

Briefing for Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 26th February 2018

The Forward Plan lists the reports expected to come to Cabinet in the next 3 or 4 months. This note supplements that with other issues that may be of interest to O&S.

Rail Franchise

As mentioned on my last briefing the government have launched a consultation about what happens to the great western rail franchise (see link below). As agreed at the previous O&S meeting I have now circulated the draft CBC response to members of the former Cheltenham Spa Railway Station scrutiny task group for feedback by 16th February so a formal submission can go in by the 21st February deadline.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/great-western-rail-franchise>

Arle Nursery

Following the decision taken to introduce a new sustainable planting regime, the review of options for Arle Nursery is nearing completion and is due to go to cabinet shortly. Does O&S want further input on this issue before then?

Publica

Further to the issue raised at the last O&S meeting, the Publica Board have formally proposed that the setting up of a Member Liaison Group be deferred and a decision on whether or not it is needed taken once Publica has been operating for a year (ie November 2018).

Officers/members within CBC have discussed this in the context of the original 'Leaders Agreement' between the councils prior to Publica being created. Current thinking is as follows:-

- Members Representative Board

This would be retained as described in the agreement because it is part of the formal decision making process for the Leaders as member representatives of their councils e.g. Reserved Matters. It was noted that the Members' Agreement includes provisions to manage situations where the Leaders/Member representatives are unlikely to reach a unanimous decision (given that decision making only requires 75% of the votes).

- Portfolio Holder meetings

These would also be retained and take place as set out in the agreement on a quarterly basis with service commissioners and members of the company's Board to review the company's performance against Annual Service plans and KPIs.

- Members' Liaison Group

The agreement describes this Group as comprised of backbenchers, which provides a degree of scrutiny and acts as a sounding board. Assuming our normal scrutiny processes are sufficient to provide the necessary degree of scrutiny, a broader group comprising the Leaders, cabinet members and others, may provide a more effective and inclusive as sounding board. This broader group would be an informal forum which could meet, perhaps, twice a year or otherwise as necessary and could be an informal extension of an existing formal structure (namely the MRG). It was, therefore, felt for CBC the Member Liaison Group as described in the agreement was not necessary if such a broader informal forum was established in its place.

- Annual meeting

It was considered that in addition to the informal forum mentioned above, an annual stakeholder meeting would also be beneficial.

Does O&S have any further views on this?