

BUSINESS AND CHILDREN'S POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Extraordinary Meeting – Marble Arch Mound project – 27 October 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Enhance the oversight arrangements for high profile projects involving complexity, risk and innovation to minimise the risks identified in this report (i.e. significant project-overspend, circumvention of existing governance processes and lack of robust project management).

Proposal: to strengthen the Corporate Portfolio Management Office with business partners assigned to high-profile, high-risk projects. Business partners would ensure objectivity of reporting back to the Corporate Portfolio Management Office, the Council's Change Board, Executive Directors and the Executive Leadership Team as an independent check and balance. Definition of high profile, complexity and risk.

Business partners would also assure project initiation and project plans, including adherence to governance structures.

Recommendation 2

Strengthen the terms of reference to the Capital Review Group and introduce a new commercial project assurance gateway. Ensure a reporting function/regular, formal reports.

Proposal: to strengthen and, where necessary, clarify the terms of reference of the Capital Review Group to avoid a project of this nature **not** being considered by the Capital Review Group in future. Clarification will include the fact that large projects which are temporary in nature and therefore revenue funded should still be considered by the Capital Review Group. Whilst we do not want to recommend restricting innovative projects, there has to be a requirement of a reporting function to CPMO/CRG ensuring regular, formal reports.

A new commercial project assurance gateway to be introduced which will review all high-risk projects lying outside Council core competencies, including income assumptions. Cabinet Member Reports with new income streams proposed will in future require evidence of assurance given by appropriately skilled parts of the organisation on commercial assumptions.

Recommendation 3

Explore and recommend options for senior level resourcing (Director and above) to ensure appropriate capacity, expertise and capability and encourage diversity of thought.

Proposal: The Chief Executive to review the Council's senior level structure (Director and above) to ensure appropriate levels of resourcing, skills and capability and make any appropriate recommendations on changes to the Leader and Cabinet within three months of the date of this report.

Recommendation 4

The Standards Committee to prioritise the review of the Member/Officer Protocol. This should be with a view to strengthening the role of officers and members in giving and receiving clear and independent advice. We want to retain the benefits of Members and officers working together to innovate. Whilst there is no evidence that there is a problem in all areas of the Council relating to cabinet member / senior officer relationships and governance, this Review presents a good opportunity to revisit the existing provisions in the member / officer protocol.

Annual Code of Conduct training for all elected members to include restatement of the protocol on member / officer relations. The Governance and Councillor Liaison Team, together with the Chief Executive, to provide 'how to work with Members' briefings to all senior officers, in particular new starters.

Recommendation 5

Undertake an audit of the Council's Highways contract management function in order to ensure that the contract management issues identified by the Review are not repeated.

Proposal: the Council to consider its contract management arrangements in light of the findings of this Review. (Note: the Council's Highways contracts are independently assessed to ensure value for money.)

Recommendation 6

Recruitment decisions for temporary / fixed term appointments over £100,000 to go to a panel of relevant members, officers and (as necessary) independent experts for review to determine that appropriate skills and competencies are covered. Final review by a member panel.

Proposal: The Council to strengthen the skills mapping, recruitment and sign off process for senior appointments, whether high-paid temporary or fixed-term contracts, especially where above £100,000. This would involve amendment of the Constitution.

Recommendation 7

Review of the resourcing of P&S Committees, with training to be provided for scrutiny chairmen, scrutiny members and officers.

Proposal: In light of the proximity of the local elections, initial refresher training to be provided now by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer with further training for members to be provided post-May 2022 by e.g. the CfGS. Refresher training to include: effective scrutiny, investigation, questioning, call-in.