

BUSINESS AND FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 8 September 2021 at 6.00 pm in Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors N A M England, J E Lavery, A Lawrence, S J Reynolds (Chair), K S Sahota and C F Smith.
Co-optees: R Williams

Also Present: Councillor R C Evans (Cabinet Member for Council Finance and Governance)

In Attendance: A Lowe (Associate Director: Policy & Governance), J Power (Policy & Development Manager), K Robinson (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

BFSC24 Declarations of Interest

None.

BFSC25 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

BFSC26 Terms of Reference

RESOLVED – that the Terms of Reference be approved.

BFSC27 Work Programme 2021/22

Members expressed their wish that the 'Pride in our High Streets / High Street Re-opening' item on the work programme focus on all of the Borough's towns not just the 'Market Towns'.

The Committee also stated a desire to examine the Station Quarter plans once they had been developed to a stage at which the Committee could add value.

RESOLVED – that the Work Programme 2021/22 be approved.

BFSC28 Commercial Projects Update

The Policy & Development Manager presented an update on the Council's commercial projects work.

There had been a change in the Authority's approach to commercial projects; the Commercial Projects team had carried out the associated work until the summer of 2021. That team had worked with service areas to identify and drive projects, this had created an issue by which the service areas did not take ownership for projects and the Commercial Projects team became responsible for delivery. This had resulted in a lack of buy-in within service areas.

The responsibility for commercial projects had, from summer 2021, transferred to the Policy & Development team. As a result, the approach to commercial services had changed with a performance management approach being implemented. Service areas had become the owners of their projects; advice and assistance would be provided by the Policy & Development team throughout.

An example of this support was in developing a business case, offering benchmarking and locality data to assist in the establishing of an evidence base. There was also assistance from the Finance team, offering modelling and officers that specialised in certain service areas.

It was hoped that the new approach would ensure responsibility lay definitively with the service areas.

The approach would be reported to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Commercial Services and Regeneration on a six-weekly basis.

Looking forward, COVID had had a significant impact on the Authority and thus on the development of business cases. Consequently, projects that were already being developed were to be reassessed as a result.

It was expected that the Committee could be involved in the monitoring of service transformation projects, projects where there was an opportunity to shape service delivery, and any project that would result in the cessation of services.

At the time of the meeting, there were 37 live projects.

Following the presentation, Members posed a number of questions:

How did an idea become a live project?

Ideas could be generated in a number of ways, these were then fed through to service delivery managers or directors and then on for investigation by the Policy & Development team.

Did the Authority look to other authorities for inspiration?

There was horizon scanning, with officers looking to see if there were ideas that could work for the Council.

How did this fit with the Town Deal Board?

The Towns Board was concerned with place-based regeneration whereas this was service delivery, though there was an impact on place with some of the projects, such as NuPlace.

Members noted the importance of income generation through commercial projects with regard to the Council's budget and service delivery.

Members thanked the Policy & Development Manager for attending.

BFSC29 Chair's Update

The Chair noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be 3 November 2021.

The meeting ended at 6.54 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday, 3 November 2021