

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Wednesday 15 February 2012 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These Minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 14 March 2012.

**Members:**

- \* Ms Denise Le Gal (Chairman)
- \* Mr Mel Few (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Mark Brett-Warburton
- \* Mr Stephen Cooksey
- \* Mr Steve Cosser
- \* John Furey
- \* Dr Zully Grant-Duff
- \* Mr David Harmer
- A Mr Eber A Kington
- \* Mr Steve Renshaw
- \* Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin
- \* Mr Nick Skellett CBE
- \* Mr Chris Townsend
- A Mr Richard Walsh
- \* Hazel Watson

**Substitute Members:**

- \* David Munro
- \* David Wood

**Ex-officio Members:**

Mrs Lavinia Sealy (Chairman of the Council)

**In attendance:**

- \* Kay Hammond (Cabinet Member for Community Safety)
- \* Peter Martin (Deputy Leader of the Council)

A = apologies

\* = present

**PART 1**

**IN PUBLIC**

**19/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Eber Kington and Richard Walsh. David Wood and David Munro substituted respectively.

20/12 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 18 JANUARY 2012 [Item 2]**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

21/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interests.

22/12 **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

23/12 **RESPONSE BY THE EXECUTIVE TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** None.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee received a response from the Cabinet on the subject of Budget 2012/13 and the *One County One Team* Corporate Strategy 2012-17.
- Some Members of the Committee felt that the response regarding Budget 2012/13 did not fully address the Committee's suggestion that the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.99% only be applied to the budgets of front-line services. Following a vote of 8 to 4 in favour, the Committee resolved to request a further response from the Cabinet on this matter.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

- None.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet be asked to respond to the Committee's suggestion that the Council Tax increase of 2.99% only be applied to the budgets of front-line services.

**Committee next steps:**

The Committee will receive a further response to its comments on the Budget 2012/13 at its meeting on 15 March 2012.

24/12 **ONE COUNTY ONE TEAM, FAIRNESS AND RESPECT STRATEGY [Item 6]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Mary Burguieres (Policy and Strategic Partnerships Lead Manager)

Kay Hammond (Cabinet Member for Community Safety)

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was informed that key to the Strategy is understanding the needs of Surrey's communities and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the Strategy is accurate in reflecting those needs. Much work had been undertaken to involve key groups in the development of the Strategy. The draft fairness and respect priorities have been identified from through this process and are designed to align with the Council's Corporate Strategy. This should ensure they are relevant to the work of the Council and what the Council is able to deliver.
- It was suggested that greater emphasis be placed on the needs and aspirations of residents. Concern was expressed that the Council was relying on a primarily top down approach that would not reflect what people wanted. The Committee was informed that it is difficult to address the desires of all residents all the time, but that through the Council's wider engagement and involvement activity we do seek to capture residents' aspirations. The suggestion was made that public forums be set up to give residents the opportunity to communicate their aspirations to the Council.
- Members were informed that partners were being given the opportunity to input into the Strategy through the Council's external equalities advisory group, chaired by the Cabinet Member. The group includes key representatives of the voluntary, community and faith sector as well as senior council officers. Each Directorate also had an Equality Group that looked at the fairness and respect priorities and their contribution to delivery of them.
- Concern was expressed that the proposed priorities of the Strategy were not sufficiently robust in addressing all the priorities of the Corporate Strategy. It was suggested that the priority to increase training and employment opportunities in Surrey not just focus on young people aged 19-25. Concern was also expressed that the Strategy's low carbon priority to ensure rural communities have access to services through new technology may exclude some areas from operating low carbon infrastructure.
- It was suggested that there be a greater focus placed upon prevention with regards to the child protection priority. Officers responded that prevention was core to the Corporate Strategy and was being addressed through the fairness and respect priorities as well. There also, however, needed to be a focus on support for groups that are currently very vulnerable.
- Concern was expressed with regards to the priority that aims to have Surrey County Council acknowledged as the most effective Council in England. Specifically, that a literal interpretation of the aim to have a workforce representative of the communities it serves would exclude

people from outside the County from working for the Council. Officers responded that the priority had been set broadly and the rationale behind it was that officers who were representative of their communities would be able to deliver services more effectively. However, it was noted that the processes to achieve a representative workforce should themselves meet the principles of fairness and respect.

- The view was expressed that the priorities of the strategy were vague and should have associated quantifiable targets. Officers responded that delivery of the Strategy would be supported by a full set of measurable targets. These were currently being developed through the Directorate business planning process. Progress on the targets would be monitored through the quarterly Cabinet business report, which is submitted to the Committee.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

The Chairman of the Environment & Transport Select Committee commented that he supported the direction of the draft Strategy and priorities, but that relevant issues should be considered at a future meeting of the Select Committee.

**Recommendations (to Cabinet):**

- a) That the following amendments and additions be made to the draft fairness and respect priorities contained in the Strategy:
- b) The phrase 'and aspirations' should be added to the penultimate priority to read 'Increase our understanding of the needs and aspirations of Surrey's residents and their differing experiences of Council services.'
- c) The implications for the Strategy of the urban/rural split in the County should be considered further.
- d) The priority in relation to Corporate Strategy outcome of being a low-carbon and sustainable County ('ensure rural communities have access to services through new technology') was more appropriate for the economy section. It was suggested that a priority along the lines of 'preventing pollutants getting in to the biological chain' might be more appropriate.
- e) The priority to increase employment and training opportunities should have a broader focus than just young people aged 19-25.

**Committee next steps:**

- The Committee to receive an update report at its meeting in October 2012.

25/12 **ONE COUNTY, ONE TEAM, INVOLVEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY**  
[Item 7]

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Louise Footner (Head of Communications)  
Julie Fisher (Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency)  
Ben Unsworth (Senior Performance and Research Manager)  
Peter Martin (Deputy Leader of the Council)

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was informed that public consultation for the policy had been open for a period of three months, and that six responses had been received from members of the public. Concern was expressed at the low public response to the consultation, which meant that the Strategy had not been adequately informed by the views of the public. The view was expressed that the Council's engagement with residents in this regard be reconsidered. It was suggested that reference in the strategy be made to the services the Council commissions. It was suggested that the low response rate was a result of the policy not being a controversial topic. Officers said they would welcome the views of the Committee as to how this could be improved. Officers informed the Committee that comments and complaints, Freedom of Information requests and feedback on the public website also gave the Council a rich amount of detail from which to draw conclusions.
- It was suggested that 'Have Your Say' sessions with officers more accessible to residents at the Local Committee level, may improve the public response to consultations. The view was also expressed that covering letters and a more personalised, proactive approach to consultees may further improve the level of responses the Council receives from consultations. The Committee was informed that in recent months 'Have Your Say' events had taken place with the aim of improving engagement with residents.
- It was suggested that more specific mention of Members be included in the Strategy as a primary means of consulting. Cost effectiveness was highlighted as a key element of the Strategy and officers were asked to ensure this. The view was expressed that reference to Surrey Compact be made in the Strategy as it is a key element of the Council's relationship with the voluntary sector. It was also suggested that specific timelines be established for implementation of the Strategy, and that the Council should ensure that the Consultation Institute's seven best practice principles for public engagement were addressed.
- It was suggested that the low take-up of consultation to the Strategy could mean that residents were happy with the way in which the Council engaged with the public. It was stated however that communication was vital and the Council should always seek to improve its engagement with residents.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

- None.

**Recommendations:**

- That the Committee's comments, as set out above, be incorporated into the revised Involvement & Transparency Strategy.

**Committee next steps:**

- None.

26/12 **2011/12 QUARTER 3 BUSINESS REPORT [Item 8]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Matthew Baker (Deputy Head of HR and Organisational Development)  
 Neil Bradley (Human Resources Group Manager)  
 Julie Fisher (Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency)  
 Kevin Kilburn (Financial Reporting Manager)  
 Ben Unsworth (Senior Performance and Research Manager)

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- Concern was expressed at the figures indicating that only 39% of residents felt they could influence decisions and 54% felt that the Council kept them informed. Officers also stated that a specific piece of research would be undertaken shortly to determine which parts of the County felt the least informed by the Council, the results of which would help to improve performance against this indicator.
- It was also felt that the target of 38% for staff who would speak highly of the Council as an employer was too low and should be higher. Officers agreed that Surrey should have a higher target and a more engaged and satisfied workforce, although Surrey's performance compared well with other Council's who had targets for staff satisfaction of about 25%. It was suggested that the low figure in Surrey could be a consequence of building closures, departmental restructures and job uncertainty. Improving staff satisfaction was an extremely high priority for the Council, which was reflected in the investment in training and development and the quality of the appraisal process.
- The view was expressed that the performance indicators were not presented in a manner that was accessible to the public. It was suggested that a key method of keeping residents informed is through local Members, and it was vital that they were kept informed about issues affecting their communities. It was also suggested that sending a personalised covering letter with public consultations and including 'good news stories' would improve the volume of responses as people would feel their response can make a difference.
- It was noted that work was underway to provide a detailed breakdown of agency costs, though negotiations were also taking place to reduce the cost of the Council's contract with Manpower by 1%, and that savings would be delivered at the end of the financial year.

- Officers were asked to clarify why Surrey's response target for responding Freedom of Information requests was twenty days, while Central Government's target was twenty-eight days.
- Concern was expressed that the target for the percentage of residents satisfied with how they were served by the Contact Centre did not adequately reflect how their issue was resolved by the County Council, and a lot could be learnt from measuring both aspects. It was therefore recommended that a further yes/no question be included to ask residents if they were satisfied with the specific service received.
- Concern was expressed that progress towards the staff appraisal target had decreased. Officers responded that if not for the Adult Social Care figures the target would have been reached. Feedback was that the quality of the process had improved, and the overall target was expected to be reached for 2012.
- It was suggested that the Environment and Infrastructure indicator for the number of people killed or seriously injured due to traffic collisions be investigated by the Environment & Transport Select Committee.
- The Committee was informed that a key reason for Waste being classified as a high risk was dependence on the delivery of the proposed Eco Park in Surrey, although the Strategic Director for Environment and Infrastructure was working closely with Defra in order to move the project forward.
- It was suggested that the Leadership Risk Register be benchmarked against national data so that progress could be quantified, and that a 'not determined' status should be considered for unclear indicators.
- Officers informed the Committee that benchmarking targets against other Councils was difficult because a 2008 requirement had now gone, meaning that all Councils can survey in different ways. Therefore benchmarking can only be made with Council consultations that followed a similar methodology to Surrey.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

- Officers to clarify why Surrey's response target for responding Freedom of Information requests was twenty days, compared to a national target of 28 days.

**Recommendations:**

- That a further question be included to ask residents whether they were satisfied with the specific service they received from the County Council, in addition to how their enquiry was handled by the Contact Centre.
- That the Environment & Transport Select Committee investigates the indicator for the number of people killed or seriously injured due to traffic collisions.

**Committee next steps:**

- The Committee to receive a Quarter 4 Business report at its meeting on 16 May 2012.

27/12 **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2011 (PERIOD 9)**  
[Item 9]

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Julie Fisher (Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency)  
Kevin Kilburn (Financial Reporting Manager)

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Chairman proposed that a Finance Sub-Group for the Committee be formed, which would monitor the three budgets within the remit of the Committee (Change & Efficiency, Chief Executive's Office and Central Income & Expenditure) and make recommendations to the Committee as appropriate. Draft terms of reference were tabled (annexe 1) and these were agreed by the Committee. It was also agreed that membership of the Sub-Group would be Denise Le Gal, Mel Few, Stephen Cooksey and Chris Townsend (or Eber Kington, as proposed by Chris Townsend) with one further Conservative Member to be agreed.
- The Committee was informed that a £1.1million surplus in Adult Social Care was due to additional Continuing Healthcare refunds and issues with the Transport Co-ordination Centre being resolved. Concern was expressed at the amount of overspends in the Directorate. Members were informed that there had been a delay to the People with Learning Disabilities draft PVR being submitted to Cabinet.
- A question was asked about whether a £3.1million underspend on gypsy sites reflected any underlying problems, and it was noted that the underspend was due to planned projects not being completed. The funding would therefore be carried forward to the next financial year. However, the Committee requested that further details about the projects involved.
- The Committee was informed that £1million of revenue was being carried forward as part of the invest to save programme for highways. However, the Committee sought confirmation that an underspend of £0.6million for road maintenance was ring-fenced within the underspend of £4.566million for the Environment & Infrastructure capital budget. Officers confirmed that Cabinet was yet to make a decision, though it was likely that the entire budget would be carried forward. The Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that the full Environment & Infrastructure carry-forward of £4.566million be approved.
- Members were informed that pressures relating to the rollout of the IMT refresh were problems with volume and the compatibility of old software with new hardware, though 50% of SCC office-based staff would have new laptops by the end of February. It was suggested that an update



report on the IMT refresh be tabled at the Committee's meeting in March 2012.

- Officers informed the Committee that the majority of overdue non care debt related to the Primary Care Trust and Borough/District and concessionary fare schemes, and would not be written off. Members were also informed that an £800,000 overspend on agency fees was a result of interim staff required to assist in elements of the IMT rollout such as the new data centre, and staff in Procurement.
- Officers were asked to clarify what the Fit for Partnering Initiative was and how much it cost.
- The Committee was informed that a large underspend in Early Years had taken place as a result of a volume issue, and because what had originally been projected had changed. Officers agreed to provide further information at a future date.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

- Officers to provide the Committee with further details of the Fit for Partnering initiative, including an overview of cost.
- Officers to confirm the reasons for an underspend in Early Years.
- Further details to be provided regarding the £3.1million underspend on gypsy sites.
- An explanation of the reclassification of efficiencies leading to the £0.4million overspend projected against Physical & Sensory Disability external residential budgets (paragraph 7) to be provided.

**Resolved:**

- That a Finance Sub-Group be established to review budgets within the remit of the Committee and make recommendations to the Committee as appropriate.
- That an update report on the IMT refresh be submitted to the Committee at its meeting on 14 March 2012.

**Recommendations (to Cabinet):**

- a) That the entire £4.566 million Environment & Infrastructure underspend be carried forward for 2012/13.

**Committee next steps:**

- The Committee will receive the budget monitoring report for January 2012 (period 10) at its meeting on 14 March 2012.

- The Committee deferred consideration of this item to its meeting on 14 March 2012.

**Committee next steps:**

- The Committee will consider the Capital Expenditure 2012/13 report at its meeting on 14 March 2012.

29/12 **COMPLETED INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS [Item 11]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Sue Lewry-Jones (Chief Internal Auditor)

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was informed that a significant amount of work had taken place in order to improve absence recording on SAP. The audit showed that in some instances absence had been under-reported. Reasons given for this were that time administrators had been subject to role changes and their responsibilities had sometimes not been passed on to the relevant officer. Difficult rotas in Adult Social Care (e.g. staff working over-night) had also contributed to this issue, though auditors had been working closely with the directorate in order to resolve these problems. Members were informed that a Rapid Improvement Event had also recently taken place to improve absence management.
- The Committee was informed that a recent audit report on heritage cited 'major improvement needed'. It was stated that the Heritage PVR Member Reference Group would investigate matters raised by the audit and refer any issues to the Communities Select Committee if necessary.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

Further information to be provided on issues relating to sickness absence in Adult Social Care.

**Recommendations:**

None.

**Committee next steps:**

The Committee to receive a further audit report at its meeting on 14 March 2012.

30/12 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 12]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** None.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- It was noted that the item titled 'Fit for the Future' on the work programme for 14 March 2012 should read 'Making a Difference'.
- It was agreed that the governance arrangements of Surrey County Council's pension fund should be scrutinised by the Committee at its next meeting.
- It was agreed that the following reports also be included on the agenda for the Committee's meeting on 14 March 2012:
  - IMT refresh – update
  - Capital Expenditure (deferred from this meeting)
  - Cost of staff sickness/absence
  - Staff vacancy levels by directorate
- Officers were asked to confirm the timing of consideration of detailed service budgets for 2012/13 by Select Committees.
- It was agreed that the Surrey First update report should be rescheduled for the Committee's meeting in June 2012.
- It was agreed that the Committee would receive a Cabinet Member priorities update report at its July 2012 meeting.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

The Financial Reporting Manager to confirm the timing of scrutiny of detailed service budgets by Select Committees.

**Resolved:**

- That the items outlined above be added to the Committee's forward work programme.

**Recommendations:**

None.

**Committee next steps:**

- The Committee will review its work programme and the forward work programme of Select Committees at its meeting on 14 March 2012.

31/12 **RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [Item 13]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** None.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- It was agreed that the Rapid Improvement Event update report [COSC 29] be added to the Committee's forward work programme for March 2012.
- It was agreed that the solar panels action [COSC 30] be removed from the tracker.
- Officers confirmed that the New Dimension Draw Down Grant was a Fire Service Training grant which aimed to increase the capacity of fire services to deal with emergencies [COSC 33].

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Resolved:**

That the Rapid Improvement Event update report be added to the Committee's forward work programme for the meeting on 14 March 2012.

**Recommendations:**

None.

**Committee next steps:**

The Committee will review its Recommendations Tracker at its next meeting on 14 March 2012.

32/12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 14]**

Noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be at 10.00am on 14 March 2012.

[Meeting ended: 1.25pm]

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Chairman