

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 4 December 2013 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, 30 January 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
- * Mr Adrian Page
- * Mrs Denise Saliagopoulos
- * Mr Chris Townsend
- * Mrs Hazel Watson
- * Mr Keith Witham
- * Mrs Victoria Young

Ex-officio Members:

Mr David Munro, Chairman of the County Council
Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Vice Chairman of the County Council

Present:

Mr Mel Few, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care (present for Item 7)

* = present

85/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

No apologies were received.

86/13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 7 NOVEMBER 2013 [Item 2]

These were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

87/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interest.

88/13 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions to report.

89/13 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

The Committee made no referrals to Cabinet at its last meeting, so there were no responses to report.

90/13 BUDGET MONITORING & QUARTERLY BUSINESS REPORT [Item 6]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Kevin Kilburn, Deputy Chief Finance Officer

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was informed that at its meeting on Monday 2 December 2013, the Performance & Finance Sub-Group considered the October 2013 budget monitoring report and reviewed the quarter two Business Report.
2. The Performance & Finance Sub-Group had requested the following additional information in relation to the budget monitoring report:
 - Reconciliation in tabular form of changes to the overall financial position of each Directorate on a month-by-month basis, including progress against target savings. It was suggested that this information could also be included as an annexe to each future monitoring report.
 - The reasons behind the expected increase in training activity in the latter part of the financial year, and the process for agreeing the consequent £400,000 over-spend.

It was agreed that the Sub-Group would discuss the operation of the Council's Reserves at its next meeting.

3. The Chairman informed the Committee that he had requested that officers present information on unit costs at the Sub-Group meeting. The Committee noted that although expenditure per head in Surrey was slightly higher than its statistical neighbours it was not significantly so. The sub group believed the benchmarking information would be useful in considering the budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.
4. In relation to the training budget overspend, officers commented that the increase in expenditure in relation to training was as result of a Cabinet decision to continue a scheme to fund the training of social workers. This reduced the reliance on locum and temporary staff and ensured greater savings in the Adult Social Care budget. The Committee challenged why this expenditure was showing in the HR budget, given that the savings were being made elsewhere. Officers recognised that coding the expenditure to the Adult Social Care budget would be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2014-15.
5. The Committee asked if the waste PFI grant was considered an area of risk, and it was confirmed that delays in implementing the Eco Park

could lead to the grant being suspended, cancelled or claimed back. The DEFRA had now informed the council that the grant would be reduced from January 2014 until the eco-park was operational.

6. The Committee was informed that as part of its consideration of the Quarterly Business Report, the Sub-Group had received a demonstration of the Performance Dashboard. The Dashboard allowed officers with responsibility for performance to look at the detailed information which feeds into the summary report presented to the Committee. Performance against individual indicators was tracked on a monthly basis, and details were provided about the action taken to address areas where performance was below target.
7. It was noted that officers completed a forecast about whether the year-end targets would be achieved as part of their quarterly updates, and that this information could be tracked over the course of a year and against the final out-turn result to understand how accurate the forecasts had been.
8. In order to ensure that the information available through the Dashboard was used effectively, the Sub-Group would continue to review the detailed information at future meetings and report any areas of concern for discussion by the Committee. Where additional issues were identified by the Committee, these would be referred to the Sub-Group for more detailed investigation at the next meeting and reported back (as appropriate) or referred to the relevant Select Committee.
9. The Committee was informed that the more detailed narrative for the Quarterly Business report was published online, and that the link to this information would be circulated to the Committee outside of the meeting.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

The Committee to receive the link to the Quarterly Business report and the detailed narrative in order to identify areas for future scrutiny by the Performance & Finance Sub-Group.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

91/13 FAMILY, FRIENDS & COMMUNITY SUPPORT - SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SURREY [Item 7]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Anne Butler, Assistant Director for Commissioning, Adult Social Care
Paul Carey-Kent, Strategic Finance Manager – Adult Social Care, Public Health & Fire

Mel Few, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member outlined the savings required of Adult Social Care in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). He informed the Committee that £15.5 million of savings had been allocated to Family, Friends & Community Support in 2013-14, and expressed the view that he believed £.5.5 million of these would not be achievable within the financial year. However, he stressed his confidence in the initiative, highlighting the role of 3 recent Rapid Improvement Events and the development of a model office in increasing efficiencies.
2. The Committee commented that the report was encouraging, though it was recognised that there were significant difficulties in measuring to what extent the principles could be scaled up. Members asked whether a greater upfront investment would accelerate the speed and scale of the benefits that could be realised. The Cabinet Member acknowledged it was an interesting challenge and agreed to explore it with officers.
3. The Committee asked what provision was in place to ensure that community resources were identified and fully utilised. The Cabinet Member highlighted the Surrey Information Point as a resource for practitioners and encouraged Members of the Committee to make use of it and share their own local knowledge.
4. Officers commented that the principle behind Family, Friends and Community Support was around re-framing the assessment process and improving engagement with the Voluntary, Faith and Community Sector (VCFS). The Committee queried how the Directorate would ensure a consistency of quality in the local voluntary offer, and what measures were in place if voluntary partners failed. Officers commented that the Directorate was supporting VCFS partners through safeguarding training and similar efforts. There would also be a setting of general standards through service level agreements and the grant-awarding process that would ensure that the quality of local offers met with the appropriate quality standards. It was also recognised by officers that VCFS organisations could be considered vulnerable to market failure, but that safeguards were in place to ensure continuity of service in such instances.
5. Members queried what efforts had been made to identify whether there were potential capacity issues within the VCFS, and how the Directorate would ensure an equality of service. Officers explained that the Directorate would work with all partners to ensure that the needs of the individual were being met through an asset-based approach.

6. The Committee had a discussion about the impact of the Care Bill. It was highlighted that this would increase statutory responsibilities to provide advice and guidance, alter eligibility criteria for support, and most likely increase service demand. The Committee was informed that the Surrey model for assessing the financial impact of the Care Bill was now being used for a national survey.
7. The Committee asked what role the Public Health agenda and Health & Wellbeing Board played in supporting a Family, Friends & Community Support. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care recognised that there was still work to be done both locally and nationally to improve integration around health and social care functions, and that the Health & Wellbeing Board would be a key factor in improving this. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that work was currently being done to identify how Integration Transformation Fund monies could be utilised to ensure the best outcomes for Surrey residents.
8. The Chairman summarised the Committee's discussions, commenting that there seemed to be a lack of clarity as to whether the Family, Friends & Community Support approach was relying on untapped capacity within the community, or whether it required investment to build further capacity. It was also highlighted that the Committee recognised the value of the approach, and that it reflected the changing service requirements as result of the Care Bill. The Committee also commented that it would be asking officers to identify where these reductions in expenditure were being made, both within Surrey and if there were examples elsewhere nationally.

Recommendations:

- That the Committee receive an update report regarding the implementation of Family, Friends & Community Support.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee will receive a further report on the implementation of Family, Friends & Community Support in 6 months time.

92/13 DIGITAL UPDATE REPORT - MAXIMISING THE BENEFIT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY [Item 8]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Mark Irons, Head of Customer Services
Paul Brocklehurst, Head of Information Management and Technology
Julie Fisher, Strategic Director for Business Services

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee discussed the role of the Chief Digital Officer and were informed that, once appointed, the Officer would be putting a Digital Strategy in place that would reflect the work already undertaken by the Council. Officers commented that the infrastructure was in place to support the Council's digital approach. However, it was highlighted that many of these digital processes did not link in to one another. The Committee was informed that a Customer Relationship Management tool was being considered as a potential solution to these process issues. The Committee requested details of the salary range of the Chief Digital Officer.
2. The Committee commented that residents would lose faith in digital services if they found their experience unsatisfactory. Several Members highlighted that residents had encountered particular difficulties when reporting highways issues. Officers outlined that the highways reporting system was held by a supplier who was in the process of reviewing their IT provision, following a merger. This had led to difficulties in ensuring the Council's services integrated with the data in question.
3. The Committee discussed the role of the community in designing digital services. Officers confirmed that they believed this was vital, and that conversations would be around what services residents would like to see online. It was stated that the Chief Digital Officer would have a key role to play in the community engagement aspect of designing digital services. Officers informed the Committee that the customer was the central consideration in any transaction design, and that any new digital processes developed would need to be user-friendly. It was highlighted that the Council was working with FutureGov to develop a number of applications for future use.
4. The Committee raised concerns about digital exclusion. It was highlighted that a number of the processes listed in the report were linked to groups that were at risk of being digitally excluded. Officers commented that the Council also offered paper-based options, as well as support for those who did not wish to use the digital route. It was highlighted that the contact centre would remain an integral part of customer services. The Committee was also informed that IMT had worked to ensure that free wi-fi was available in every Surrey library, as well as a number of initiatives with Adult Social Care to identify the best way of supporting vulnerable residents.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

Details of the advertised post for Chief Digital Officer to be supplied to the Committee.

Committee Next Steps:

The Committee to receive a report six months after the appointment of the Council's Chief Digital Officer.

93/13 IMPROVING STAFF MORALE & WELLBEING [Item 9]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Paul Brocklehurst, Head of Information Management and Technology
Julie Fisher, Strategic Director for Business Services

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman commented that the exercise of talking with staff in informal group sessions had been interesting, and asked the Committee how they would want to proceed with scrutiny in this area. Members commented that they would like to consider repeating the exercise once or twice a year in different areas of the Council. It was highlighted that the Committee had valued the HR training in appreciative inquiry, and that the experience had been very positive. The Committee indicated that they would want to consider offices around Surrey as possible places to hold these informal workshops in the future.
2. Members raised concerns that some staff had reported delays in the provision of IT equipment. Officers explained that this had been a result of a significant rise in the number of users requiring laptops. It was explained that the manufacturer's delivery cycles caused delay on occasion, and that there had been a number of issues with the supplier failing to deliver equipment of the correct specification. It was stated that these backlogs were in the process of being addressed.
3. Members commented that it was encouraging that staff had recognition of the challenges facing the Council, but still maintained a positive attitude. The Committee was informed that there had been some concerns about how periods of long-term sickness were covered, as often this increased work-load for other members of staff.
4. The Chairman summarised that the Committee would continue to repeat the exercise of holding informal group discussions with staff over the year, in order to gather a more comprehensive picture. The report produced from the first session would be sent to the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet with a request that they take note. However, it was stated that the Committee did not feel in a position to make a formal recommendation until more information had been gathered and considered. It was agreed that the staff who had attended the discussion would be provided with a copy of the report and the minutes from this item. The Committee thanked staff for their contributions.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

The Chairman to send the report to the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team, asking that they note its contents.

Action by: Chairman/Democratic Services

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Democratic Services to explore future opportunities to run similar informal group discussions with staff.

Action by: Democratic Services

The report and minutes to be shared with staff who attended the informal group discussions, as well as a note of thanks for their contribution.

Action by: Democratic Services

94/13 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 10]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was asked to note both its own Forward Work Programme, and those of the Council's Scrutiny Committees. One Member expressed frustration that the Children & Education Select Committee's workshop on School Place Planning, held on 25 November 2013, had been poorly attended.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided: None.

Committee next steps: The Committee will continue to review its Forward Work Programme and Recommendations Tracker at every meeting. It will review the Forward Work Programmes of the Council's Scrutiny Committees on a six-monthly basis.

95/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]

The Committee noted the next meeting of the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be held at 10.30am on 30 January 2014.

Meeting ended at: 1.00 pm

Chairman