

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **CORPORATE SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 6 December 2017 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 7 March 2018.

(\* present)

**Elected Members:**

- \* Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman)
- \* Dr Andrew Povey (Vice-Chairman)
- Mr Mike Bennison
- \* Mr Mark Brett-Warburton
- \* Mr Will Forster
- \* Mr Naz Islam
- \* Mr Graham Knight
- \* Mr Andy MacLeod
- \* Mrs Sinead Mooney
- \* Mr Mark Nuti
- \* Mr Wyatt Ramsdale
- \* Mr Richard Walsh

**In attendance**

Tim Oliver, Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Mike Bennison.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 4 OCTOBER 2017 [Item 2]**

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed by the Committee.

**3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

There were none.

**4 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were none.

**5 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS TRACKER [Item 5]**

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman informed the Committee that a property 'follow up' workshop would be organised in due course with the Committee to consider Member engagement. This was formally agreed for inclusion on the Forward Work Programme.
2. Along with an existing item on the forward plan around the HR strategy, the Committee agreed that an additional item on corporate health and safety would be included on the forward plan for March 2018.
3. A Member of the Committee queried if agency contracts could also be considered with the HR strategy item in March 2018. The Chairman confirmed that a HR item on agency staffing would be considered by the Committee in June 2018 as part of a 6 month update.
4. The Vice-Chairman queried if the Committee should consider the IT digital strategy and in particular how this was being implemented across the organisation. The Chairman explained that the digital strategy was in the remit of the Overview and Budget Scrutiny Committee and Members of that Committee had received a private briefing on the strategy. The Chairman agreed to take this away and discuss this further with the Chairman of the Overview and Budget Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services supported the Committee in considering the digital strategy.
5. A Member of the Committee expressed the view that the Committee should have more meetings in its schedule. The Chairman explained that the Committee's meetings had been set up quarterly for 2018 but there was room to hold additional workshops and undertake site visits as members wish.

*Cllr Sinead Mooney and Cllr Mark Brett Warburton arrived at 10.15am.*

**Actions:**

- For a property 'follow up' workshop to be included on the Committee's Forward Work Programme.
- For an item on corporate health and safety to be included on the Committee's Forward Work Programme for March 2018.
- For the Chairman to discuss the inclusion of the implementation of the digital strategy to the Committee's Forward Work Programme with the Chairman of the Overview and Budget Scrutiny Committee.

**6 ORBIS PARTNERSHIP [Item 6]****Declarations of interest:**

None

**Witnesses:**

Sheila Little, Director of Finance  
Adrian Stockbridge, Orbis Programme Manager  
Tim Oliver, Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman queried if Brighton and Hove were ready to join the Orbis partnership and what work had been done in preparation for taking on a new partner. The Orbis Programme Manager explained that Brighton and Hove formally joined the partnership in May 2017 but work had begun 18 months prior to them formally joining. Although, not formally integrated, a phased approach for integrating each of the services was being undertaken. Key challenges for Brighton and Hove were around technology. It was recognised that their IT was not yet at the right level and required further work so that they can contribute effectively to the partnership.
2. Concerns were raised around staff travel times and travel costs as a result of needing to travel to different offices as part of wider Orbis work. The Orbis Programme Manager stated that this was a concern but more meetings were being arranged through Skype which would save money on travel expenses. Going forward travel expenses would be linked to pay grades. The Director of Finance clarified that this meant that expenses would be paid through payroll.
3. It was queried if each Orbis partner had their own sovereign property strategy and what challenges this posed to the partnership as a whole. The Director of Finance stated that Surrey had a well-established property strategy. Although each authority within Orbis would have a different property strategy, each authority would be supported equally through the partnership in ensuring their strategy was fit for purpose. The Chief Property Officer in Surrey was in contact with each authority regarding this.

4. The Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services explained that the Orbis Joint Committee had asked the Orbis leadership to add more granularity to the business plan including a dashboard with KPI's. The Joint Committee had discussed its ambitions for Orbis and would like to see at least 80% of processes within Orbis to be the same. The revised business plan is expected to include more details around integration on lower levels of the partnership.
5. The Chairman explained to members that the business plan was still very much a work in progress and the Select Committee had the opportunity to contribute to its development.
6. A Member queried what impact savings on staffing had on staff resilience and morale. The Director of Finance explained that the development of staff was at the forefront of the business plan with coaching, mentoring and support always being available to staff. A number of programmes focused on developing staff were in place and 'epic champions' within the partnership would feedback any concerns from staff to senior leadership. Staff were also given the opportunity to take advantage of secondments through the partnership.
7. Members of the Committee asked for more detail around the Centres of Expertise (CoE) in regards to the pace of progression and queried if these would be commercialised. The Orbis Programme Manager explained that each CoE was progressing at different stages. The HR CoE would go live in April 2018 and an update on the development of CoE could certainly be provided in the future. There was a growth model in place for developing commercial opportunities and services such as payroll which was recognised as possible income generator.
8. The Chairman queried if Orbis could make more savings in the future. The Director for Finance stated that Orbis was only part way through its original business plan and as the partnership developed, changes to processes would bring in savings.
9. A Member of the Committee queried the FTE figure for management in Table 2. Officers clarified that costs for management were included in services operating budgets but more detail could be provided on request.
10. Officers updated the Committee on the purpose of the maturity assessment included on page 24 of the report. It was explained that the assessment allowed the organisation to assess itself in terms of development. The current and aspiration levels for technology remained the same at 8, due to challenges in funding and the requirement for the organisation to exploit the technology it currently has.
11. The Director for Finance explained that employees in Orbis were included on the payroll of each of their respective sovereign authorities and are bound by the terms and conditions of that authority. The Orbis budget has been split 70/30 between Surrey and East Sussex. The

contribution ratios were annually reviewed and would be reviewed again in April 2018 with Brighton and Hove included in the ratio.

12. Members queried what the biggest challenges facing Orbis were. The Director of Finance stated that challenges included,
- a. Travel and time- making sure that the travel undertaken by each partner was equitable and cost effective.
  - b. IT- issues around connectivity and ensuring basic IT 'hygiene factors' were being implemented i.e. ensuring electronic calendars across the partnership can be shared.

The Cabinet Member added that work around KPIs would evidence what is and what is not going well for the partnership.

13. The Committee congratulated officers on performance to date. A Member queried whether a marketing plan was being put in place to seek new clients and new opportunities. The Cabinet Member stated that there was currently no marketing plan in place but a plan would be developed in the future. The Joint Committee were ambitious in what they hoped Orbis can achieve and areas of development had been identified.
14. It was queried if the investment that had been put into Orbis could have been put into Surrey CC to create efficiencies in house. The Director of Finance explained that very little investment had been put into Orbis and that the majority of efficiencies had been created from reducing management staff numbers which would not have been possible if done in house. A small investment had been put into an Orbis programme team headed by the Orbis Programme Manager. There was an 'invest to save' fund for Orbis but very little of this had been used.
15. When questioned if the partnership had been a success, the Cabinet Member stated that the lack of detail around KPIs made it difficult to fully understand the impact of Orbis.

**Recommendations:**

- For the Corporate Services Select Committee to report key comments on the Orbis business plan to the Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services.

**7 BUDGET PLANNING: BUSINESS SERVICES AND ORBIS [Item 7]**

**Declarations of interest:**

None

**Witnesses:**

Sheila Little, Director of Finance  
Louise Lawson, Senior Principal Accountant  
Tim Oliver, Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. A Member of the Committee queried building running costs and asked what costs this included. The Senior Principal Accountant explained that this cost included rents, utilities and some staffing costs and that a cost breakdown could be provided if members wished to see further detail. The Chairman added that building running costs would be discussed at the property 'follow up' workshop.
2. Members of the Committee agreed that associated costs with buildings needed to be allocated and 'cross charged' to services to ensure there was ownership of costs. The Cabinet Member stated that as the Leader had agreed, Surrey would be moving forward with a 'place agenda' that would include discussions with services around their property needs. Currently there was no clear data around how much staff and services were using in terms of building costs but this would be developed to ensure transparency of costs.
3. Queries were raised in relation to insurance costs. The Director of Finance explained that £4m was the cost for the 2017/18 insurance premium. The £1.3m income had been generated through insuring on behalf of schools.
4. It was explained that a corporate allocation model with costs was in place for when returns were submitted to government. The Director of Finance agreed to share this with this Committee.
5. Members agreed that it was important that managers were aware of their costs especially in regards to property. The Cabinet Member was in agreement that services needed to be aware of costs, especially those they had control over. The practicalities around how this information is collated and shared would need to be discussed with the Director of Finance.

**Recommendations:**

- For the Corporate Services Select Committee to report key comments on the budget item to the Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services.

**Actions:**

- For the Director of Finance to share corporate allocation costs with the Committee.

**8 ORBIS PUBLIC LAW BUSINESS PLAN [Item 8]****Declarations of interest:**

None

**Witnesses:**

Rachel Crossley, Assistant Director (Chief of Staff)

Sarah Baker, Legal Services Manager  
Tim Oliver, Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The item was introduced by the Legal Services Manager who explained that a fair amount of work was still required on the journey to integration. The shadow year for OPL would be extended into 2018/19. During 2017/18 a key piece of work had been focused on getting all authorities on the same case management system, a complex project in its own right.
2. A Member of the Committee queried costs if Orbis Public Law (OPL) was set up as a new legal entity. The Legal Services Manager gave some background to the alternative business structure (ABS) model, explaining that there were no proposals to set this up at present as the costs would be considerable and there was not a clear business case to support it. Under current legislation, OPL can undertake work for different local authorities without becoming an ABS.
3. There was a discussion around the difficulty in recruiting childcare advocates. The Legal Services Manager explained that there had been two recruitment drives to recruit to vacant posts but these had been unsuccessful. The role would involve advocates attending both courts in Guildford and Brighton. Recruiting to these roles would bring in a saving of £100k to OPL partners. It was further added that currently 60-70% of hearings were covered in house by team lawyers and acceptable results were achieved.
4. Members queried if it was possible to recharge costs back to teams for the legal services they used. The Chief of Staff stated that a balance needed to be achieved in regards to the support services required and the time pressures legal services were under. As a starting point it would be useful to understand and monitor what services were using the legal team.
5. A Member of the Committee queried why there were challenges to recruiting to advocacy roles. The Legal Services Manager explained there were a number of challenges. With the increase in childcare cases many of the people within this field were already employed. Staff were also constantly moving on as there were vacancies and opportunities in this area. OPL was also competing with London wages which were more attractive.
6. The partners within OPL are aligning ways of working and from 2018 work would be allocated to all four authorities. This was part of the commercial pathfinder project. The Cabinet Member added that the Joint Committee were in agreement that they wanted to see an acceleration of the work being undertaken by OPL. The Joint Committee also asked to be provided with a KPI dashboard setting out where each authority was in terms of progression. Areas where joint working could be developed also needed to be identified.
7. Discussions around cross charging services was raised again by Members. The Cabinet Member agreed that it was possible to capture

the work being undertaken by staff through time recording. This would inform managers where time was being spent. The Cabinet Member agreed to look into this going forward. The Chief of Staff confirmed that teams in legal monitored where their time was spent but this data had not been routinely shared with other services and this is something the service could look at.

8. The Committee were in agreement that time recording was positive as it would evidence which services heavily relied on legal services and where cross charging could take place.
9. The aim is for OPL to be fully integrated by 2019/20. Getting all partners within OPL to develop at the same pace has been difficult but timescales and milestones for the next 6 months will be included in the business plan and presented to the Joint Committee in January. The Cabinet Member stated that the Council's first obligation was to residents and the cost benefits to them. Currently, the Cabinet Member is unclear on the level of benefit to be achieved through OPL. Over the next 6 months the priority will be understanding and identifying which areas of OPL should be progressed and focussed on. By the end of 2018 a detailed business plan should be in place.

**Recommendations:**

- For the Corporate Services Select Committee to report key comments on the Orbis Public Law business plan to the Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services.

**9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 9]**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 7 March 2018, at 10.00am in the Ashcombe Suite, County Hall.

Meeting ended at: 12.20pm

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**Chairman**