

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at 12.00 pm on 2 July 2014 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 11 September 2014.

Members:

- * Mr Nick Skellett CBE (Chairman)
- * Mr Eber A Kington (Vice-Chairman)
Mr Mark Brett-Warburton
Mr Bill Chapman
Mr Stephen Cooksey
- * Mr Bob Gardner
- * Dr Zully Grant-Duff
- * Mr David Harmer
- * Mr David Ivison
Mrs Denise Saliagopoulos
- * Mr Chris Townsend
- * Mr Richard Walsh
- * Mrs Hazel Watson
- * Mr Keith Witham
Ms Denise Le Gal

Ex-officio Members:

Mr David Munro
Mrs Sally Ann B Marks

Substitute Members:

Mrs Fiona White

Present:

Ms Denise Le Gal

* = present

54/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Mark Brett-Warburton, Bill Chapman Stephen Cooksey and Denise Saliagopoulos

Fiona White substituted for Stephen Cooksey.

55/14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 4 JUNE 2014 & 16 JUNE 2014 [Item 2]

The Minutes were agreed as accurate records of the meetings.

56/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interests.

57/14 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

58/14 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

The outcome from the Committee's call-in of the Cabinet decision relating to the Grant Criteria and Funding Opportunities Guide was noted under item 6.

59/14 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

Declarations of interest: None

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

- 1 In relation to the call-in of the Cabinet decision relating to the Grant Criteria and Funding Opportunities Guide (COSC 40), it was noted that, whilst the Cabinet supported the principle that high priority should be given to supporting the Family, Friends and Community Support Programme, it had not felt it appropriate to single-out specific programmes in the guide. The Committee's other two recommendations were accepted, and the proposed changes to the Guide as a result of recommendation (b) would be shared with the Chairman of the Committee.
- 2 The Committee did not feel that the response from the Assistant Director of Schools & Learning in relation to COSC 41 adequately addressed its concerns about completion of the programme of works for the provision free infant school meals by 1 September 2014. It was therefore agreed that further clarification be sought about how many schools would meet the deadline and what interim measures would be put in place for any schools which would not be ready.
- 3 The Committee was concerned that the data about trends in staff costs and benchmarking data for staff above level S8 (COSC 47) which it requested at its meeting on 4 June 2014 had not been provided, and suggested that the Chairman write to the Chief Executive to request his support in ensuring that officers respond in a timely fashion to requests by the Committee.
- 4 It was agreed that the item on Welfare Reform, scheduled in the Committee's work programme for September 2014, should be deferred to October 2014.

Recommendations:

- (a) That the Assistant Director of Schools & Learning supply details of any schools which would not meet the deadline for the provision of free infant school meals by 1 September 2014, along with the interim measures which would be put in place.

Action by: Bryan Searle

- (b) That the Chairman write to the Chief Executive to request his support in ensuring that officers respond in a timely fashion to requests for information by the Committee.

Action by: Nick Skellett/Bryan Searle

Actions/further information to be provided: None.

Committee next steps: None.

60/14 BUDGET MONITORING - MAY 2014 [Item 7]

Declarations of interest: None

Witnesses:

Julie Fisher, Strategic Director for Business Services

Sian Ferrison, Transformation and Development Manager

Key points raised during the discussion:

- 1 A report from the Committee's Performance & Finance Sub-Group was tabled at the meeting. A copy of this report is included as an annex to these Minutes.
- 2 It was reported that the Sub-Group had been encouraged by the revised approach to achieving savings from the Family, Friends & Community Support programme and had recommended specific issues for the Adult Social Care Select Committee to consider as part of its review of the programme in September 2014.
- 3 The Committee noted that a mechanism had been put in place to track and monitor progress on the development and implementation of robust plans for achieving efficiencies across the whole Medium-Term Financial Plan period. Whilst the Sub-Group had heard from officers that the new process was robust, the Committee was concerned that the Cabinet's agreement that to consult the Committee on the proposals for the mechanism had not been followed through.
- 4 It was highlighted that paragraph 2 and table 2 on page 31 of the report did not adequately explain the position in relation to reserves, as no mention was made of the additional £14M drawn down at the end of the previous financial year. It was agreed that further details would be circulated to the Committee.

Recommendation:

That the Adult Social Care Select Committee consider the following issues as part of its review of the Family, Friends & Community Support programme in September 2014:

- The availability of community support infrastructure in the County, both in terms of its ability to meet a diverse range of needs and its geographical spread.
- The impact on community support capacity of a move by the Council towards contracts with community groups instead of the payment of grants.
- The variance in the availability of support between urban and rural areas in the County.

Action by: Ross Pike

Actions/further information to be provided:

Further details about the position in relation to reserves, to reflect the additional £14M drawn down at the end of the previous financial year, to be circulated to the Committee.

Action by: Kevin Kilburn

Committee next steps: None.

61/14 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES 2014/15 [Item 8]

Declarations of interest: None

Witnesses:

Denise Le Gal, Cabinet Member for Business Services
Julie Fisher, Strategic Director for Business Services

Key points raised during the discussion:

- 1 The Committee noted the following amendments to the objectives: bullet point 1 of objective 1 to read 'Increase number of completed appraisals'; and the reference to recruiting a new Head of procurement on page 2 to be deleted.
- 2 It was noted that ensuring that the County Council was an attractive employer was a key priority, particularly for those services where there were staff shortages. It was agreed that an action should be included to reflect the need to ensure that the recruitment process resulted in tangible improvements in the services with the greatest need, such as Adult Social Care.
- 3 Information Technology (IT) was considered by the Cabinet Member to be the top priority for the coming year, and she had been successful in

securing an additional £2M funding for 2014/2015. The progress made in recent years in upgrading the Council's IT was noted, although it was recognised that there was still progress to be made to ensure that the high level of investment was positively reflected in the experience of staff. It was therefore agreed that the third action in relation to objective 1 would be amended to read 'Drive use of new technology and measure outcomes'.

- 4 The opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the Cabinet Member's priorities was welcomed, although it was commented that the wording of some of the objectives would make it difficult to measure the outcomes for residents. It was noted that the objectives as written were intended to be high-level, and more detailed information would be circulated to the Committee. It was agreed that the Cabinet Member would report progress on her objectives to the Committee in early 2015.

Actions/further information to be provided:

The Cabinet Member objectives to be amended to address the points agreed above, and a more detailed version to be circulated to the Committee for information.

Action by: Denise Le Gal

Committee next steps:

The Committee to review progress on the Cabinet Member's objectives in early 2015.

62/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 9]

The Committee noted the next meeting of the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be on Thursday 11 September 2014 at 10.30am.

Meeting ended at: 1.12pm

Chairman