

MINUTES of the meeting of the **COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at 10.00am on Thursday 18 October 2012 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames.

These Minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 14 November 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
- * 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)

* = present
A = apologies

PART 1

IN PUBLIC

116/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Steve Renshaw

117/12 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 12 SEPTEMBER 2012 [Item 2]

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

118/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interests.

119/12 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

120/12 RESPONSES BY THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

No referrals were made to Cabinet at the last meeting so there were no responses.

121/12 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [Item 6]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. In response to the update provided by Ben Unsworth in relation to COSC 107, further clarification had been sought with regards to the reasoning behind removing existing questions as opposed to extending the questionnaire. The following response was received: 'There is an ideal length for a telephone survey, aiming for a maximum of 15-20 minutes asking someone questions. If you go any longer than this you risk people stopping the call or getting bored and giving unreliable answers. At the moment our survey takes around 20 minutes for someone to complete, so if we want to ask different questions we need to remove something else so that the survey does not take any longer to complete.' The suggestion was made that consideration should be given to substituting questions.
2. Members raised concerns in reference to COSC 105 and the number of held vacancies within Local Highways Services. These vacancies were viewed as having a significant impact and causing delays on work being undertaken. There was discussion around the lack of consistency being encountered on a local level due to positions being left vacant.
3. Members praised Local Highways Services staff and a number of recent appointments. However, there were concerns voiced about the difficulty encountered as a result of business support roles being left vacant, and that this was creating a back log of work that impacted on engineers' ability to carry out their duties.
4. A question was raised in reference to COSC 94 and when the Scrutiny Improvement Plan would be shared with the Committee. It was noted that the plan was an internal document, currently under development, and would be shared at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendations:

- That the Chairman write to the Strategic Director for Environment and Infrastructure, with a copy to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, to express concern about the impact of holding business support vacancies on the work of Highways engineers. In addition, that the Chairman reiterates the request for a Rapid Improvement Event to review the process for local highways schemes.

Action by: Mel Few/Bryan Searle

Actions/further information to be provided:

- None.

Committee Next Steps:

- None.

122/12 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 7]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Members noted the Task and Working Group Tracker which was a new standard document provided for the Committee. This would be reviewed alongside the Forward Work Programme at every Committee Meeting.
2. A scoping document for a Members' Group monitoring the Adults Integrated System (AIS) Business Process Review (Adult Social Care Select Committee) would be brought to the November 2012 meeting.

Recommendations:

- None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- None.

Committee Next Steps:

- The Committee will review its work programme at its meeting on 14 November 2012

123/12 TASK GROUP SCOPING REPORT – SUPPORTING FAMILIES [Item 8]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Task Group Scoping Report for the Supporting Task Group was shared with Committee Members. The Task Group had been set up in response to the Government's Troubled Families Programme and would help shape how

this work was undertaken in Surrey. It was in the initial stages of its work and hoped to complete its recommendations in the early part of 2013.

2. The Committee discussed the Scoping Report. The necessity to speak to front-line staff was identified as vital to ensuring that the Task Group took an appropriate overview of the current pressures being placed on services.
3. A number of witnesses had been identified for the second phase of witness sessions. The Task Group would be holding round table meetings with a number of practitioners from a wide range of services. The intention of these was to identify key practices and how agencies would work together to develop the Family Support Programme.
4. Members raised the issue that many families matched two of the criteria defined by the Troubled Families Programme but not the full three. It was the view that this meant that there was a potential for certain families to be overlooked by services. The Task Group would be looking at how the criteria could be extended to ensure that those who need support are being appropriately identified.
5. There was some discussion around the change in wording from Troubled Families Programme to Family Support Programme. The view was expressed that this could prove a barrier towards directly addressing the problems identified and fail to take a view of the impact troubled families may have on the local community. The report indicated that the change of name was driven by feedback from staff and partners and this was supported by the Committee.
6. Members praised the work being undertaken by the pilot scheme in Waverley and commented that it was an important initiative aimed at addressing a significant pressure on the Local Authority's budget.
7. Given the necessity of this work to be completed within a short time frame Members would ensure substitutes were able to attend meetings where possible.
8. The Committee endorsed the scoping document for the Supporting Families task group.

Recommendations:

- None

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

- None

Committee Next Steps:

- The Committee will review the progress of the Task Group as part of its monthly monitoring process.

124/12 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT [Item 9]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Kevin Kilburn, Deputy Chief Finance Officer

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee discussed the timing of the Budget Monitoring Report. This was seen after it had been presented to Cabinet and there was a discussion around the effectiveness of the Committee's scrutiny role given these circumstances.
2. Kevin Kilburn, Financial Reporting Manager, outlined the process of producing the Budget Monitoring Report and the tight deadlines involved in providing the report for Cabinet. There was further discussion as to whether the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings could be moved in order to allow scrutiny to be undertaken in advance of Cabinet. The view was expressed that the report being shared with Committee in advance of Cabinet would enable them to recommend key focuses for the Cabinet meeting.
3. The principal barriers to producing the report sooner were the need for the figures to reflect the most current data and the time required to produce accurate forecasting information.
4. The Chairman reported back on the recent Finance Sub-Group meeting. The principal focus of this meeting had been the Adult Services and Local Highways budgets. Adult Services had been asked to clarify where the key areas of overspend were and the principal reasons for this. At the current rate of expenditure the Adult Services budget was expected to be in deficit by £2.7 million. This is after it had absorbed its full contingency brought forward from the previous year.
5. The discussion with Local Highways Services had been primarily focussed on the need to standardise reports to Local Committees in order to ensure a consistency in the information they receive.
6. There was a discussion around the forecasting process with respect to budgets, given that certain categories seemed to consistently report a discrepancy between forecast spending and actual spending. The Financial Reporting Manager outlined the training offered to budget holders and how this supported them in producing forecasting figures. It was expressed that small changes in volume often had a notable impact on the difference between forecast and actual figures.

Recommendations:

- That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman have further discussions with the Leader and Finance officers about the timing of Council Overview

& Scrutiny Committee and Finance Sub-Group meetings in order to ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the budget in the future.

Action by: Bryan Searle/ Kevin Kilburn

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

- None

Committee Next Steps:

- None

125/12 COMPLETED AUDIT REPORTS [Item 10]

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Sue Lewry-Jones – Chief Internal Auditor

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was given a summary of the Internal Audit Reports by the Chief Internal Auditor. Reports highlighted for discussion included 16-19 Education, Data Quality – Looked After Children (LAC) Health and Dental checks, and Residential Care Homes – Managing Residents' Monies.
2. 16-19 Education had been identified by the Audit Report as being 'Effective'. Data Quality – LAC Health and Dental checks, and Residential Care Homes – Managing Residents' Monies had both been identified as needing major improvement.
3. There was discussion around the data quality of LAC Health and Dental checks. The current target profile did not reflect performance and the plotting of this target was presenting some difficulty. It had also been highlighted that supporting paperwork was not being retained in an appropriate manner. The recommendations from the audit were aimed at improving this process.
4. In reference to the audit on Residential Care Homes – Managing Residents' Monies, the Committee was asked to note that the report recognised that staff were acting with the best intentions for residents. However, the report also drew attention to concerns about the lack of procedural clarity with regards to the management of resident's finances. Guidance on financial procedure was being prepared in order to protect both staff and residents. The Chief Internal Auditor would look into what guidance would be provided about the importance of independent checks.
5. There was a discussion around the audit process and how recommendations were followed up. The Chief Internal Auditor indicated that the full audit reports included management action plans, with both individual responsible officers and an allocated overall owner of the action plan identified.

Recommendations:

- That the Children and Families Select Committee scrutinises the implementation of the audit recommendations in relation to dental checks for Looked After Children.

Action by: Cheryl Hardman

- That the Adult Social Care Select Committee scrutinises the implementation of the audit recommendations in relation to the management of residents' monies in residential care homes.

Action by: Leah O'Donovan

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

None

Committee Next Steps:

None

126/12 ONE TEAM REVIEW – COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS [Item 11]**Declarations of Interest:****Witnesses:**

Louise Footner – Head of Communications
Sally Wilson – Project Manager

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

1. The Committee were presented with the initial findings of the One Team Review of Communications and Engagement. This review was currently at the discovery phase. The primary challenge was to ensure that the Council had the best and most consistent communications. Current expenditure within the Communications team was £1.8 million, with £1.1 million allocated to staffing. Communications expenditure outside the central Communications team had proven more difficult to establish, however work was being done to clarify how this was measured.
2. The Committee discussed how the Localism agenda could be reflected in the Review. It was felt that the current report did not adequately reflect support for local communications, instead putting forward a case for centralised communication. It was noted that the discovery phase of the review was reporting back from benchmarking feedback and not looking to make any specific recommendations at this stage.
3. A Members' Seminar was scheduled for 12 November 2012. This would present an opportunity for Members to discuss the Review and how it could reflect their concerns and priorities moving forward.

4. Members praised the strength of the methodology behind the report. However, there was some discussion as to the report's identification of local residents' needs in terms of communication. It was felt that more could be done to identify what these needs were.
5. The Committee had a discussion around the interchange between the communications on a local and central level, and how this interchange could be managed effectively to ensure a consistent message.
6. There was further discussion as to the role of the County Council website, and how this could be used to manage communications with residents. Amongst the ideas suggested was the use of SMS to keep residents informed of local issues. It was raised that residents would wish to see the data related to a specific postcode.

Recommendations:

- That the aim of the review should be to achieve a Communications Service which is aligned to the Corporate Strategy, with clearly defined goals and processes, and the One Team Review should be conducted with this outcome in mind.

Action by: Louise Footner/Sally Wilson

- That a further progress report is presented to the Committee at its meeting on 13 February 2013

Action by: Louise Footner/Sally Wilson

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

None

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

**127/12 ONE COUNTY, ONE TEAM PEOPLE STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT
[Item 12]**

Declarations of Interest:

None

Witnesses:

Matthew Baker – Deputy Head of HR & Organisational Development
Pamela Hart – Programme Manager, HR & Organisational Development

Key Points Raised During the Discussion:

1. The Committee received an update on the implementation of The Organisational People Strategy. This included outlining the progress already made and the identification of key priorities and targets. The Committee were also asked to note the Progress Report (Annexe 2) on the delivery of key promises outlined by the People Strategy.
2. There was a discussion around The People Strategy and its role in encouraging new employees to the County Council.
3. Members discussed the STARS training programme and the high demand for courses. The Committee were informed that the intention was to expand the training in order to meet demand.
4. It was highlighted that there had been an increase in the number of staff receiving appraisals and a clear improvement in the quality of these appraisals. The Committee expressed support for the promises outlined in Annexe 2, but queried why the targets for appraisals were set at 80% and not 100%. This target would increase incrementally to 100% by 2017.
5. It was raised that the wording of the promise "Everyone will have a fair and manageable workload" was potentially open to a wide interpretation and difficult to measure. The Committee expressed that this would require possible further clarification.

Recommendations:

- That further consideration be given to how the targets and promises to which they relate can be better matched, that the targets are seen as being sufficiently challenging and that the promises made are given necessary priority.

Action by: Matthew Baker

Actions/Further Information to be provided:

None

Select Committee Next Steps:

None

128/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 13]

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be at 10.00am on Wednesday 14 November 2012.

[Meeting ended: 12:50pm]

Chairman

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