

# Minutes

## Performance Management Board

10<sup>th</sup> March 2021



### Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Coleridge	Yes	S Rehman	Yes
G Courtauld	Yes	B Rose	Yes
Mrs C Dervish	Yes	P Schwier (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
T Everard	Yes	N Unsworth	Yes
M Radley (Chairman)	Yes		

### 22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

**INFORMATION:** There were no interests declared.

### 23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

**INFORMATION:** There were no questions asked, or statements made.

### 24 MINUTES

**DECISION:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Performance Management Board held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 were approved as a correct record.

### 25 COMMERCIALISATION OF BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL SERVICES – TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME

**INFORMATION:** The Chairman invited the Governance and Members Manager, Emma Wisbey, to introduce the report to the Committee. It was explained that the meeting marked the Committee's first evidence gathering session for the Scrutiny Review into 'Commercialisation of Braintree District Council Services.' One of the proposed Lead Officers for the Review, James Sinclair, Commercial Manager at the Council, was also in attendance in order to introduce himself to Members and outline his role within the organisation.

A brief background was then provided as to the Call for Topics submission process, which took place in July 2020 with all Members invited to participate at the time. Extensive discussions had taken place between the Chairmen of the four respective 'Scrutiny Committees' and officers in the Governance and Members Team in order to establish the key areas of topic focus that a Scrutiny Review might explore, and to assign the topics accordingly to the most appropriate Scrutiny Committee for the purposes of Scrutiny Review. With support from officers and Management Board, the Chairmen then went on to produce and agree a set of Terms of Reference for each selected Scrutiny Topic.

The Committee was asked to refer to Appendix 1 of the report, which set out the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Review into 'Commercialisation.' It was reiterated that it was not the purpose of the Scrutiny Review to 'fix' commercialisation within the organisation, but rather to reflect on the subject and make any subsequent recommendations to the Executive, should Members feel this was necessary. Members were then invited to raise any questions they had in respect of the Terms of Reference, after which it was collectively agreed that Members were broadly satisfied with the contents of the Terms of Reference and would be happy to proceed. Mr Sinclair was then invited to outline his role at the Council, at which point he explained his intention to provide Members with a wider context around where 'commercialisation' lies within the Authority at future meetings of the Committee.

The Governance and Members Manager then proceeded to explain that Appendix 2 to the report provided Members with a list of online resources on commercialisation, the purpose of which was to help give Members a clearer context as to how commercialisation worked within Local Government settings. The majority of the resources were linked with the Local Government Association (LGA) website, and also included a series of relevant case studies based around commercialisation within District and Borough Authorities. The resources links that had been included as part of the agenda were intended to act as a means through which Members could enhance their knowledge of commercialisation as a whole and to observe the approaches of different Authorities, not to draw comparisons with our own. Mr Sinclair would complement this information with his own knowledge and experiences of the subject during future meetings of the Committee. Members were requested to utilise the resources provided and to notify the Governance and Members team should they identify any other resources around commercialisation that could be shared with the Committee. Mr Sinclair added that the Local Government Association (LGA) also offered training on commercialisation that was specific to Members, should they wish to explore this as well.

Members were then referred to Appendix 3 of the report, the 'Timetable of Meetings 2021/22.' It was advised that due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the commencement of the Scrutiny Review into Commercialisation had been delayed and as such, the previously anticipated completion date for the Review of April 2021 would not be achieved. It was therefore proposed that, with Members' agreement, the timetable be extended until at least the winter of 2022, including any additional meeting dates, in order to ensure that the Committee was able to review and examine the topic of "Commercialisation" as thoroughly and effectively as possible.

The following suggestions for further exploration within the scope of the Scrutiny Review were made:-

- The Governance and Members Manager proposed that Mr Sinclair provided a presentation to Members which gave them a clearer idea as to where commercialisation lies within the Authority at the next meeting of the Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021. Members were in agreement with this approach.
- Members indicated that they would like to receive a general overview of the services within the Council that it was seeking to commercialise. Officers were in agreement with this but added a word of caution for Members should they wish to explore any areas currently under negotiation or had contractual considerations. It was stressed that any such discussions would need to take place in the form of a private committee meeting in order to avoid the potential disclosure of sensitive commercial information.

- It was requested that Members be provided with information on commercial services provided at other Local Authorities during the first evidence gathering session on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021. In response, it was agreed that Mr Sinclair would outline some examples of such services within other Local Authorities during his presentation. Mr Sinclair subsequently recommended that Members refer to the document entitled 'Enterprising Councils,' which was available through the LGA website.
- With regard to the upcoming Local Government Review (LGR) and whether this would impact on the Scrutiny Review, Members were informed that there was no confirmed timetable at the moment for this to take place. The Committee would need to be mindful of the LGR when it became time to establish the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review. In the meantime, Governance officers would keep Members informed of any new emerging information that became relevant to the Scrutiny Review.

**DECISION:** That Members:-

1. Agreed the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Review into 'Commercialisation of Braintree District Council Services;'
2. Noted the Future Work Programme for 2021/22 as set out in the report, and;
3. Gave consideration to the next steps they wished to take to commence the Scrutiny Review, including agreeing any additional meeting dates.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure that the Scrutiny Review into Commercialisation of Braintree District Council Services is completed within the stipulated timeframe and that it complies with the Council's procedural rules for Scrutiny.

## 21 **THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 2020/21**

**INFORMATION:** Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager, was invited to present a report on the performance of the Council as at the end of the third quarter (October to December 2020). Firstly, Members were made aware of a slight error in the cover report and summary section which pertained to the number of projects with an "amber" status, the number of which should read "nine," not "seven" as printed in the document. The figure had been subsequently corrected on the Council's website.

Members were informed that as of the third quarter, a total of 41 projects were on track and continued to progress well. Nine projects had an "amber" status; the projects included the work on the redevelopment of the entrance to Witham Town Park; the delivery of Superfast Broadband across the District; continued support to NHS England for the improvement of health facilities across the District; responding to requirements from the Environmental Bill in relation to waste and resources whilst supporting climate change objectives; researching and trialling alternative fuel vehicles for some of our frontline services; improvement to sports facilities at Braintree Sports and Leisure Centre; the development of the 3G pitch at Halstead Leisure Centre; the future approach to of our leisure services, and; the development of health priorities in various localities within the District. Many of the delays that had been experienced in respect of the projects were attributed to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

With regard to performance indicators, Members were advised that targets had not been set for all of the performance indicators due to the disproportionate impact of the

pandemic. For the targets that remained, it was confirmed that seven performance indicators had met or exceeded target and seven performance indicators had missed their target. Four performance indicators had missed their target by less than 5%, and three had missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance were in relation to recycling rates, average waiting time for disabled facility grants, average call answering time in the Customer Service Centre, the percentage of complaints responded to within the timescale, the collection rate for Business Rates, the collection rate for Council Tax and the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days.

With regard to staffing levels, it was reported that sickness rates amongst staff were relatively low in the third quarter. On the subject of complaints, 115 complaints had been received in the third quarter, which indicated that there had been a slight reduction in the number received when compared with that of previous quarters.

In respect of the Council's financial performance, it was reported that the estimated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Council's finances for the year was £3.548 million: £1.311million of additional expenditure and £2.237million reduction in income. Whilst the impact of the in-year projected variances (Covid related and other) on the General Fund was a net positive variance of £279,000, it was highlighted that this was after a drawdown from the General Fund unallocated balance earlier in the year of £135,420. The overall estimated position for the year was therefore a net addition to the General Fund unallocated balance of £143,580.

There followed a brief discussion by Members on the report, during which the subsequent points were made and an action agreed:-

- The Chairman wished to express his thanks on behalf of the Committee to staff at the Council for their sustained, high levels of performance throughout the year and the achievements made in the face of such challenging circumstances.
- The Chairman also wished to thank all of the staff who were involved with the processing of grants for local businesses for their hard work in ensuring that these were issued. Other Members shared the gratitude expressed by the Chairman and wished to convey their thanks as well for the hard work of all staff.
- In response to a question in relation to the projected housing figure and why this appeared to be less than what was stated in the updated budget, the Business Solutions Manager agreed to research this and report back to Members at a later date.

**DECISION:** Members of the Performance Management Board noted the report.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To inform Members of the performance of the Council.

## 22 **DECISION PLANNER**

**DECISION:** The Decision Planner for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 was noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.24pm.

Councillor M Radley  
(Chairman)