

FINANCE, RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4th November, 2015

Present:-	Councillor Mike Stubbs – in the Chair
Councillors	Hambleton, Loades, Pickup, Sweeney, Waring, Wilkes and Williams Portfolio Holder Finance, IT and Customer
Officers	Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) Business Improvement Officer (Performance and Procurement) Housing Strategy Officer (for first part of item 5 only) Scrutiny Officer

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Fear, Wallace and Huckfield.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2015 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

It was asked why the Co-operative Council item was not on the agenda.

Resolved:-

That the Chair formally writes to the Chief Executive, seeking clarification as to the reason the report was not submitted.

4. **REVIEW OF CHANGES TO THE COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair asked Members for feedback to the Recommendations proposed in the report in relation to the review undertaken by a Local Government Association peer review team of the democratic decision-making structures of the Council.

Recommendation:-

- (a) *That the Council approves the following changes to the Committee arrangements*

- i. Merge the Audit and Risk and Standards Committees*
- ii. Disband the Staffing Committee*
- iii. Disband the Joint Parking Committee*
- iv. Disband the Member Development Committee*
- v. To create the Constitution Working Group as a Committee of the Council and to title it the Constitution Review Committee*

Resolved:-

Committee supported i, ii, iii and iv but did not agree on v. One Member did not support ii.

A vote took place in support of i, ii, iii and iv:-

In favour – 5

Against - 1

- (b) *That the number of places on the Public Protection Committee be set at 15.*

Resolved:-

Committee supported the recommendation.

- (c) *That the Constitution Working Party be asked to make recommendations for changes to the Council's Constitution to give effect to recommendation (a) above and make a report to the next meeting of the Council.*

Resolved:-

Committee supported the recommendation.

- (d) *That the Council approves the Audit and Risk Committee and Standards Committees to operate as a combined Committee until the appropriate changes are made to the Council's Constitution as required consequentially by recommendation (a) above to request the Group Leaders to nominate the same named individuals to both the Audit and Risk Committee and the Standards Committee with immediate effect.*

Resolved:-

Committee supported the recommendation.

- (e) *That the Group Leaders be requested to nominate the same named individuals to both the Licensing Committee and the Public Protection Committee with immediate effect.*

A Member objected to this recommendation. It was explained that when the proposal was submitted for consultation it was felt unlawful to merge both Committees, but to bring them closer together.

A motion was passed and seconded for this recommendation not to be accepted. However, this motion was withdrawn as Members felt more information on the legalities and scoping of the Committees was required, should it take place, including the Licensing Sub Committee

Resolved:-

That a report be presented to Scrutiny.

- (f) *That the Constitution Working Party be asked to undertake a review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and to bring forward recommendations consistent with the objectives and recommendations of the Peer Review to improve the efficiency of the Council's democratic arrangements.*

Members felt the current operation of Scrutiny was working well.

Resolved:-

All Members agreed that the current process of Scrutiny to remain unchanged.

- (g) *That the Council approves the transfer of the powers and duties of the Staffing Committee to the Head of Paid Service acting with the agreement of the Portfolio Holder for human resources with immediate effect and until the appropriate changes are made to the Council's Constitution as required consequentially by recommendation (a) above.*

A vote took place:-

In favour – 5

Against – 3

Abstain – 1

Resolved:-

Committee supported the recommendation.

- (h) *That the Constitution Working Party be asked to consider recommending to the Council conventions which could be adopted to improve the efficiency of formal meetings which are consistent with promoting effective debate, efficient use of Member and officer time, and facilitate the involvement of the public, consultees and others in the work of the Council's formal meetings.*

Resolved:-

That this recommendation be deferred as more Officer clarification is sought.

5. QUARTER TWO FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Before this report was introduced an update from resolution (b) *“that a comparative report is produced showing the number of homelessness cases where positive action was successful preventing homelessness, to see if the system was working”*, agreed at the last meeting, was provided by the Housing Strategy Officer.

A table showing a breakdown of homelessness prevention activity figures was circulated.

A Member commented that it was good to see positive action in preventing families becoming homeless but asked how many families were unsuccessful?

The Member was advised the only possible way of obtaining the information was to see how many families were placed in temporary accommodation and from those how many the service tried to engage with but became homeless and not recorded.

The banding system assess' the housing need; the most vulnerable cases, to enable them to become eligible for housing.

It was asked if there was guidance available, as homelessness was becoming a bigger issue.

A draft Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy would be presented to the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee on the 2nd December 2015.

Resolved:-

- (a) That the Housing Strategy Officer supplies Committee with a summary of the Homelessness Strategy review.
- (b) That Committee is provided with information on discretionary housing payment.

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) presented the financial position for quarter two 2015/2016.

Progress had been made with the implementation of staff related savings to deliver the 2015/2016 target of £50k. Details of the Collective Agreement, recently signed, would be submitted to the next Staffing Committee.

The Capital Programme was on target.

With regard to the Council's frozen investment in Heritable Bank, a further payment had been received in August bringing the total amount repaid to 98% of the total that was frozen.

Quarter Two Performance Review 2015/2016 was presented by the Business Improvement Officer (Performance and Procurement).

85% of the indicators were on target, four were off target:-

- 2.6 – Percentage of Minor Planning Applications determined within time. The result had improved since Quarter One
- 3.6 – Number of people accessing leisure and recreational facilities. There had been a positive growth in attendances compared to the same period in 2014-15;
- 4.3 – Average number of days per employee lost to sickness. Last quarter there were 23 reported cases. These had now reduced to six cases and were of a serious nature, and were being actively managed by HR and the relevant Head of Service;
- 4.4 – Percentage of requests resolved at first point of contact. This was 1% off target. A high percentage of requests were resolved given the number of staff corporately available to deal with service requests during the peak summer holidays.

Within Appendix 'B' previously the figures for indicators 3.4, Number of referrals from GPs to organised sporting activity and 3.5, Percentage of people referred for exercise by GPs whose health improves had not been available. These were presented, as requested by Scrutiny, within the report. The information would be looked at further to see if there was a better way of measuring activity locally and any changes to the indicators used presented to Scrutiny.

The figure from indicator 3.5, 75%, was based on the number of people who had been referred by their GP to a programme and had completed a twelve week programme, which improved their fitness levels.

It was raised that the figure for the comparative quarter in 2014-15 for 3.6, Number of people accessing leisure and recreational facilities, was not cumulative and needs to be consistent.

6. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) presented the report to Committee. The report was due to be considered by Cabinet on the 11th November 2015.

The format of the MTFS document was the same format as that used in the previous two years. It sets out the terms and how the Council delivers those gaps within the Budget Strategy. The main changes had been in respect of updating the figures and assumptions.

No further details on timescales had yet been announced. It was expected that further information would be available on the Spending Round announcement as part of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on the 25th November 2015.

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) advised that the Council receives New Homes Bonus funding, which was based on new build homes, conversion and long-term empty homes which had been brought back into use.

A member requested how much the Council currently collects in business rates. The Executive Director stated that the Council collected approximately £32m in business rates in 2014/15.

Local authorities that concentrated on economic growth and housing were the ones likely to gain from both business rates retention and New Homes Bonus funding.

A Member asked that when the new recycling service commences was there an asset plan in place?

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) advised that if not enough capital receipts were received the Council would enter into temporary borrowing. The cost incurred through temporary borrowing would be minimal interest.

An update would be provided on the Asset Management Strategy at the next meeting of Scrutiny.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT and Customer informed Committee that, at the present time, there was vast amount of changes within local government. Those authorities who were willing to deliver and expand in terms of building and housing would survive. There was also a need for this authority to operate on a more commercial basis.

Resolved:-

Committee were in agreement with the format, assumptions and budget strategy contained within the MTFs. In respect of the budget timetable this was agreed and members endorsed the proposal to cancel the Scrutiny Budget Café scheduled for the 13th January 2016.

7. **WORK PLAN**

Resolved:-

That the following items are included on the work plan:-

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Joint meeting with Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Capital Strategy 2016/17 and Asset Management Strategy

8. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions submitted.

9. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

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

Wednesday 3rd December 2015, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1.

COUNCILLOR MIKE STUBBS
Chair