

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Wednesday 12 September 2012 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These Minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 18 October 2012.

Members:

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

Ex-officio Members:

- * Mrs Lavinia Sealy (Chairman of the Council)
- Mr David Munro (Vice-Chairman of the Council)

In attendance:

- * Ms Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Change & Efficiency)
- * Mrs Lavinia Sealy (Chairman of the Council)

Substitutes:

- * Mr Chris Norman
- * Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin

* = present
A = apologies

PART 1

IN PUBLIC

102/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Mark Brett-Warburton and Steve Cosser. Dorothy Ross-Tomlin substituted for Mark Brett-Warburton and Chris Norman substituted for Steve Cosser.

103/12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 11 JULY 2012 [Item 2]

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

104/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interests.

105/12 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

None were received.

106/12 RESPONSES BY THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

The Committee received responses from the Cabinet to issues raised concerning IMT Project Roll-Out Update and Superfast Broadband in Surrey. These responses are included in the Committee papers.

107/12 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [Item 6]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

- Members raised concerns over the level of staffing required by the Communications Team. Members were informed by the Chairman that this issue would be discussed as part of a broader item concerning the communications department and would take place at a future meeting.
- In relation to COSC 63 a sub group of members had met with four out of six of the strategic directors, and a picture was emerging that each directorate takes a different approach to measuring vacancies. This sub group will summarise its findings and present them at the November meeting. The Chairman stressed the importance of the Committee having a clear understanding of the overall headcount ahead of the budget finalisation.
- The Committee was updated about COSC 98, and it was noted that the issue of measuring Co2 emissions from street lighting would be further explored and the Energy Task Group.
- The following update in relation to COSC 101 was reported at the meeting. 'Contract performance monitoring for SCC's critical and strategic suppliers is now under review following the OSC meeting in July with the initial focus on Adult Social Care, with all other areas to follow over the next 4 months. The Procurement team will review all of these suppliers to assess the current status of performance measurement and to implement measures where none currently exist. The aim was to agree common measures across all suppliers and to provide a performance dashboard for senior management to view.'

108/12 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 7]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The key issues that will drive forward the Adult Social Care Select Committee's agenda were the national changes in funding for care, relating to the Dilnott report, and a review into Surrey's in house residential homes. A taskgroup has been established to investigate IT issues relating to the Adult Information System (AIS).
- The key themes for the Children & Families Select Committee were ensuring that the service can manage budget pressures, caused by increasing volumes of child protection cases and Looked after Children (LAC) as well as reviewing change in the service to give a stronger focus on early help, supporting families and children with disabilities. The meeting was also informed that an unannounced OFSTED inspection had started and was currently underway.
- The Communities Select Committee was leading on a review of the community engagement public value report, and was undertaking an in-depth analysis of how the County works with the voluntary and faith sector. The Committee would also be investigating the legacy of the Olympics and how it could increase local tourism.
- The Education Select Committee was focusing its work programme on driving up attainment, and reviewing the new OFSTED framework. The Committee had included a standing item going forward to scrutinise the School Organisation Plan.
- Environment & Transport Select Committee would be investigating pressures on both short-term and long-term strategic budgets, and would be scrutinising the service plan for highway prioritisation. The Committee would also be convening a task group to investigate countryside issues and understand how the County works with local partners. The Chairman of the Environment & Transport Select Committee assured the meeting that there would not be a change to the methodology, that decides which roads are prioritised and inspected, but instead the Committee would look at how outcomes can be improved through smarter working and an increased use of technology. The wording of the work programme would be amended to make this clear.
- The Health Overview Scrutiny Committee was continuing to focus on the transformation of the NHS and the implementation of Clinical Commissioning Groups. Surrey was behind some other authorities in the region, and there are gaps emerging in setting commissioning priorities. Headline issues are; the emerging Health and Wellbeing Board; and the Council taking lead responsibility for public health. The Committee would continue to monitor the situation in relation to the de-merger of Epsom Hospital and St Heliers, and the viability of Ashford and St Peters Hospitals.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- The Environment & Transport Select Committee would refresh and update its work programme.

Committee Next Steps:

None

109/12 **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT [Item 8]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Kevin Kilburn, Financial Reporting Manager
David Hodge, Leader of the Council
Denise Le Gal, Cabinet Member for Change and Efficiency

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Committee discussed the budget monitoring report that has also been scrutinised by the Finance Sub Group on 11 September 2012.
- The Committee was keen to continue to monitor recruitment and staffing budgets, questioning whether there was a need to fill roles if savings had been achieved from those roles remaining vacant for a significant period.
- Questions were raised about the Deputy Leader's growth fund, in which money had been vired across from Customers and Communities budgets, and Members asked about the aspiration behind it, its accountability, and how all Members could influence it. A decision was made corporately to use this fund for developing infrastructure and much of it has already been allocated to the Strategic Director for Environment and Infrastructure.
- The Committee raised the issue of future savings and how budgets could deliver the County's objectives going forward. The Committee believed that the Council should be exploring opportunities to have more shared services to ensure that finite resources could be utilised as effectively as possible. The Committee will review the procurement partnership, entered into with East Sussex County Council, at a future meeting.
- The Committee raised the issue of the cost of salaries and how they were measured against establishment figures. This would evidence where the authority could potentially make savings.
- There has been a £9.5m corporate adjustment in the capital budget. After discussion, it was cleared that this adjustment was a 'top side' adjustment on the assumption that not all the capital projects would be spent this financial year., Information was requested about progress on filling vacancies in the Environment & Infrastructure Directorate following the recent restructure.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

An update to be provided on the current recruitment / vacancy position for the Environment & Infrastructure Directorate. Action by: Kevin Kilburn.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee to be provided with a further monitoring report at its meeting in October 2012.

110/12 **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS [Item 9]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Kevin Kilburn, Financial Reporting Manager

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The regulations were reviewed at the July meeting of the Finance Sub-Group. The meeting was in agreement that the Regulations were now clearer and more functional. Members did raise concerns with the wording of 2.16c and it was agreed to make the wording clearer. The suggested revised wording would be shared with Members of the Committee outside the meeting.
- Subject to amendment of 2.16c the Committee agreed the Financial Regulations.

Recommendation to County Council

That, subject to an amendment to the wording of paragraph 2.16(c), the draft Financial Regulations be approved. Action by: Kevin Kilburn

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

The wording of paragraph 2.16c to be reviewed and shared with the members of the Committee for agreement. Action by: Kevin Kilburn

Committee Next Steps:

None.

111/12 **QUARTER ONE BUSINESS REPORT [Item 10]**

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Ben Unsworth, Senior Performance & Research Manager

Mark Irons, Interim Head of Customer Services and Directorate Support

Julie Fisher, Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The meeting discussed the results of the latest residents survey and noted that the volume of calls to the contact centre had risen in the last quarter with a corresponding decrease in the web site contacts. The change was ascribed to a 33% increase in telephone contacts during the period of heavy rainfall that had damaged verges and created potholes. The Olympics also generated a large number of contacts. The fall in hits on the website could be partly explained by the fact that the computers in libraries, for use by members of the public, no longer defaulted to the County Council's web page. Members also commented that the reporting page on the Highways section of the website was difficult to use, and that steps should be taken to simplify the reporting element.
- Members were happy to see that a measure was included, in the survey, to gauge public satisfaction with the service they receive from Council staff. Members were informed that 3,500 to 4,000 residents were canvassed for feedback every year and that this was undertaken through telephone calls made by an agency, commissioned on the County's behalf.
- The service agreed to investigate the Committee's perception that there was a lack of contextual data in the report, to support the RAG rating for Children Schools and Families on page six of annexe 2.
- Members were informed about the factors that impact on how residents feel they can shape the services delivered by the local authority. Since 2008 data had shown that this figure was affected by prominent publicity campaigns and national and local elections. There is, however, a disconnect between what people say they want to do and how they actually interact with local services. Members were keen on future reports evidencing how Surrey compared to other local authorities on resident satisfaction, and asked for officers to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of public campaigns. It was agreed that this would be included in the discussions with the Communications Team later in October and December 2012.
- It was suggested that consideration be given to using the survey to test resident's awareness of the Community Improvement Fund, as well as seeking views on the Council's Annual Report.
- The Committee was informed that a Members Seminar would take place on 26 October 2012, with the objective of making members aware of the methodology behind this report.
- It was also felt that work should be undertaken to reflect these top line statistics by Councillors division

Recommendations:

None

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

- Consideration be given to using the survey to test resident's awareness of the Community Improvement Fund, as well as seeking views on the Council's Annual Report. Action by: Ben Unsworth.
- Work should commence on further analysing the statistics by Councillor/Division. Action by: Ben Unsworth

Committee Next Steps:

None

112/12 COMPLETED INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS [Item 11]

Declarations of Interest:

Witnesses: None

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- Following the conclusion of "unsatisfactory" arising from the audit of Honoraria payment in schools: A question was asked about the potential risks to the County Council from incorrect payments made to teaching staff, and it was noted that processes had now been changed to prevent further errors. Guidance had also been sought from the Teacher's Pension Agency about further steps which needed to be taken in relation to the original errors.

Recommendations:

None

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

None

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

113/12 TASK GROUP SCOPING DOCUMENT [Item 12]

Declarations of Interest:

None

Witnesses:

Chris Norman, Vice-Chairman of the Communities Select Committee

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The task group intends to undertake an in depth investigation into high need areas in the County. This work would be mindful of both the Supporting Families project and the Leader’s Community Engagement Fund, and would tie together a number of different policy strands.
- This task group would be an important piece of work that would aim to uncover how different areas were prioritised and how different partners who work in these neighbourhoods communicated with each other, and residents.
- Members were reassured that local Members would be invited to share their views particularly those with Priority Place initiatives within their divisions. It was suggested that consideration be given to including a Member with experience of Priority Place initiatives within the membership of the Task Group.
- The committee was assured that this task group would not duplicate the work of the Supporting Families Task Group and would outline how it linked to the work programmes of relevant Select Committees.
- The Committee endorsed the scope of the Task Group, subject to the comments above.

Recommendations:

None

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

None

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

114/12 **CHANGE & EFFICIENCY SERVICE REVIEW [Item 13]**

Declarations of Interest:

None

Witnesses:

John Stebbings, Chief Property Officer
Julie Fisher, Strategic Director for Change & Efficiency
David Hodge, Leader of the Council
Denise Le Gal, Cabinet Member for Change and Efficiency

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

- The Committee received a presentation on the County’s property service.
- Members were informed that the service was undergoing a restructure and was currently engaging staff through a consultation process. The

manager's who were successfully employed in the new structure, during its first phase, have been assisting in reshaping the services that would be transformed during the second phase.

- The strategic director explained that the service had been analysing the entire property life cycle, the results of which would form the project management process.:- for example the school organisation plan. The largest portion of the business was focused on maintaining the current estate, but needed to change focus to the longer term.
- The service regularly looked at performance, and benchmarking, to ensure it was meeting its corporate requirements.
- There had been a reduction in staff costs and a saving to the budget had been made by bringing certain functions in-house. The aspiration was for the service to be fit for purpose and to become a more professional and commercial organisation. The service now had project financing, timelines and property databases, which previously had not been in place.
- Members requested further details of the staffing structure prior to and following the reorganisation as well as the savings achieved by bringing services back in-house.
- The Cabinet Member for Assets and Regeneration had offered to meet with any Member to discuss property issues, and the service had also been holding drop in sessions for Members to attend to talk about issues in their divisions. The service had been working closely with the districts and boroughs, and a varied range of other stakeholders such as Surrey Sports. The County wanted to change the mindset of services and departments, across the organisation, to be more commercial and entrepreneurial.
- Members raised the issue of capital expenditure programmes and asked how they were being tracked going forward. The Committee was informed that there was an in-depth process, numbering 27 stages, which encompassed the initial project brief to the final hand over to the service that would use the finished facility. Progress on all projects was monitored by the department at a weekly management meeting.
- On the follow up on the Audit report on rental income, it was confirmed that no outstanding rental debt had been written off and the overall debt had been reduced to £188,000.
- It was noted that the Committee would receive a more detailed report at a future meeting, which would cover issues such as service performance, the status of capital schemes and challenges faced by the service.

Recommendations:

None

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

Further details of the staffing structure prior to and following the reorganisation, as well as the savings achieved by bringing services back in-house, to be provided to the Committee. Action by: John Stebbings

The Committee to receive a further update report at a future meeting. Action by: John Stebbings.

Select Committee Next Steps:

The Committee to receive a further update report at a future meeting.

115/12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 14]**

The next meeting of the Committee will be at 10.00am on Thursday 18 October 2012.

[Meeting ended: 12:48pm]

Chairman