

# Transformation Board Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 18 April 2024

## **Present:**

### **Attendees:**

#### **Commissioners:**

Ged Curran, Commissioner, Chair  
Gavin Jones, Lead Commissioner  
Denise Murray Finance 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

#### **Officers:**

Sue Butcher – Executive Director Children’s Services and Chief Executive Slough Children’s Services  
Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer  
Marc Gadsby – Executive Director People and Adult Services  
Stephen Menzies (ICT&D)  
Jane Senior (Strategic Commissioning Change)  
Chris Holme – Interim Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services and Deputy S151 Officer (remote)  
Jacqueline Soloman Project Manager (remote)

#### **Secretariat:**

Mandy Brown - Chief of Staff to the Commissioners  
Nasreen Brittain – Executive Assistant to the Commissioners (minutes)

#### **Also Present:**

Dave Hounsell  
Andrew Merritt-Morling Programme Manager  
Jacqueline Soloman, Project Manager  
Lara Felix, Project Manager  
Alex Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny

#### **Apologies for absence:**

Cllr Pavitar Mann - Leader of the Opposition  
Will Tuckley – Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Services  
Patrick Hayes - Executive Director Housing, Property and Planning  
Sarah Wilson (Assistant Director, Legal & Governance, HB Law

## Minutes

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

1.1 Introductions made.

### **2. Declarations of interest**

2.1 No declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes and actions from Board held on 21 March 2024**

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 March 2024 were approved and actions updated. Terms of Reference to be approved at the May Board.

### **4. Workstream Update: Target Operating Model (Andrew Merritt-Morling)**

4.1 Ged updated that this paper would not be presented today as the work done had gone beyond the situation that the Council was currently at. More work would be done to align the star chamber and the TOM and bring them back for the May board. The work done was an excellent piece of work, however.

4.2 Cllr Chahal asked about discovery work being done before the next board rather than waiting a further month for the board. Ged confirmed the work should be getting done in between boards, not just at them.

### **5. Workstream Update: Strategic Commissioning Transformation (Jane Senior)**

5.1 The purpose of the programme is to transform the commissioning practice and develop a strategic commissioning function across the Council and in collaboration with statutory partners, with the aim of delivering better outcomes for local people; whilst making long-term efficiencies and an in-year saving of £750k by March 2025. This programme represented an opportunity to forge the approach to strategic commissioning. The important thing of note was there was an in-year cross council saving of 750k attached to this piece of work but unclear as to how this figure was arrived at.

#### **5.2. Objectives:**

##### **Three key objectives:**

- i. Objective 1: Cross-cutting projects to deliver better outcomes and in-year savings (delivered through workstream 1) Identifying and implementing a number of cross-cutting contracting and commissioning projects across 'people' focused elements of the Council, to improve pathways and provision also with the aim of improving outcomes for local people (aligned to the Corporate Plan) and achieving savings and efficiencies within the short term (£750K by March 2025) and the longer term.
- ii. Objective 2: Practice Improvement and Standardisation (delivered through workstream 2) Standardising commissioning approach across the Council and SCF through sharing good practice, initially through adoption of a Strategic Commissioning Framework and through establishing a commissioning community of practice. To roll out a series of 'Let's Talk' sessions to share and develop best practice alongside

identifying gaps in knowledge and training opportunities. By March 2025.

- iii. Objective 3: Redesign of Strategic Commissioning (delivered through workstream 3) Research and implement opportunities for re-organising commissioning across the Council and with its partners to deliver more integrated services and pathways, and better outcomes for local people - supported through re-defined partnerships and governance arrangements. For implementation of redesigned model from April 2025.

5.3 Jane Senior confirmed that for the Commissioning Transformation she was the programme lead, with Jacqueline Soloman as the project manager. A 'sponsor' would need to be identified and she would be consulting with CLT on this at the next meeting.

**5.4 Workstream 1 overview:**

- iv. **Activity 1** – review of contracts register (SCF and the Council) to identify opportunities for consolidation, negotiation and termination, there was also a workshop scheduled for this work.
- v. **Activity 2** – Review of spot purchasing and individual purchasing to identify opportunities (top 20 spend) for consolidation, re-negotiation, re-procurement on an alternative e.g., block basis. This would consider market intelligence and opportunities for approaching through a commissioning lens
- vi. **Activity 3** – taking a longer term view to look at cross-cutting opportunities and initiatives, such as homelessness, mental health, transitions, and the VCS. Identify and implement opportunities for strategic commissioning initiatives where commissioning responsibilities straddle two or more directorates or organisations.

To review, agree and adopt the strategic commissioning framework and then introduce positive work patterns and bring those into the Council.

Keen to embed a community of practice. Establish a bank of innovation and good practice. Would be holding 'let's talk' sessions over the coming weeks to introduce the strategic framework as the go-to document for good practice. Undertake a training needs analysis to identify gaps in knowledge or areas for development/improvement.

- vii. **Workstream 3** - redesign of strategic commissioning and partnerships. To review existing commissioning arrangements and partnerships, drawing upon Red Quadrant interim and final reports as necessary.
- viii. Undertake research into alternative strategies and integrated commissioning models with Las and ICSs. Options appraisals for new models with regard to Slough, or wider.
- ix. Design, consultation, and delivery.

**5.5 Key Deliverables: by March 2025**

- i. Savings of £750K delivered
- ii. Cross-cutting commissioning projects established.
- iii. Strategic Commissioning Framework adopted across the Council and SCF Series of Lets Talk Sessions implemented.

- iv. Commissioning Community Established
- v. Training Needs Analysis undertaken, and Training Plans produced.
- vi. Recommendations on new Commissioning Model and Partnerships arrangements agreed through Council's governance processes – aligned to the Target Operating Model

**5.6 Progress to date:**

- i. Workshop held in January with good attendance and engagement. There was a real sense of energy and momentum.
- ii. Governance programme structure also been put in place with assistance from Jacqueline Soloman. There was now a regular rhythm of meetings.

**5.7 Workstream 1** – procurement workshop took place on 17 April to go through procurement opportunities.

**Workstream 2** – let's talk sessions have been discussed and planned.

**Workstream 3 – progress to date:**

Gantt Chart shared which contained the risk table. Felt the risks were realistic which would need to be mitigated in order for the work to be successful.

One key risk was this was time consuming and put pressure on existing workloads and objectives/targets.

Restructure of Frimley ICB to support Slough. This would have an impact on integration and resource availability.

Not seen too many territorial behaviours which has been encouraging.

Concern was however raised about the £750,000 saving which was unevidenced, so discovery work would need to be carried out.

**5.8 The main programme dependencies were:**

- iii. Corporate plan and health and wellbeing strategy. Any commissioning intentions arising through this Workstream One must align with the Corporate Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Frimley Plan (as appropriate)
- iv. Commissioning resource. Any strategic commissioning intentions which are developed through this Workstream One will need to be resourced - either through an existing commissioning lead or through additional resource where availability is constrained
- v. Cross-Council initiatives. Commitment from members to participate in projects operating on a x/Council as well as directorate based BAU
- vi. Partnerships. Ability/willingness of partnership to flex and accommodate strategic commissioning initiatives
- vii. Openness. Willingness to offer frank appraisal of current levels of commissioning understanding to support an appropriate training programme being put in place
- viii. Partners. Partners to be willing to participate in Workstream Three and to consider alternative delivery models

- 5.9 Gavin reflected there needed to be a shared understanding by senior staff of what strategic commissioning was. Jane was not sure that was currently the case. Gavin felt more messaging would be required to distinguish it from procurement. Gavin felt it was a key element of the TOM. Good strategic commissioning could transform the spend of an organisation. Gavin would work closely with the Council on this and would be keen to see the strategic framework.
- 5.10 Denise wanted to see a very clear definition of strategic commissioning and the commissioning lifecycle as well as defining the need and contract management, shaping the market. The slides did not reflect this clearly and would need to do so going forward. Delivering against the £750k target, procurement management were the department who could do the framework. Be very clear in approach as to how this would be brought to the reporting.
- 5.11 Gavin wanted to see more on data and insight from the reporting going forward as it was not included in the presentation for today's Board. Was interested to know the skills and capabilities aspect of this as it was quite a rare thing. How would the HR team develop these skills and people. How would the organisation provide this support more broadly across the Council. Jane agreed, and the Director of HR and Strategy would sit on workstream 3 once they were onboarded.
- 5.12 Sue Butcher felt that for wider ownership it was crucial who attended the 'chat about' sessions. There was a call for a wider understanding of this area, with a clear definition between the strategic and operational elements.
- 5.13 Denise wanted to understand the engagement with partners and there was a strategic approach to get them on board and work differently. Jane said this would come in workstream 3. Felt there was scope for this piece to be developed. Not always focused on outcomes that could be delivered locally.
- Some partners were invited to sit on the board, but they would be changing within the Frimley restructure, which was a risk for the organisation. Needed to be having more of a voice regarding expectations with Frimley as the wider piece. Denise said needed to consider who the partners were. Going beyond just the ICB partners if the organisation was going to be strategic. Was there a strategic partner register, what was the commissioning availability across the whole space for example. Denise asked Jane to think about this area more. Jane accepted this was a good challenge and the thinking had been contained within health and social care partnerships and would require additional thinking to achieve.
- 5.14 Stephen Taylor asked whether the CLT could do anything to assist. Jane responded the biggest thing CLT could do was to nominate a sponsor to do this piece of work which would provide assurance and challenge to support this work. Jane requested advice and a discussion on how Members were to be engaged and welcomed doing this with CLT.
- 5.15 Stephen Menzies felt there was a longer term issue, as there was not a procurement programme for IT at the moment, or indeed the staff. This could require an additional nine members of staff. He was writing a 1-3 year plan. In 3 years' time would need to launch a procurement programme for 5 projects which would require significantly more staff. If the organisation took a category management approach it could be more innovative in its procurement approach. A different skill set to what the Council currently had would be required.

Cllr Chahal said he had been kept at arm's length despite it being under his portfolio and expressed an interest in being more closely involved. Agreed to set up a meeting with Jane.

Leader was happy for Cllr Chahal to lead on this area but as chair of the health and wellbeing board he also wanted to be included in the process.

Ged concluded it felt that a wider range of choices needed to be resolved by CLT as there were implications on the TOM and other areas of the organisation. It could be that conclusion would be a narrow set of activities now, with a wider ambition later on. He also wanted to understand for the next meeting, why the enthusiasm from Commissioners was not reflected amongst others.

Wanted the Boards to be a place where more discussion could happen. Jane responded the scope issue was very important. If the scope were to significantly widen, wasn't sure how geared up the Council was to deliver that successfully. Would not want to set anything up that was not achievable.

- 5.16 Denise responded that with regards to the £750k savings that needed to be delivered, it did not need to be the defining element of this programme but would need to be part of a separate element. Needed to be dove tailed to avoid duplication. Needed to think about what resources Jane Senior would need to deliver on this urgent piece of work that will be required. Jane confirmed this was part of workstream 1. Chris Holme and Jane have had initial discussions about this work, and she was mindful that this would need to move at pace. Departments needed to be informed about the savings number they would be required to meet. This work had not been done yet.

Dave McNamara said the alignment of services had been looked at. Needed to be aware of the savings target that to be delivered. Cllr Chahal agreed to take further discussion offline as was concerned about this. Gavin reflected Jane could deliver this target as she was not service area.

## **6. *Engaging Members in the Recovery Programme: (Stephen Taylor)***

- 6.1 Alex Polak went through the action plan to ensure Members were engaged. Have taken a look at what was already in the governance action plan which could be used to deliver this.
- 6.2 The principles behind it were that decisions should be Member led, i.e., cabinet. Keen to avoid making mistakes from the past and having mixed boards of members/officers.

### **6.3 *Stakeholders:***

- i. All member briefings were improving. It was time to have a formal programme to them. Previous barriers had been lack of time.

Members with key roles would be expected to attend boards.

Cabinet needed to have greater understanding across the piece. Had talked about how lead members and directors could be better utilised. CLT's relationship to be more proactive. Instigate a programme of more away days. Portfolio management where cabinet space to take a more strategic approach. With a new CEx and CLT in place, this would be a good time to make these changes.

Wanted to be closely involved in the guiding process working with CLT.

Not proposing new boards rather do the existing things better. Stephen Taylor added it was important there was some consistency across the board as to what support cabinet members received. Cabinet members were politically accountable. Members could not tell EDs to manage however, there had to

be a clear distinction between the management and political side. Stephen and Alex were setting the principles for this.

Alex outlined what it would take to do this. Barriers had been staff turnover and direct pushback from members of the previous administration and CLT regarding time commitment.

Would need to work out if CLT had thought about how this would be deliverable.

Cllr Chahal agreed with Stephen Taylor on being strategic, and the need to provide robust challenge to EDs. Needed a Leader's office with more support, this was a key ask which was initially made two months ago. The CLT was now quite different, so would like to organise some events to put in place more training and nurturing going forwards.

Denise felt the recovery and transformation needed to be more broad across the chamber, not just cabinet. This would be a good time to think about all the existing meetings, cabinet plan, scrutiny, private and public, audit and corporate governance committee. How did the executive meet as well. Much of this would be cross-cutting. Adopt a more cross-chamber approach. Use already established boards, rather than create new ones would be the best approach, then agendas could be more effectively aligned. The Leader agreed. Members were keen for greater engagement and making a meaningful contribution to the operating model.

Sue Butcher reflected on how culture improvement was measured. How would we know this transformation project would be a success. Needed to think about this and what difference the staff would be seeking. Who from the culture group would be a representative on the boards.

Cllr Chahal responded that he had spent time in Bristol where he had done a session there on embedding cultural change. Could look at Bristol's example and use that in Slough. He was inspired by his visit.

Ged concluded that many of the things that this board would discuss would not be able to be progressed at the desired. This area, however, was not one of those because the relationship between Members and CLT was in the organisation's hands. Cllr Chahal felt these two groups could prove to be a challenge to get this right. Perhaps could use external facilitators to ensure success in this relationship building/forging. Ged agreed there were many approaches to doing this within the financial envelope the Council had. The time of year provided an opportunity to take a view with cabinet reshuffle etc. and agreed to bring this subject back for the June board for further discussion.

**Action: Dave Hounsell to add member engagement to the agenda for June Board.**

Mark Gadsby felt that where time investment had been made by CLT with Members, it ought to be noted.

## **7. Transformation Fund Governance: (Dave Hounsell)**

- 7.1 Governance of the transformation fund sat with the recovery board. Needed to get to a clear position going forward, that this board would now be the governing body for this fund. Ged responded, that going forward no approval from spending could happen until it had been through the Transformation Board. Would need establish a system for bringing business cases and how bids were made. Authorisation could only be made at the Board, however. Needed clarity on the amount that had already been approved/spent.

**Action: Dave Hounsell to report to the June meeting on the system for allocating and monitoring transformation monies**

- 7.2 Denise reminded the board that under the directions any utilisation of contingency funds required Commissioner approval. Chris Holme to work on any carry forwards that had been processed and this ought to be clear in the upcoming report for Cabinet.

Stephen Taylor asked who had the budget for the £4m. This was sitting in the general fund.

Mark Gadsby wanted to know when he could start making a business case. Denise responded not to spend too much time on business case until he had have a one-page mandate to do the work, this would give the in-principle very quickly.

## **8. Programme Developments:**

### **8.1 Terms of Reference**

- i. Not finalised. Carried over to May board.

### **8.2 First iteration of Highlight Reports**

- i. Dave thanked colleagues for the work done in this area. The purpose of these reports was to provide the Board with assurance.
- ii. Were going through a significant change of leadership roles with lots of re-onboarding. Acknowledged would need to link things up. There had not been a strategic view on what had been done on data technologies. Timing: scrutiny wanted to see HR improvement and workforce. The new CEx, Will Tuckley would need to take a view on this.
- iii. Stephen Mason responded that there was nothing in IT to deliver the dashboards in a secure manner. Looking at an appropriate manner in which to deliver this. Not enough resource in this area either. Lots of conversations around co-pilot, however, the Council did not have the resources to purchase this as it was expensive. Would buy some licences and test them first.

Cllr Chahal was happy to listen to the current position and give his thoughts to Stephen Menzies and agreed to set up a meeting to do this.

Ged concluded there was a danger things could get too bitty. Now engaged in transforming the Council. Would be very interested in CLT thinking through how all this activity could be communicated to staff to show how it was all



linked together. Needed some way to explain it while the work was going on over the next few months.

**Outcome: This would be discussed at the May board.**

- iv. Denise reflected she did not have sight of the mission and purpose. Anticipated there would be a workshop with CLT or away day to get understanding around this. Needed a strap line that said what the mission and purpose were.

**Action: Andrew Merritt-Morling to arrange workshop with CLT to establish understanding of the mission and purpose.**

Mandy said agreed to have a high level message from each of the Boards to be shared with Comms team.

Cllr Chahal talked about having champions, doing coffee mornings to get the messaging out to start with. The document presented at IRB this month was the framework for this piece. Have some posters around the building as well to promote the mission and purpose.

Mark Gadsby said the LGA came in to look at the broader comms the Council used, so this could be explored further. Agreed an away day would be a good way forwards.

**v. Items agreed for comms: (to send to Kate Pratt once reworded)**

- (i) Establish a CLT sponsor for the strategic commissioning project.
- (ii) Have a further strategic discussion about commissioning, the definition and distinction between this and procurement. More immediately think about the £750k and how that is managed
- (iii) Welcomed the proposals for member engagement. Agreed to come back in two months' time to discuss the work that will have happened between now and then
- (iv) Transformation funds, clarity on who will be managing these in the future and allocating money, to report back at the May board.
- (v) Asked CLT to think about communicating the purpose and mission of the TOM.

**9. AOB**

9.1 None.

**The Meeting closed at 13.36pm.**

***Date of next meeting***

Thursday 16 May 2024 at 12:00pm.