



OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEES' REPORT TO COUNCIL

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

For Members to note the headline activity of the Council's overview and scrutiny function in the period July 2024 to September 2024 asking questions of Scrutiny Chairs as necessary.

BACKGROUND:

As part of the ongoing process to raise the profile of the work of Select Committees and to ensure appropriate visibility of scrutiny work and outcomes, regular reports are provided to Council. These are an important opportunity to evaluate the contribution the scrutiny select committee function makes to the work of the Council and to highlight the achievements of scrutiny.

This report focuses on the work of two of the Council's Select Committees and work conducted in two recent Task and Finish Group reviews:

- **Additional needs and disabilities: parent/carer experience** (A Task Group of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee, chaired by Cllr Jeremy Webster)
- **Digital Business and Insights (DB&I): Lessons Learned** (A Task Group of the Resources and Performance Select Committee, chaired by Cllr Steven McCormick)

Both reviews identified a number of improvements and recommendations for consideration by the executive.

SUMMARY OF DIGITAL BUSINESS AND INSIGHTS (DB&I) TASK GROUP REVIEW

1. Members conducted a 'Lessons Learned' analysis of the *MySurrey* ERP replacement project¹ with the aim of gaining an understanding of the factors that contributed to the delay in the implementation of the Unit4

¹ Enterprise Resource Planning software is a category of business management software that typically integrates organisations' key functions such as payroll, HR and employee data

product, the additional cost to the Council, and what could have been done to avoid this outcome, with the benefit of hindsight.

Background

2. The programme suffered a large increase in budget, with an end cost to the Council of £27.9m against an initial budget of £16.6m. 'Go-live' was originally intended for December 2021 and eventually achieved in June 2023, some 18 months behind the original target date. Delays to the programme have had negative impacts on staff, partners and on the council's reputation, and there have been a significant number of problems to resolve after project implementation, particularly in Payroll. Additional technical and '*business-as-usual*' support to manage these issues has been required, incurring significant additional cost to the council.
3. The Task Group conducted extensive oral witness sessions with many senior officers involved in the delivery of the programme, as well as input from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, and detailed review of contemporaneous committee and Programme Board reports. A Lessons Learned report produced by an independent consultant was also commissioned and proved valuable to the work of the group.
4. The final report of the Task Group was presented to Cabinet on 23 July 2024. It contained 18 recommendations intended to ensure the Council did not make similar mistakes in future projects. **Cabinet accepted all of the Group's recommendations and the principles behind them. A plan has been provided detailing how they will be implemented and operationalised by the administration.**

Conclusions & Recommendations

5. In its conclusions, the Task and Finish Group found that a lack of understanding of the complexity of the project at the outset, was at the heart of the delay and overspend that the Council incurred. The original implementation timeline and expectation of 15 months was unrealistic and proved damaging, with more time required to attend to complexities that arose and multiplied throughout the course of the project. This in turn damaged stage control² and resulted in a tendency to progress through programme stages with issues unresolved, or to run core project stages concurrently, which caused further problems.
6. Business readiness emerged as the key issue which could have made a material difference to the time required to complete the project and its eventual cost. The lack of understanding at the outset of the way the Council was using the old system (SAP) and weaknesses in internal processes and underlying data were key factors in the complexities that arose and the numbers of change requests made. Myriad problems

² Procedures to ensure that the different stages, or 'phases', of a project are only exited and entered at the appropriate time, usually only after the satisfaction of a number of pre-agreed entry or exit criteria.

became apparent throughout the programme, notably with Payroll, and had to be addressed. Witnesses highlighted a good understanding of the 'as is' position and of weaknesses in existing functions and operations, as an essential pre-requisite to commencing a programme of this size and being able to set realistic implementation expectations at the outset.

7. To avoid similar future problems with the implementation of projects the following priority recommendations were identified:

- **Undertake a robust *business readiness* assessment to test the organisation's capacity to receive any new system and to ensure weaknesses are identified in advance and factored fully into implementation plans and timelines.**
- **Ensure that there are stronger links between board representatives and their service users to deliver a better understanding of service weaknesses and issues at leadership and Programme Board level.**
- **Give greater focus to the behavioural change aspects of implementing new systems and the impacts on users who may be required to work in new ways, ensuring the provision of more, better-timed training, education and support for staff.**
- **Ensure that the council has sufficient leadership capacity to manage a programme of this scale and complexity by appointing a full-time senior responsible owner (SRO) within the organisation to work alongside the Programme Director.**

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES: PARENT/ CARER EXPERIENCE TASK GROUP REVIEW

8. This Group was tasked with considering what changes could improve the Council's support of parents and carers of Children and Young People (CYP) with Additional Needs and Disabilities (AND), and ensure it strives to put families at the centre of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process to as far as possible meet the needs of CYP.

9. Primary data was gathered through focus groups with 25 parents and carers, a survey of Members' casework, and discussions with young people, SCC SEND case officers, management and caseworkers in the Learners' Single Point of Access (LSPA). The EHCP process, complaints and appeals data and statutory guidance were examined.

Conclusions & Recommendations

10. Members found conflict is built into the EHCP system, with "hand-off" points that contribute to communication issues. This results in Member

involvement at various stages and a survey of Members showed that poor communication from SCC was a key factor in disputes. Parents and carers who participated in the focus groups, already burdened with child worries, are further stressed by a system they enter into looking for support. A focus group with case officers illustrated the pressures of an individual helping around 200 parents negotiate an excessively complicated system, in a role where the parent expects an advocate while the law expects compliance with a timeline, in an environment lacking sufficient places of the type sought by families. The result can often be emotional overload on both sides.

11. The Task Group identified a number of changes and improvements required to better support the family in their quest to meet the educational needs of a child with *additional needs*. The following priorities were identified. These are underpinned in the full report by a number of more detailed recommendations

- **Staff and Training: The Additional Needs and Disabilities (AND) workforce must be appropriately sized to meet demand and better equipped to cope with the challenges of the role.**
- **Communications: Support for families must be more personal and easier to access.**
- **Timeliness monitoring: The system used by Inclusion and Additional Needs teams needs to enable full monitoring of Key Performance Indicators.**
- **Quality Assurance: To mitigate a decline in quality during the clearance of the backlog, bring forward annual reviews due in the next 12 months to the earliest possible opportunity.**
- **Process: The excessively complicated EHCP procedure needs to be improved.**
- **Dispute resolution: When only 2% of Local Authority decisions are being fully upheld at tribunal, there is a need to reduce the number reaching that stage.**
- **Training for schools: SCC should lobby the Government to continue the pilot Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) in the future and should encourage more schools to take up the offer. SEN and building relationships with families should not be the sole responsibility of one person in a school.**

12. These recommendations were presented to Cabinet on 24 September 2024 and a Cabinet response is awaited.

SUMMARY OF SELECT COMMITTEE ACTIVITY July to September 2024

13. The Select Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs Group met twice to discuss challenges and share best practice. The Leader and interim Chief Executive attended a meeting to give an overview of key priorities for the Council year and to identify potential areas for future working between Cabinet and Select Committees. This included an assessment of the opportunities, risks and challenges for Surrey County Council this year and over the remaining lifetime of this Council and a number of areas were suggested where future scrutiny might add value. The Select Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs Group reviewed scrutiny approaches and the importance of prioritising scrutiny activity to ensure scrutiny is as effective as possible and targeted appropriately on strategic priorities or issues of resident concern.

Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee:

14. At its July meeting the Committee received a report on the Updated Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy (including a New Approach to 20mph Speed Limits). The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth. This followed Committee consideration of earlier drafts of the strategy in 2023. The Committee submitted recommendations to Cabinet requesting further clarity on the process of local community engagement and Member involvement plus more detailed targets to monitor progress and assess impact.

15. The Committee also reviewed the performance of the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and its progress addressing recommendations from the inspection carried out by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). A further session is scheduled with SFRS on 15 October 2024 to hear the Service's initial response to the Grenfell Inquiry Report including any plans to address and incorporate key recommendations.

16. Following a report from the Head of Community Investment and Engagement which provided an update on the Your Fund Surrey (YFS) community grant programme, the Committee asked the Cabinet Member to review the process and crossover between the large and small project funds and any flexibility for contributing from the small fund to a larger project. The Committee also received an update from the Deputy Cabinet Member for Strategic Highways on the new Utility Task Force convened in response to the Committee's recommendations to address streetworks issues including site signage and emergency works.

Adults and Health Select Committee:

17. The second meeting of the Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (Frimley Park Hospital) (JHOSC) took place on 6 September 2024 at

Surrey Heath House. This is the statutory joint committee providing scrutiny to the programme for replacing Frimley Park Hospital which was constructed during the seventies using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). Frimley NHS Foundation Trust provided an update on the current situation at Frimley Park Hospital and how that continues to be managed, including access to the current site, the new diagnostic unit and out of hospital urgent care facilities for residents requiring same day access. A detailed update on the selection process for identifying a new site and what could be communicated with people about potential sites was also provided. The JHOSC made a strong recommendation for Frimley Health to commence work on a Contingency Plan in case the authorisation to proceed is delayed to the point where the provision of hospital services is put at hazard.

Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee:

18. At its July meeting the Committee received an update report on the Home to School Travel Assistance (H2STA) Improvement Programme undertaken by the Surrey School Travel and Assessment Team (SSTAT) and the current performance of the service provided to children, young people, and families in Surrey. The Committee expressed concerns around the ongoing budget deficit and communications between Council teams and parents. Recommendations were submitted to Cabinet.
19. At its September meeting the Select Committee progress checked the *Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Recovery Plan* which aims to bring timeliness in line with statutory obligations, and reviewed lessons learned from an *End-to-End Review of the EHCP statutory process*. It also received a report on *Children Not In School*, exploring how many children of statutory school age are not registered at school or suitably (electively) home educated, the range of reasons and the impact.

Resources and Performance Select Committee:

20. On 18 July 2024 the Resources and Performance Select Committee received a report on the Customer Transformation Programme. The report was presented by the Interim Executive Director for Customer, Digital and Change. In considering the Customer Transformation Programme, the accompanying Dynamic Customer Operating Model and other appended papers, the Select Committee noted the potential benefits of the programme but were concerned about the potential risks which it considered to be significant and not well enough articulated. The Committee submitted a report to Cabinet highlighting its concerns and requesting further work to clarify these risks and provide assurance to the Committee, Cabinet and Members that these are well understood and can be effectively managed; and that any learnings from the recent DB&I experience are being applied.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council review the work summarised in this report providing feedback to Scrutiny Chairs as appropriate.

Lead/Contact Officers:

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Sources/background papers:

Select Committee agenda and minutes. Available here: [Committee structure - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

Report of the DB&I Task Group available here [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 23/07/2024 14:00 \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

Cabinet response to the DB&I Task Group Report available here: [\(Public Pack\)Cabinet- 23 July 2024- Supplementary Agenda 3 Agenda Supplement for Cabinet, 23/07/2024 14:00 \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

Report of the Additional needs and disabilities: parent/carer experience Task Group available here [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 24/09/2024 14:00 \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#). Cabinet response to follow.

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