



Item

Cambridge Live Report

To:

Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee 3 October 2019

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All Wards

Non-Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

Following the decisions taken by this Council, and by Cambridge Live, to end the contract for services with Cambridge Live, and transfer all its staff and undertakings to Cambridge City Council, a review was commissioned into the events that led to this point.

A review has now been conducted by an industry expert, Mark Taylor, on behalf of the East of England LGA. This is attached as Appendix 1.

The review reports on an investigation into events that are seen very differently from different viewpoints, and finds that both the Council and Cambridge Live could have acted differently at key points, in ways that might have increased the chances of the independent trust developing into a successful and viable entity for the long-term. It highlights the learning from other trusts, in particular that the first five years at least of a new trust are often difficult, and that establishing a trust with an intention of

achieving savings is unlikely to create a sustainable basis from which to build a thriving organisation.

The intent of the report is not to cast blame on any individual or organisation, but to highlight areas where lessons can be learned, which might be valuable in managing other arms-length relationships, or in any future decision to create an arms-length trust.

The review has the benefit not only of hindsight into what happened, but also of the passing of time in respect of other organisations, to give a different view on trust formation from that which was taken at the time of the trust's formation.

This review did not examine in depth the financial position of Cambridge Live. Members will be informed separately when the auditors complete the accounts for the trust, on the balance sheet at the point of transfer.

Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to note the report, and to ask officers to consider how the learning might best be applied to current and future relationships.

2. Background

The background to the decision to take Cambridge Live's services back in house is set out in the 19 December 2018 report: <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=476&MId=3565&Ver=4>

Which provides links to the original decisions taken to create the Trust.

The decision to commission an External Review was taken at Full Council on 21 February 2019:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=3405&Ver=4> and the terms of reference for the review were approved by

the Exec Councillor for Communities at the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 27 June 2019:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=476&MId=3606&Ver=4>

The external reviewer was commissioned through the East of England LGA and selected as an independent expert who had no previous relationships with either Cambridge City Council or Cambridge Live. The review took place between June and August 2019, with the report being produced in early September.

3. Implications

The review contains lessons which should be taken into account in managing arms-length relationships, and in creating new arms-length organisations. The lessons for the Council to take on board include:

- Careful consideration about the reasons for creating a new organisation, or transferring services to an existing one, and the balance between cost saving and effective delivery;
- The need to consider carefully the role of councillors on Boards, their responsibilities and term of office;
- The need to consider whether a shadow board and shadow period of operation is appropriate as part of the set up;
- The importance of ensuring organisations have a robust business plan at inception, which is reviewed and developed on a regular basis;
- The delicate balance between supporting an arms-length body to develop and allowing it to be independent and set its own direction, is difficult to maintain and relies on skill and good will from all involved.

4. Consultation and communication considerations

Past and present officers and members of the Council, as well as Cambridge Live staff and Board members were interviewed in the conduct of this review.

5. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Cambridge Live Review report.

6. Appendices

Cambridge Live Review report.

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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