

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ORBIS** Joint Committee held at 2.00 pm on 6 July 2018 at Council Chamber, BHCC, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 3BQ.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Friday, 12 October 2018.

(* present)

Elected Members:

- * Councillor Les Hamilton (Chair)
- * Councillor David Elkin
- * Councillor Helyn Clack
- * Councillor Bob Standley
- * Councillor Denise Turner-Stewart
- * Councillor Andrew Wealls

In attendance

John Stebbings, Chief Property Officer, Orbis
Simon Pollock, Assistant Director of Business Operations, Orbis
Gail Perryman, Programme Coordinator, Orbis
Adrian Stockbridge, Head of Performance, Strategy and Change, Orbis
Michael Coughlin, Executive Director (Customers, Digital and Transformation), Surrey County Council
David Kuenssberg, Executive Director for Finance and Resources, Brighton and Hove City Council
Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis, Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance and Law, Brighton and Hove City Council

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS [Item 1]

(a) **Apologies**

- 1.1 Kevin Foster, Chief Operating Officer, East Sussex County Council sent his apologies.

(b) **Declarations of Interest**

- 1.2 There were none.

(c) **Exclusion of Press and Public**

- 1.3 There were no Part Two items on the agenda.

2 MINUTES [Item 2]

- 2.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee agreed the minutes to be a correct record of the meeting on 12 April 2018.

3 2017/18 BUDGET OUTTURN [Item 3]

- 3.1 Officers introduced the report which showed that there had been a net underspend of the budget driven by meeting efficiency targets and savings in staffing costs as the number of agency staff declined.
- 3.2 In response to Councillor Wealls, Officers stated that the £70,000 transfer reflected several items moving in and out of the operating budget as listed in the appendix.
- 3.3 In response to Councillor Standley, Officers stated that the additional savings from staff vacancies would be a one off saving as these posts would be filled in the next financial year bringing the budget back in line with targets. The posts had not been recruited to as they were part of teams going through restructuring, but it would not be viable for these posts to be deleted in the long run.
- 3.4 In response to Councillor Clack, Officers stated that they would be able to provide a written response to confirm the total spend on redundancy. Officers confirmed that redundancy payments had been higher than expected due to the volume of voluntary redundancies taken across the authorities.
- 3.5 **RESOLVED:**
That the Committee noted:
1. *Orbis operating budget variance of -£2.5m at year end*
 2. *£1.5m spend on Orbis investment and redundancies*
 3. *Services achieved £5m efficiencies by year end*
 4. *Agency expenditure of £2m (4% of staffing)*

That the Committee agreed:

5. £0.07m transfer to the Orbis operating budget

4 PROPERTY SERVICE UPDATE [Item 4]

- 4.1 The Chief Property Officer introduced the report which discussed the process of integration so far, what the next steps were and the challenges that property services faced such as very different geography between the three authorities, different landlord models and business plans which were out of synchronisation.
- 4.2 In response to Councillor Elkin, Officers responded that there was only one integrated post in Brighton & Hove City Council's property services. The aim was to achieve an integration of systems and processes rather than integrated posts. Orbis was

currently looking to procure a new database system for property services which would be used across all three authorities.

- 4.3 In response to Councillor Wealls, Officers stated that savings would be driven by improved processes and not by staff reductions. The number of agency staff employed by property services had been reduced with front of house services being insourced.
- 4.4 In response to Councillor Wealls, Officers also clarified that the reporting structure for senior management was to the Chief Property Officer as the Orbis liaison and to the respective Executive Directors in each Authority. Each Authority set its own objectives which were then managed from a personnel side by the Chief Property Officer and the Executive Director had strategic oversight.
- 4.5 In response to Councillor Clack, Officers stated that they agreed that travelling between authorities was an overstated issue as there were only 16 individuals with dual roles in property services and only 48 dual roles in the entire Orbis Partnership.
- 4.6 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the update.

5 ORBIS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK [Item 5]

- 5.1 Officers introduced the report which was the latest in a series of reports on non-financial performance. Although all three authorities collected performance data work was needed to ensure that this data was consistent across the Partnership.
- 5.2 Councillor Standley noted that there were significant differences in sickness rates between the three authorities and that the sickness rate for Orbis staff was below the averages for the sovereign Authorities. He asked officers to expand on the causes of these differences.
- 5.3 Officers stated that the data was taken from a relatively short period and they would expect that the differences would lessen as more data was collected. The difference in sickness rates between authorities did have some historic precedent as Brighton & Hove as a city had a demographic with higher prevalence of risk factors associated with health issues leading to sickness. This was shown in Public Health data and was common across employers in the city. Brighton & Hove City Council also had an in house waste collection service which had a higher rate of injury than office based roles and so would increase sickness rates. Surrey County Council's data was uncorrected and was very likely to be significantly underreporting the levels of absence in the Authority.

- 5.4 Councillor Elkin suggested that it may be best practice for there to be a single absence reporting system or at least equivalent systems across the Partners to ensure that consistent data was being collected and could be reported.
- 5.5 In response to Councillors Wealls and Clack, Officers stated that there was a drop in satisfaction with Orbis services in Surrey which was expected given the challenging circumstances and restructure taking place. Surrey now had a sovereign lead for Orbis which would allow issues to be addressed much quicker and for more strategic oversight.
- 5.6 In response to Councillor Turner-Stewart, Officers responded that more forensic surveys were being carried out to investigate the performance results reported. Brighton & Hove and Surrey were also carrying out separate surveys of services including Orbis services.
- 5.7 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.

6 CONSISTENCY OF SERVICE DELIVERY [Item 6]

- 6.1 Officers introduced the report which showed how far integration had been achieved and what the aspirations were in terms consistency of approach across authorities.
- 6.2 In response to Councillor Clack, Officers stated that they felt they had set realistic and achievable targets of between 80-85% constancy across the partners. This recognised that there were always likely to be small processes and minor divergences due to differences in circumstance between authorities. This would also be a process of continuous improvement as processes would need to change and adapt over time.
- 6.3 In response to Councillor Elkin, Officers stated that the information in the report would be used to inform business plans rather than being referred to day to day.
- 6.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.

7 SURREY COMMERCIAL SERVICES [Item 7]

- 7.1 Officers introduced the report which informed the committee that Surrey Commercial Services had come under Orbis. The service catered to around 300 schools in Surrey and a neighbouring authority. The Service currently operated at a profit.
- 7.2 Councillor Wealls expressed concern that the presence of Surrey Commercial Services in Orbis could influence political decisions in the other Authorities to move to providing services

in house which were being effectively managed as outsourced contracts.

7.3 Officers provided assurance that Orbis would not seek to influence political decisions in the Sovereign Authorities. However Surrey would be able to provide technical expertise to assist in writing a business case if another Authority sought to bring its school meal provision in house.

7.4 In response to Councillor Turner-Stewart, Officers stated that there was increased competition from private sector providers and that the service was seeking to rebrand in order to compete for contracts outside of Surrey.

7.5 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.

8 ORBIS REVIEWS [Item 8]

8.1 Officers introduced the report which highlighted the reviews which were being carried out by Ernst & Young to identify areas which could be reduced in the future as financial pressure on Local Authorities was likely to continue and cuts to the back office were likely to be required. The report also covered the reviews taking place at Surrey which would become part of a wider strategic review at the Council.

8.2 Councillor Clack stated that she felt that the new team of people who had been brought in at Surrey would be able to bring the County up to the level it should be at and to quickly address the existing issues in Children's Services.

8.3 Councillor Elkin stated that he felt these reviews were important as Council's would have to make more cuts and it was important to know where future savings may come from.

8.4 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the report.

9 ORBIS JOINT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 9]

9.1 Councillor Clack stated that she would like an overview of Surrey County Council's Transformation Plan to be presented at the next Committee.

9.2 Committee Members asked Officers to look at moving the meetings from Friday afternoon and possibly looking at using a venue which was equidistant for the Members rather than meeting at a Town/ County Hall. Councillors also asked Officers to establish what quorum would be for the Committee to potentially allow a smaller contingent to meet to ratify a minor decision.

9.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee approve the forward plan.

Meeting ended at: 3.40 pm

Chair