

FINANCE, RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 17th June, 2014

Present:- Councillor Paul Waring – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Hambleton, Holland, Huckfield, Jones, Stringer, Sweeney, Taylor.J and Wallace

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Fear, Mrs Peers and Mrs Shenton (Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Finance Resources)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul Waring and Councillor David Stringer declared a personal interest in item 5; Parish/Town Councils – Review of Concurrent Funding

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2014

Agreed as a correct record

4. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO END OF QUARTER 4 (MARCH) 2014

The Executive Director Resources and Support Services gave an update on the Financial and Performance Review, Fourth Quarter, 2013/14 which showed a surplus of £7,000. It had been reported that the external Auditors were pleased with the progress achieved due to this being the first year the new financial system went live. A statement of accounts would be produced by the 30 June 2014 followed by a report presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 21 July, with the final report from the external Auditors going to the Audit and Risk Committee on the 29 September 2014

A Member asked for future reports to include comments about how inflationary pressures were affecting the Council's budget. The Executive Director Resources and Support Services agreed to this

The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships advised that the report on Quarter 4 2013/14 was based on the existing Council Plan and had been changed to focus more on outcomes rather than using the previous approach to performance management, which was indicator/target based

A review of the report led to the following suggestions being made by Members:-

- 1.1.1 - **“Percentage of food premises that have a zero or one national food hygiene rating”** - clarification was sought on the wording of ‘Target Qtr 4 2013-14 - Monitoring Indicator’. A Member reported it was good to see the percentage was low of food premises that had a zero or one national food hygiene rating but asked what action had been taken when the premises are

FINANCE, RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

zero or one rated. Assurance was requested that this would be acted upon immediately

It was also asked that a separate report was produced on the food hygiene inspection process rather than adding to the existing report. The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Business Partnerships agreed to forward a copy of any such report to all Members

- 1.1.2 - **“The percentage of food establishments which are broadly compliant with good hygiene law”** – it was requested that the wording ‘broadly compliant’ be changed to simply ‘compliant’
- 1.1.5 - **“Number of people killed or seriously injured on the borough’s roads”** – a Member asked if it was known on which roads incidents occurred and was there a pattern over the past five years. The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships agreed to look into the situation but reported that Newcastle Borough Council was not provided with specific details. He also said that there is a need for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Partnership Team to work with relevant authorities
- 1.3.2 - **“Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting”** – the decrease in the percentage of household waste was due to seasonal changes, i.e. garden waste collections
- 1.3.5 - **“The level of air quality”** – it was asked that the Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships produce further background information on the problem areas where action was taken rather than just monitoring
- 1.5.2 - **“Percentage of investment portfolio (NBC owned) vacant”** – a Member asked when there was a vacancy how long do the units stay vacant and how long had they been vacant? The Chair confirmed that the Town Centre Partnership had been heavily involved to ensure the units were occupied. A Member informed the Committee that it would be a good idea if there was an empty unit, for the occupied unit next door to display their goods in the vacant premises. It was agreed that this would be raised with the Town Centre Partnership
- 2.1.4 - **“The level of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)”** – this information will be circulated at a future date
- 2.3.6 **“Number of homelessness cases where positive action was successful preventing homelessness”** – it was felt that, even though the positive action was successful, it did not give a true account of what was occurring as there was no information on the overall size of the problem. The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships agreed to provide an estimate of total homelessness figures
- 2.4.4 **“Average stall occupancy rate for markets”** – the Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships informed the Committee he was not aware of the stalls being removed
- 3.1.2 - **“Level of satisfaction with Council run parks and open spaces”** – Members were informed that collections were carried out throughout the year and reported annually

3.2.2 - **“Number of people visiting the museum”** – table to be amended to take account of a typo error – ‘Result Qtr 4’ should read ‘Result Qtr 3’

3.3.2 **“Number of referrals from GPs to organised sporting activity”** – a Member commented that the report quoted ‘Target for Qtr 4 - to be agreed’ then went on to quote it had been agreed and asked who sets this target? The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships advised it was between Newcastle Borough Council and the County Council Public Health team (who commissions this area of work)

A Member asked if the figures included cardiac referrals or was it just GP referrals to which the Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships replied it was just GP referrals (although this would be checked)

4.2.4 - **“Items raised by Members on the Scrutiny work programme”** – The Chair confirmed all feedback from Scrutiny Committees were presented to Cabinet

4.3.2 - **“Average number of days per employee lost to sickness”** – the cumulative quarter 4 result is an improvement compared with quarter 3 but remains above target

4.4.7 - **“Increase in the number of residents, community and voluntary groups engaged with LAPs (narrative)”** – the Chair asked about the timeframe for these figures. The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships advised this was not listed as a Performance Indicator in the Council Plan and there was not a separate report

RECOMMENDED: That the following action is taken:-

- The Executive Director Resources and Support Services include comments about the effects of inflationary pressures on the Council’s budget in future monitoring reports
- The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships to ask for a report on Performance Indicator 1.1.5 - to be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on Monday 1 September 2014
- The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships to ask for a report on Performance Indicator 1.3.5 in relation to problem areas where action is being taken
- Performance Indicator 1.5.2 to be raised with the Town Centre Partnership

5. PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS - REVIEW OF CONCURRENT FUNDING

The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships presented the Committee with proposals for a review of the existing funding arrangements to cover Parish/Town Council concurrent functions. This was previously considered by

FINANCE, RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Cabinet in February 2014 where it was resolved that the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (now known as Finance, Resources and Partnership Scrutiny) undertake such a review in order to report back to Cabinet in time for implementation of a revised scheme for 2015/2016.

The Cabinet suggested this review was due to the system not working fairly across the Borough and expenditure not being monitored correctly in all cases

The outcome of the review would be to:-

- Understand the up to date picture with regard to concurrent funding of Town/Parish Council
- To develop proposals around the future arrangements for concurrent funding of Town/Parish Councils in the Borough

RECOMMENDED:-

- A working group to be set up comprising of Councillors D Stringer (Chair), S Sweeney, N Jones, D Huckfield and J Taylor
- The Working Group to be provided with the NALC 2011 report
- Recommendations to be reported to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 4 December 2014

6. **COUNCIL PLAN 2014-16**

The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships reported this is a work in progress with the intention of fully developing the Plan with the involvement of Members and officers in preparation for the next financial year

A draft version of the Plan would be presented to Cabinet on 23 July 2014 for approval

An approved (by Cabinet) version will be presented to the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on the 1 September 2014

Cabinet response to Scrutiny comments on the 10 September 2014

Final version to Council on the 17 September 2014

Implementation from 1 October 2014

RECOMMENDED:- The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships to forward a copy of the draft Council Plan 2014-16 to all Members

7. **CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP - FUTURE WORK PLANS**

The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships asked the Finance, Resources and Partnership Scrutiny Committee to nominate Members to sit on the Constitutional Review Working Group (CRWG). The Working Group reports to this Scrutiny Committee

In terms of future work areas there were a number of headings included in the Council's Constitution which could be the subject of a review by the Working Group These included:-

- Operation of Full Council
- The Executive Council
- Locality Working
- Scrutiny Committees

Nominations were requested and the following Members were nominated:-

Councillors Mark Holland, Robert Wallace, Eileen Braithwaite (the Liberal Democrat group will be approached for a nomination)

The Chair is to be elected at the first meeting of the Working Group

RECOMMENDED:- That the Working Group be set up and asked to report back to a future Finance, Resources and Partnership Scrutiny Committee meetings

8. **WORK PLAN**

It was agreed the following items be added to the work plan:-

Monday 1 September 2014

- Keele Golf Course
- Council Plan

Thursday 4 December 2014

- The Working Group to report their review of existing arrangements for concurrent funding of Parish/Town Councils

9. **URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent business was raised

10. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 1 September 2014, 7.00pm in Committee Room 1

COUNCILLOR PAUL WARING
Chair