

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Wednesday 16 May 2012 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These Minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 13 June 2012.

Members:

- * Mr Mel Few (Chairman)
- * Mark Brett-Warburton
- * Mr Stephen Cooksey
- * Mr Steve Cosser
- * Mrs Clare Curran
- * Dr Zully Grant-Duff
- * Mr David Harmer (Vice-Chairman)
- * Mr Eber A Kington
- * Mrs Sally Marks
- A Mr Steve Renshaw
- * Mr Nick Skellett CBE
- A Mr Chris Townsend
- * Mrs Denise Turner-Stewart
- * Mr Richard Walsh
- * Hazel Watson

In attendance:

- * Ms Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)

Substitutes:

- * Mr Nick Harrison
- * Mr Chris Norman

* = present
A = apologies

PART 1

IN PUBLIC

60/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Steve Renshaw and Chris Townsend. Chris Norman and Nick Harrison substituted respectively.

The chairman welcomed new members of the Committee - Clare Curran, Denise Turner-Stewart and Sally Marks, and looked forward to their positive contributions.

61/12 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 17 APRIL 2012 [Item 2]**

It was agreed that bullet point one of minute 53/12 be replaced with the following:

Concern was expressed regarding the high level of Council spending on Olympic communications. The Cabinet Member responded that spending on Olympic communications was important as Surrey County Council needed to ensure it was keeping residents well-informed.

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

62/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interests.

63/12 **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

64/12 **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 the following response from the Cabinet with regards to its recommendation that the entire Environment & Infrastructure capital budget underspend for 2012/13 be carried forward:

‘I, as Leader, and the Cabinet are fully aware of the reasons for the delays in highways maintenance and other capital schemes, and of the need for these to be completed. The Cabinet will fully endorse the carry forward of the Environment & Infrastructure capital budget to the new financial year.’

David Hodge, Leader of the Council

- The Committee noted the response.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

65/12 **RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [Item 6]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that she was satisfied with with the current arrangements for management of the Surrey County Council pension fund. The Committee was informed that a new Pension Fund manager would be recruited shortly.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- COSC 56: Clarification to be sought on the projected figures with regards to the staffing structure of the Transition Team. Specifically, why spending was projected to increase up to 2016/17 when staffing reduced from 15 FTEs to 8 FTEs from 2013/14.
- Clarification to be provided about the meaning of the following statement in relation to the work of the Transition Team: 'Communication and Engagement across the C&E Directorate supporting culture development, driving forward the advocacy agenda to improve motivation and performance'.
- Responses to queries to be circulated with the recommendations tracker in future, and the name of the officer providing the response to be included.
- It was agreed that "completed" items be removed from the list.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee will review the recommendations tracker at its next meeting on 13 June 2012.

66/12 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 7]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Chairman advised the Committee that he had arranged to meet the Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency to understand the Key Performance Indicators of the directorate and a work programme going forward would follow. The same process would be applied to the Chief Executive directorate.
- The Budget Monitoring Report for 13 June will focus on the Final Outturn report for the year.

- Health Scrutiny Select Committee:
 - Neuro-rehabilitation review moved from 24 May to September on the Health Scrutiny Committee forward work programme.
- Communities Select Committee:
 - Volunteering Strategy no longer on the agenda for Communities Select Committee on May 22.

Recommendations:

- a) That the amendments listed above be made to the forward work programmes and agreed.
- b) That the list of work under select committees be re-ordered by Committee/date order rather than Date/Committee order.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee would review the forward work programme at its next meeting on 13 June 2012.

67/12 **PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT [Item 8]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Kevin Kilburn (Financial Reporting Manager)

Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Reassurance requested with regards to action being taken to address non-care debt. Officers will provide examples of where non-care debt had been written off, along with details of the write-offs.
- Concern expressed that although a 30 day target had been set for the collection of non-care debt, in some local areas debt had not been recovered for over five years. Officers responded that 22 days was the average number of debtor days for March 2012 and that an action plan was in place to assist in the collection of rents. It was suggested that the 22 day average needed to be re-assessed in context with the figures for other months so that trends could be identified.
- Concern expressed that the carry forwards of £31m to offset budget pressures should only be used to fund “one off non recurring” spend.

- Noted that the Olympics Risk Contingency should be shown as part of the Customers & Communities revenue budget instead of Children, Schools & Families.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

- Officers to circulate details of the Council's cash balance held at the end of the 2013/14 year.
- Examples of where non-care debt had been written off to be circulated to the Committee along with details of the reasons for the write-offs.
- Officers to move 'Olympics Risk Contingency' figures from the Children's Schools and Families Directorate in annexe C to Customers and Communities Directorate.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee to receive the final outturn for the year at its meeting on 13 June 2012.

68/12 **QUARTER FOUR BUSINESS REPORT [Item 9]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Susie Kemp (Assistant Chief Executive)
Ben Unsworth (Senior Performance and Research Manager)

Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Concern expressed that the targets and results for residents "feeling that they can influence decisions" and for residents "feeling that SCC keeps people informed" were too low.
- Officers believed that the results were the highest that had been for some time, and that Surrey County Council was performing well. Compared to other Authorities this result was good. It was noted that no peer information was provided to support this claim.
- It was felt that there was not enough comparative data in the report. Officers responded that different methodologies employed by other Councils meant that benchmarking against other authorities was difficult.
- Officers offered to prepare a seminar for Members to discuss the residents' survey methodology and findings in more detail.

- Committee was informed that media perceptions played a key role in public responses.
- Concern was expressed that staff appraisal results were too low, both as to the target and results.. Officers responded that the reorganisation within Adult Social Care had a significant impact on these results, and that other services had achieved the targets.
- Suggestion was made that a distinction between short term and long term sickness absence be considered..
- Concern expressed that the the results for staff speaking highly of the Council as an employer were low.

Recommendations:

- a) That the questions used on the 360⁰ feedback appraisal process be reviewed to ensure that the value to the member of staff being appraised is maximised.
- b) That ensuring effective communication with residents be added as a measure for the Environment & Infrastructure Directorate for the 2012/13 Business Report Scorecard.

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

- A seminar to be scheduled for all Members on the methodology for the residents' survey.
- Details of the reason for the increase of 19 posts against the budgeted headcount for the Chief Executive's Office to be circulated to the Committee.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee to receive a further quarterly business report at a future meeting.

69/12 IMT PROJECT ROLLOUT UPDATE [Item 10]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Paul Brocklehurst (Head of IMT)
Julie Fisher (Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency)
Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Committee was informed that project statuses were updated weekly and problems escalated immediately to ensure preventative action could be taken quickly.

- Officers were confident projects which were behind schedule would meet their completion targets.
- Suggestion that provision be made for unsuccessful challengers to procurement decisions having to accept responsibility for resultant costs.
- Committee informed that Surrey Go website had witnessed an increase from 600 to 2000 members and that adequate support would be provided for the Olympics.
- Officers stated that very few projects required to replace 'bad buys', with a number of Directorates having recently been subject to significant IT upgrades.
- Committee informed that rollout of IMT equipment for Members was not yet complete.

Recommendations:

That Surrey MPs and MEPs be lobbied to support a change to the law relating to procurement, so that in the event of a challenge to the procurement process by an unsuccessful bidder not being upheld, the legal costs are met by the appellant, similar to existing arrangements with planning law.

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

- That Select Committee Chairmen follow-up any concerns with the implementation of IMT projects in their service areas.

Select Committee Next Steps:

- The Committee to further review the progress of the rollout of IMT projects at a future date.

(Denise Turner-Stewart and Nick Skellett left the meeting at 11.55am)

70/12 **POLICY & PERFORMANCE TEAM PRESENTATION [Item 11]**

Declarations of Interest: None.

Witnesses: Mary Burguieres (Lead Manager Policy and Strategic Partnerships)
Liz Lawrence (Head of Policy & Performance)
Sue Lewry-Jones (Chief Internal Auditor)
Justin Newman (Performance and Change Lead Manager)
Ben Unsworth (Senior Performance and Research Manager)

Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- Committee was advised that it was hoped that the Surrey website would become a key source of information for the Council, community and partners.
- The role of the Policy & Performance Directorate was to develop an overall policy position for the Council from the top level and ensure coordination with all services within the County.
- In response to a question on the validity of the data, Officers informed the meeting that information was being used proactively rather than reactively in order to predict patterns of behaviour, such as the birth rate in Surrey and the impact this had on school places.
- Committee was informed that the Council had a number of networks linking Policy & Performance and Directorates throughout the County, which enabled joint working and the pooling of skills.
- Concern expressed that the Policy & Performance Service's vision included promoting local decisions, yet made no reference to Local Committees.
- Suggestion made that Policy & Performance Service should have greater engagement with key Children's, Schools & Families Directorate projects.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

None.

Select Committee Next Steps:

None.

71/12 **COMPLETED AUDIT REPORTS [Item 12]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Sue Lewry-Jones (Chief Internal Auditor)

Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)

Key Points Raised During The Discussion:

- Chief Internal Auditor drew attention to the two areas –
 - Records Management and;
 - Health and Safety Compliance which were rated 'amber' for Management Action Plan Progress. More recently a Records Disposal

Policy had been produced. Also an audit of Health and Safety was underway.

- Chief Internal Auditor confirmed that disposal of records stored in the basement of County Hall was taking place in consultation with the Surrey History Centre.
- Direct Payments; Major Improvements needed:
 - Committee informed that a management action plan for direct payments had been agreed in response to the audit recommendations. Noted that there would be a full follow-up audit report later in the year.
 - Chairman of the Adults Social Care Select Committee confirmed that she was aware of the findings of the audit.

Actions/further information to be provided:

An update to be provided on the implementation of an online register for elected Members' interests and related party disclosures.

Recommendations:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

Noted that the Committee will continue to receive audit reports at future meetings.

(Dr Zully Grant-Duff left the meeting at 12.40pm)

72/12 RAPID IMPROVEMENT EVENTS UPDATE [Item 13]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Julie Fisher (Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency)
Adrian Stockbridge (Lean Programme Manager)
Bryan Smith (Lean Programme Manager)

Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Officers were congratulated for the implementation of actions listed under 'current status' in annexe A.
- Suggestion made that Chairmen of relevant Committees be informed of the intention to commence an RIE within their remit in order that they could propose appropriate Committee involvement.

- View expressed that a balance needed to be struck between small, local purchases and central procurement to make savings. Committee informed that organisations had been given purchase cards to make their own purchases.

(Nick Harrison and Richard Walsh left the meeting at 1.04pm)

Recommendations:

That the Chairman of the relevant Select Committee be informed at an early stage of any RIEs impacting on services within their Committee's remit, and that the Chairman be asked to decide whether or not Member involvement in the RIE would be appropriate.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

73/12 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 14]

Noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 13 June 2012.

[Meeting ended: 1.14pm]

Chairman