

Transformation Board – Meeting held on Thursday 21 March 2024

Present:

Chair:

Gerard Curran, Commissioner

Members:

Cllr Dexter Smith – Leader, with responsibility for Improvement and Recovery
Cllr Wal Chahal - Deputy Leader, and Lead for Financial Oversight and Council Assets
Cllr Pavitar Mann - Leader of the Opposition

Officers

Stephen Brown - Chief Executive and Head of Paid Services
Sue Butcher - Executive Director, Children's Services, Chief Executive Slough Children's Services
Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Patrick Hayes - Executive Director Housing, Property and Planning
Marc Gadsby (ED People Adults)
Bal Toor (HR Improvement)
Stephen Menzies (ICT&D) (remote)
Chris Holme (Deputy S151 Officer)
Jane Senior (Strategic Commissioning Change)
Jemma Reid (Customer Services Improvement) (remote)
Sarah Wilson (Assistant Director, Legal & Governance, HB Law)

Secretariat

Mandy Brown (Chief of Staff)
Nasreen Brittain (Executive Assistant to Commissioners), minutes.

Also present

Dave Hounsell
Andrew Merritt-Morling, Programme Manager
Jacqueline Soloman, Project Manager (remote)
Lara Felix, Project Manager (remote)

Apologies for Absence

Gavin Jones, Lead Commissioner;
Denise Murray, Finance Commissioner;
Adele Taylor - Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services and S.151 Officer,
Deemple Brain, Programme Manager

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 Introduction to the meeting. Ged started by saying that it was important to reflect on things and he felt optimistic about the Board. It would provide a good focus. There was a concern about the number of Boards and the same people attending them which could result in more talking than doing and would need to ensure that this did not impact on things negatively.
- 1.2 Stephen Taylor shared he was leaving in May and was working with the incoming Monitoring Officer to ensure things went smoothly going forward. Wanted to leave things as a going concern and felt there was a wish for improvement and hoped people had not given up on that.
- 1.3 Alex Polak reflected he was feeling a little unsettled as he did not know whether he would be staying or going. However, overall, he was feeling optimistic about the signals that he had received about the future direction. Was also feeling elements of self-doubt and felt this was a period of reflection for him.
- 1.4 Sue Butcher reflected she would miss departing colleagues and wanted to keep the focus going. She was very proud of her staff group and excited to be acquiring libraires etc. Sue reported that Paul Moffat was currently writing his letter to the Minister. The Board was growing, and she felt excited about being more involved in the culture programme.
- 1.5 The Leader reflected he was optimistic about the transformation piece which would enable the Council to operate more effectively. Saw it as an opportunity to reset the relationship with the voluntary sector and act as an enabler to managing the Council's functions at a time of slim-down. He expressed frustration at how long it had taken to get here but was pleased it was now happening. Members had previously had very low visibility about what was going on and he hoped this would change in the future.
- 1.6 Marc Gadsby felt proud overall. It was a good time to reflect and look at the resilience of the people in Slough. He had reflected on the assurance model, and it made him think about the opportunity to expand on those to achieve best outcomes for the residents. While there had been some very good individual performances, things needed to improve to make that more the norm. however, in general he felt proud and focused.
- 1.7 Cllr Mann reflected on staff morale and the culture of the organisation which still required a lot more work. Also didn't want the focus to be too inward looking, as needed to remember it was all about the residents.
- 1.8 Dave Hounsell looked forward to supporting the transformation programme and the Board.
- 1.9 Andrew Merritt-Morling echoed this, and also spoke about the operating model and putting residents first.
- 1.10 Jane Senior reflected she felt optimistic. She had a great team, who were hard working and were determined. Good governance had provided a better platform to be more innovative. She felt excited about the transformation programme and building up cross-Council engagement. Staff had been very excited about the award certificates they had received at the recent Roadshow.
- 1.11 Stephen Brown thanked Ged for acknowledging his departure and the delicate situation he was in until his departure. In the meantime, he felt he wanted to leave the Council in a better position. On reflection, felt he should have started this process sooner and overall felt conflicted.
- 1.12 Cllr Chahal reflected this was the last opportunity to get things right. He also felt excited about the challenge, however. He had previous experience of transformation; however, this was a whole Council transformation. He had been taking pulses around the organisation and

reflected there were a lot of dedicated and wonderful members of the staff, and it was vital to have them on board throughout the transformation period. He would be part of the transformation process and felt it was important for it to be a cross-party initiative. Reporting progress would also be key.

- 1.13 Sarah Wilson felt optimistic and energised. She reported there had been a good audit committee the previous night, which was more honest and transparent than previously. Slough was a tough place to work and that needed to be reflected on at times. She was slightly concerned about language, structure, and terminology and how that was heard across the organisation.
- 1.14 Nasreen Brittain reflected she was feeling optimistic overall and wanted Slough to succeed. She was also pleased to see the new Board structure.
- 1.15 Mandy Brown reflected she was also feeling optimistic about things and was looking forward to supporting the programme and the Council.

1.16 Declarations of Interest:

- i. No declarations of interest expressed.

2. Terms of Reference: Dave Hounsell

- a) Ged thanked Deemle Brain for the hard work she has put into this but could not be at the meeting today. Dave Hounsell would therefore be presenting on her behalf.
- b) Key item was the Terms of Reference. Draft TOR was shared for review. The Recovery Board had reviewed this prior to the meeting today.
- c) Key point to note was the purpose of the Board was to act as a driving force behind the changes needed for the Council to meet its best value obligations.
- d) Work streams would be defined and reported into the IRB and would drive the pace and delivery. How this then worked with the Finance Board needed to be worked on.

e) *The Organisational Change Board will:*

- Decide on the critical success factors and priority change plans that will drive recovery and operational transformation.
- Focus the council's recovery activity on delivering Best Value for residents within the financial envelope.
- Development of the Target Operating Model to guide how SBC seeks to operate in the future to achieve its strategic objectives
- Continually refine SBCs recovery plan and continuous improvement initiatives by using performance metrics, best value guidance and peer reviews to deliver efficient and effective services to the residents and businesses of SBC.
- Monitor progress of Transformational Projects.
- Identify corporate wide solutions.
- Agree new transformation projects.
- Ensure resources can be allocated to priority projects.
- Ensure that transformation projects align to the recovery plan and Corporate Plan
- Foster codesign and development of solutions between Commissioners, Members and SMEs across the Council.

Comments on the TOR from the Board:

- a. Opposition Leader to be included and will nominate a deputy when unable to attend.
- b. Leader responded around whether the Chair of Scrutiny would attend. Felt there should be some Member engagement. Welcomed ideas and suggestions on how to carry this forward. Ged responded that his experience was that it was a mistake to confuse scrutiny of own actions/decisions. However, Members had a strong desire to be involved. So, more consideration would need to be given to how best to balance the two. Felt it was worth doing a piece of work and Alex Polak could design something for Members.

Outcome/Decision: Would not make a decision now on the inclusion of Chair of Scrutiny but bring back a proposal to the next Board. Cllr Mann wanted a clear way of reporting to the Members about the outcomes from Boards. Stephen Taylor agreed with that.

- c. Last item on the agenda could be what Comms message wanted to relay more broadly to Members. Cllr Chahal said there would be copious activity with Members on shaping things and delivering the overall message into the wider organisation. Difference would be what we are doing within the organisation not to it.
- d. Stephen Brown thanked the team for their hard work in producing the TOR. Important to establish how this would operate in terms of size/type of reporting. The Leader felt communication and transparency was a key issue and it could be beneficial to have someone from the Comms team to attend the meetings.

Decision/Outcome: Ged reflected that that the working group which had been set up would need to think about how the related groups would be updated and get the messaging across to. This would need to be nuanced further.

- e. Alex Polak reflected that a theme over the last couple of years had been the moving boundary of what the Council was responsible for and what the Commissioners were responsible for. He felt the Council should be making the decisions itself and looking at how it managed its own business in a self-aware way and then update the Commissioners. He did, however, see this Board as Commissioner led. Alex wanted to check whether people were comfortable with the boundary. Ged responded that this was something that needed to be borne in mind. The more successful the Council was, the less Commissioner involvement would be required. This was about helping ensure the right steps were being taken to deliver best value outcomes. This Board was designed to assist that delivery not, confuse it.
- f. Terms of Reference to be signed off at the next Board.

3. TOM Scope (Dave Hounsell)

3.1 Priority Areas

- i. Scope slide shared. Trying to get the right balance between the breadth and a focus to ensure the limited resources were used well. At the moment it is showing the target operating model would have one workstream amongst many, with the others feeding into it.

Senior leadership recruitment and onboarding was in its final stages. The Agresso review formed part of the IT Strategy. These were the starting points of the scope of workstreams as things currently stood.

Sue Butcher mentioned there was a Getting to Good Board as well as a SEND Board which has separate accountability and needed to be included/reflected as such. Cllr Chahal said he couldn't see Members on the workstream, Ged responded that was because this slide reflected the lead officer level only.

Stephen Brown reflected there had been a discussion on strategic partnerships. Alex Polak said the point to make was that he saw governance as something that everything sat within. Was pleased to see governance in the workstream and felt calling it Governance would be best as it enveloped all governance. Ged responded that it was more about getting the right workstreams in the right place to be able to provide good oversight. Stephen Taylor agreed that he was content with this. Amendments would be made as things progressed.

3.2 Pause

- i. Not covered.

4. Reporting Approach (Dave Hounsell)

- 4.1 Comments welcomed. Wanted to highlight there would be a rigorous reporting template against each workstream. Would hold workstreams to account. Cllr Mann wanted reassurance around the equality impact. Marc Gadsby asked how the report would work to produce good metrics.

Action: Dave Hounsell to ensure the report would produce good metrics and provide a timeframe for when that would be.

- 4.2 Stephen Menzies wanted assurance that this report would align with other reporting.

Action: Dave Hounsell to ensure the reporting would be aligned.

- 4.3 Cllr Mann's wanted an assurance that EDI would be threaded all workstreams and not considered as a separate thing then those papers could be brought to this Board. Ged reflected it was important to make the engagement explicit not implicit. There was a lot of concern in the community whether the Council properly recognised this and was also a concern that had been highlighted from staff internally.
- 4.4 Alex Polak's concern was sometimes things had fallen down at SBC as other elements to support them were not present and was concerned about doing this properly. Technology could also assist with this to prevent too much resource being consumed to deliver it, so technology would be key to success. Dave Hounsell was hopeful good internal and external candidates could be attracted to the advertised roles. Stephen Menzies felt it was not possible to have 60 reports per month serviced. Dave said there would only be one coming per month, as it would be a much more consolidated picture. Agreed to take further discussion offline.

5. Next Steps (Deemle Brain)

- 5.1 Clarify and finalise the names of the workstream leads and ensure they were briefed on the requirements.
- 5.2 Stock-take on the current workstreams in scope so as not lose focus. Create a forward plan for what work will need to be done and give colleagues time to prepare for future deep dives. To add the Member engagement piece to that as well.
- 5.3 Timescale for reporting would be agreed at the next Board in April.
- 5.4 Jane Senior asked if there would be an introduction provided to the workstreams as she would like to be able to take people through what the achievements will be. Ged confirmed there would be. Going forward would have specific items that would be done as deep dives.

6. AOB:

6.1 Comms and key messages:

- a) Internal comms to go out to explain the purpose of the Board and the next phase of the intervention.

- b) Officers and members welcomed the new approach to oversee the improvements to the Council. They agreed to commission a piece of work to identify how Councillors could be fully involved in the work.
- c) They also agreed to ensure that the equalities impact of any improvements were fully identified and explored.
- d) Finally, the meeting recognised the need for rigour in implementing changes and committed to applying this.
- e) It was also agreed that there was a need to apply rigour to the workstreams and include the member involvement piece as well as 'The Council is running the Council'.

The meeting closed at 12.10pm.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 18 April 2024 at 12:00pm.