

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 30 April 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 Wednesday, 4 June 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
- A 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 David Hodge, Leader of the Council [For items 6,7 & 8]

\* = present

**30/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Victoria Young. There were no substitutions.

**31/14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 2 APRIL 2014 [Item 2]**

These were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**32/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interest.

**33/14 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

**34/14 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** None.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Committee noted the Cabinet response to the recommendations made concerning the impact of welfare reform. Members commented that the Adult Social Care Select Committee would be reviewing the progress of the getWIS£ Service on 26 June 2014. The view was expressed by some Members that there was a need to ensure getWIS£ and CAB worked together to support residents who needed advice and assistance.
2. The Committee thanked the Impacts of Welfare Reform Task Group for their work. The Chairman commented that there was a vacancy in the Task Group, and suggested a Member of the Adult Social Care Select Committee might wish to join, it was agreed that this would be raised at the next Committee meeting.

**Recommendations:**

None.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Committee Next Steps:**

The Impacts of Welfare Reform Task Group will continue in a monitoring role, and make a further report to the Committee at its meeting on 11 September 2014.

**35/14 INTERNAL AUDIT: REVIEW OF APPRAISALS 2013/14 [Item 6]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Pascal Barras, Compliance Auditor  
Sue Lewry-Jones, Chief Internal Auditor  
Carmel Millar, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development  
Neil Bradley, HR Group Manager

David Hodge, Leader of the Council

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Chairman commented that appraisals had been an historic area of concern for the Committee, and noted that Members were disappointed that the audit had identified significant concerns. Officers offered an apology, and outlined that the audit had been based on a manual counting exercise. The Committee was informed that the SAP Portal had been upgraded from March 2014 to enable managers to

electronically input whether an appraisal had been completed. The Committee was told that this information was then reported up through the management structure to ensure that there was appropriate oversight. Officers circulated information about a number of measures that were being undertaken to ensure the number of appraisals increased.

2. Members queried whether the updated system would lead to managers completing appraisals in a superficial manner, in order to show full completion. Officers clarified that a package of training and development supported the appraisal process in order to ensure they were of sufficient quality.
3. The Committee commented that there should be steps taken to ensure that a digital record was being made of the appraisal documents. Officers explained that the decision had been taken not to do so, as it was felt that it would require a significant IT resource. Members expressed the view that there should be further consideration about how a digital solution might support the appraisal process. It was highlighted that appraisal information needed to be retained to ensure continuity when managers changed.
4. Officers commented that one appraisal form for all staff might not be suitable, as different staff had different requirements. It was highlighted that the emphasis was on the quality of conversation around performance and support needs, rather than following a rigid process.
5. The Committee expressed concern about the lack of response to telephone messages left by the auditor during the course of the investigation. The Chief Internal Auditor welcomed the Committee's support and commented that efforts were made to ensure that investigations were undertaken directly with staff when there was sufficient resource to do so.
6. Members questioned whether the low number of appraisals undertaken in some Directorates had an impact on retaining staff. Officers expressed the view that quality of management had an influence on how staff viewed their employment, and that it was recognised that it was important to have in place measures to support good management. It was commented that the relevant individual Select Committees should follow-up the appraisal figures for those Directorates that reported low completion rates.
7. It was highlighted by officers that work was being undertaken to review the Council's Pay and Reward Strategy. The Committee commented that the proposed changes should be supported by the appraisal process, and stressed the importance of ensuring staff were involved in a development conversation with managers. It was also highlighted that there were a number of risks to the Council, both in terms of its reputation and in cases where certain matters could go to an employment tribunal.

**Recommendations:**

- a) That Cabinet note that the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee's significant concern about the present level of appraisal completion, as highlighted in the internal audit report, and that the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team work to ensure that managers are achieving 100% completion of appraisals for eligible staff by May 2015.

Action by: Cabinet/Corporate Leadership Team

- b) That the Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team reiterate to staff the importance of the work of the Internal Audit Team, and ensure that all requests for information are responded to in a timely fashion.

Action by: Chief Executive/Corporate Leadership Team

- c) That HR investigate options to move towards a digital appraisal process as a means of improving both the quality of appraisals and the completion rates.

Action by: Head of HR and Organisational Development

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Committee Next Steps:**

None.

**36/14 FLASH OUTTURN REPORT FOR 2013/14 AND PROPOSED CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS TO 2014/15 [Item 7]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Kevin Kilburn, Deputy Chief Finance Officer

David Hodge, Leader of the Council

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Committee was presented with a report from the Performance & Finance Sub-Group. A copy of this report is included as an attachment to these minutes. There were no further comments.

**Recommendations:**

That the Committee seeks assurance from the Cabinet Member for Assets & Regeneration Programmes and from Property Services that Commercial Services be given sufficient support to enable them to be able to provide free school meals in all infant schools by 1 September 2014.

Action by: Cabinet Member for Assets & Regeneration Programmes/  
Property Services

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Committee Next Steps:**

None.

**37/14 REVIEW OF CENTRAL AND DIRECTORATE COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTIONS [Item 8]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** Louise Footner, Head of Communications  
Susie Kemp, Assistant Chief Executive  
Kerry Middleton, Communications Manager, Children, Schools & Families

David Hodge, Leader of the Council

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. Officers informed the Committee that the emphasis was on creating a single forward plan and pooled budget for communications activity across the Council. It was commented that a systematic approach to evaluating the effectiveness of communications activity had been developed, and that it gave a clear view of communications spend across the Council. The Committee was told that there was continuing work to identify areas of best practice for grant funded and income generating activity.
2. The Committee queried why there had been an increase in communications staff across the different directorates. Officers commented that while the central Communications Team had reduced staff, this had created resource implications where activities were still being required. It was commented that the numbers had changed since publication and that updated figures would be circulated to the Committee.
3. It was highlighted that the changes outlined within the report would enable the Head of Communications to have a greater oversight and the ability to identify where resources were required for specific activities. The Committee was informed that the Environment & Infrastructure Directorate had developed a model of good practice where posts were funded within the Directorate but located with the central Communications team.
4. The Committee commented that it felt local Members could be utilised more effectively to help communicate information about the Council, as well as a number of local issues. It was also highlighted that libraries and printed material both had important roles in communicating key messages. Members commented that the "More than 50 Ways that Surrey adds Value" document had been praised by residents, and suggested that a condensed annual report could also

be produced in order to help with communicating information. Officers commented that they recognised the value local Members could add in this instance, and that they would explore how this could be supported within the level of resources available.

5. There was a discussion concerning the role of the Communications & Engagement Strategy, and how the function of media and public affairs worked in relation to the Council. Some Members expressed concern that this function was not suitably recognised within the report. Officers commented that reputational considerations were embedded across all communications activity.
6. The Committee discussed the role of consultation documents, and commented that elements of this process could be clearer and widened to include a greater number of those affected. Officers highlighted that work was being undertaken with Directorates to develop an improved approach to consultations, this included the use of the “Surrey Says” website.
7. The Committee had a general discussion about how public reports could be made easier to read. A number of ways this could be supported were highlighted, including the use of annexes for more detailed information such as Equalities Impact Assessments.
8. The Committee endorsed the approach and activity set out in the report to embed a common management, planning and budgetary framework for communications across the organisation, and expressed its appreciation for the effectiveness and quality of the service.

**Recommendation:**

- That the Head of Communications review the support and information provided to Members in their local role, both individually and through Local Committees, including the provision of a simplified version of the Annual Report (in printed form) for Members to share with constituents.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

The Head of Communications to circulate latest staffing figures to the Committee.

**Committee Next Steps:**

None.

**38/14 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME  
[Item 9]**

**Declarations of interest:** None.

**Witnesses:** None.

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

1. The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme and Recommendations Tracker, there were no further comments concerning these.
2. The Committee reviewed the Flooding Task Group scoping document. After a period of discussion, the Committee was informed that the scoping document did not reflect the issues highlighted at the first meeting of the Task Group. It was agreed that an updated scoping document would be circulated to the Committee for ratification

**Resolved:**

- That the scoping document for the Flooding Task Group be updated to reflect the issues identified at the Task Group's first meeting, and then circulated to the Committee for approval.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Committee Next Steps:**

None.

**39/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 10]**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held at 10.30am on 4 June 2014.

Meeting ended at: 1.05 pm

---

**Chairman**

This page is intentionally left blank



**Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
10.30am on Wednesday 30 April 2014**

At its meeting on Monday 28 April 2014 the Performance & Finance Sub-Group considered the flash out-turn report for 2013/14 and Proposed Carry-Forward Requests to 2014/15. Amongst other items, the Sub-Group also discussed issues relating to Commercial Services, including the training, financial management and governance arrangements.

**Item 7: Flash Out-Turn Report for 2013/14 and Proposed Carry-Forward Requests to 2014/15**

The Sub-Group reviewed the report and noted that the provisional capital and revenue out-turn was broadly in line with the position projected in the budget monitoring report considered by the Committee at its last meeting. The Sub-Group did not make any specific recommendations, but requested the following additional information (with responses in italics):

- (a) The size of the overall budget for the Chairman of the Council and how it's spent.

*The Chairman's budget is £74,600 and is provided to support his activities. It is used for a variety of activities with both an internal and external focus, for example hosting Long service awards and civic services like remembrance and commonwealth days, and supporting the voluntary sector.*

*The chairman has a two year plan of activities to support the voluntary sector and wider community, for which the carry forward of £20,000 is requested.*

- (b) The identified schemes to be funded from the New Homes Bonus carry forward of £720,000.

*The New Homes Bonus funding carry forward of £720,000 has been identified for supporting economic development in the county.*

*£290,000 is being used to support the Sheerwater Link Road and the remainder on projects to support economic development such as;*

- *Creating capacity for the development of major schemes funded by DfT, Local Transport Bodies, LEPs etc*
- *Development of Transport strategies for 11 Surrey towns – to include strategy and implementation plans*
- *Supporting delivery of smart economic growth/ Surrey Connects action plan*

*The allocation of funding to the South East is still being determined.*

(c) A breakdown of the £160,000 on Member Allocations to be carried forward.

*This information is attached.*

### **Commercial Services**

Commercial Services is a trading department based within the Children, Schools & Families Directorate which provides catering services to schools and Council buildings. The Sub-Group noted that the biggest challenge facing the Service was currently the need to meet the requirement to provide Universal Infant Free Meals from September 2014, as many schools either did not have kitchens on site or had premises which needed extensive refurbishment to bring them up to the required legal standard. The importance of working closely with Property Services in order to achieve the September deadline was noted, and the Sub-Group made the following **recommendation**:

That the Committee seeks assurance from the Cabinet Member for Assets & Regeneration Programmes and from Property Services that Commercial Services be given sufficient support to enable them to be able to provide free school meals in all infant schools by 1 September 2014.

**Nick Skellett**  
**Chairman of the Performance & Finance Sub-Group**