a total of 39 Incident Reports were completed during the period of September 2018 to December 2019, of which the majority were from the Supported Living Services. During this same time period, 146 accidents were reported, of which all bar one was from People’s Services, with 84 of these being reported from a School setting.

To further inform the report to the Commission, all Senior Managers had been contacted to advise on the scale of this issue in their service areas. It was noted that the most frequent reported occurrences of abuse across the Council was verbal abuse.

The report also provided the Commission with a Case Study which outlined a specific incident that had occurred at Wesley House and the outcomes of an Employee Survey which had been undertaken during Autumn 2019.
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The report summarised that whilst there was a Council-wide Policy in place, it was clear from the reporting from Departments that there was not currently a standardised approach to staff safety, some staff were unaware of the Violence and Aggression at Work Policy Statement and that the Incident Report form was inconsistently and infrequently completed.

Members were advised that the One Council approach provided an opportunity to revisit the issue of staff safety across both the One Space and One People work-streams and that a Working Group had been established across all three departments to review the Policy and Procedures and ensure this was fully implemented across all services and sites.

Members discussed the report and agreed that zero tolerance should be zero tolerance, whilst noting that there was a difference between unintentional abuse and targeted abuse. It was accepted that under reporting and a culture of ‘professional resilience’ also had an impact and that these issues would need to be explored by the Working Group.

The Commission questioned if Trade Unions were engaged and discussed the value in including representatives from schools in the Working Group. It was reported that the Working Group was in its early stages of establishment so engagement could not yet be reported on. It was also noted that whilst school staff were employed by their Governing Body and who have their own arrangements to ensure the safety of their staff, the inclusion of representatives could be of value to the Working Group.

It was proposed that consideration should be given to another staff survey being undertaken in 12 months’ time to assess improvements from a staff perspective.

* Resolved that:

(1) the update report be noted;

(2) regular updates on progress be provided by the Working Group (as referred to in the report); and

(3) once the Working Group had completed its programme of work an update be provided to the Commission on its findings and to present its Action Plan.

34 UPDATE ON SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020

A report was submitted updating the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the Work Programme 2019/20 for review for prioritisation and the individual work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels which had been updated to reflect the decisions of each Panel at their January meetings.

A comprehensive Work Programme was fundamental to the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Panels as it enabled them to plan and manage their workloads to make best use of the available time and resources, to add the most value to the performance of the Council and outcomes for residents.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission was encouraged to review the Work Programme on a regular basis to ensure it remained timely and relevant.

The Work Programme Prioritisation Aid and the work programmes for the Overview and
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Scrutiny Commission and its Overview and Scrutiny Panels were attached to the report at Appendices 1 to 6 respectively.

An update on the Work Programme 2019/20 was outlined by the respective Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, Members of the Task and Finish Groups and Scrutiny Manager, where appropriate.

The updates from each Panel were as follows:

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel
The Chair of this Panel advised that the Scrutiny Review on Waiting Times for GP Appointments was ongoing as the information requested by the Panel continues to be pursued and that the Task Group would be visiting GP practices to see various appointment booking systems.

Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel
The Chair of the Panel advised that the following work had been undertaken by the Panel since the last meeting of the Commission: Scrutiny Review of Children’s Services Improvement Plan, CAMHS waiting times, Children’s Mental Health Resilience and SEND Transport provision.

It was reported that the next meeting of the Panel would be undertaking scrutiny of SEND Offer and SEND Improvement Plan.

Task Groups had also been established to review the Ofsted Action Plan and Apprenticeships for Looked After Children.

Safer Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
The Chair advised that the Panel had been presented with the draft Domestic Violence Strategy and that a Spotlight Review had been scheduled to consider Pre-intervention to reduce cycles of abuse.

Environment, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel
The Chair of the Panel advised that the following reviews had been undertaken by the Panel since the last meeting of the Commission: Highways Management, Town Centre Regeneration and Visitor Economy, Flood Risk Management and had undertaken a Site visit to view the Leisure Services at Newton-le-Willows Health and Fitness Centre.

The Commission was advised that the next meeting of the Panel was scheduled to consider; library services review, the Borough’s housing needs and waste collection and fly tipping.

Task Groups had also been established to review the Council’s use of plastics and paper and road
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safety and parking around schools before 9am and after 3pm.

Audit and Financial Monitoring
Overview and Scrutiny Panel

It was reported that the Panel would continue to consider Internal Audit Reviews undertaken and agreed actions alongside budget performance monitoring.

The Chair of the Commission reported that in relation to the topic of Brexit Preparedness; events had now overtaken this review following the UK ceasing to be a member of the European Union on 31 January 2020.

The Commission was advised that third party procurement was scheduled to be considered at the next meeting of the Commission.

* Resolved that the report and verbal updates be noted.

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