

MINUTES

FINANCE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

04 SEPTEMBER 2012

Present:

Adeleke	Organ
Ayling	Sutton (Chairman)
Clark	Taylor
Collins	Townsend (Vice – Chairman)
Doole	White
Marshall	W Wyatt – Lowe

Also in attendance: Councillor Harden – Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services and Councillor Tiley – Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources

Officers:

Mark Brookes	Group Manager – Legal Governance
Jim Doyle	Group Manager – Democratic Services
P Twine	Interim Project Manager – CSU Project
Steve Baker	Assistant Director – Legal, Democratic & Regulatory
James Deane	Group Manager – Financial services
Dave Gill	Group Manager – Partnerships & Citizens Insight
Linda Dargue	Insurance & Risk Manager
Matt Rawdon	Human Resources Team Leader
Heather Weller	Project Manager – Customer Services
Louise Dolphin	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting started at 7.30pm.

OS/171/12 MINUTES

Minutes of the meetings held on 03 July 2012 were confirmed by the members present and were then signed by the Chairman.

All Members agreed that all Part II documents are to be attached to future agendas.

OS/172/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Organ.

OS/173/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

OS/174/12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

OS/175 /12 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN

None

OS/176/12 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT – LEGAL GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Steve Baker introduced the Quarter 1 Performance Report. He informed the Committee that in July the Council had joined the Public Law Partnership (PLP). He said that the PLP was not a separate legal entity and therefore each partner authority retains its own autonomy. He highlighted the fact that the PLP would offer shared information which in return would improve the Council's buying power and offer the opportunity to generate income and / or make savings.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Taylor pointed out that there had been a typing error on the reports of the date of the meeting and asked if this could be rectified for future reference.

S Baker confirmed that all items for future reference would be proof read.

Councillor Wyatt – Lowe referred to Page 4, item 2 and asked for an update on how the preparations for the Police and Crime Commissioners elections were going.

J Doyle informed the Committee that reports are kept on any inspections that are carried out. He mentioned that all of the Presiding Officers were given questionnaires prior to the by-election for the Woodhall Farm ward and Hemel Hempstead Town Division to identify any risks involved. He said that all agents would be written to obtain comments from the candidates. Recent feedback suggested that the last election had been well organised and well run by Democratic Services and Electoral Services. All postal votes would be returned to the poll stations. Scanners, Pc's and printers would all be placed at the sports centre to assist with the count for the Police and Crime Commissioners election.

Councillor Wyatt – Lowe referred to the paperwork which is used for the elections. He mentioned that both postal and proxy forms are being used, however he wanted to know how we could ensure that the correct forms were being used and what checks were in place to correct this.

J Doyle said that we would not be able to interact with the way in which the forms were being used at the Police and Crime Commissioners election as it will be dealt with at Broxbourne. He went on to confirm that for the following election in 2014 that all these checks could take place. J Doyle pointed out that other organisations have their own forms. He said that all agents will send their information to us and in return, all bar-coded forms would be sent out to eliminate mistakes happening and help make the process run more smoothly.

Councillor Ayling referred to the Operational Risk report on Page 1 and asked what a procurement silo was.

S Baker apologised for the abbreviation of this term and explained that it referred to the need to avoid the Procurement Team working in isolation from the other Council services. It meant that there should be a 'joined up' approach towards procurement across the council so that the Council could increase its buying power rather than each service procuring on its own.

Councillor Adeleke referred to Page 4, point 4 and asked what penalties would incur if the Council had to pull out of the partnership.

S Baker confirmed that at present there were no penalties for withdrawing from the partnership. He said that the Council had agreed to sign up and along with the County Council and most of the other districts. The Council could at any time withdraw from the partnership without incurring a penalty. If in the future, the PLP were to consider setting up as a separate legal entity this would have to be referred back to Members for a decision.

Councillor Adeleke asked if there was any protection in place regarding sensitive data.

M Brookes confirmed that each authority has signed a memo to safeguard any sensitive information being used outside of the Partnership.

S Baker also confirmed that there was a password protected log - in procedure which would secure all information held on the shared website. He said that the point of the PLP website was to share information among the other member authorities, but with the use of password protection, this would eliminate any sensitive data being breached.

Councillor White said that he found it interesting to see the level of usage in the partnership. He mentioned that he did a review on the PLP 1 year ago and said that there were some risks involved in being linked to the PLP. However he said that it would be interesting to see what benefits would take place over the next 6 months.

Councillor Collins referred to the management board having a secretary, and asked what this would cost. He asked if Members could have confirmation of the total number of hours that are contributed to the partnership.

S Baker said that he would provide an update in his next report in January.

Actions:

The Chair thanked S Baker for his report and asked if Members could have a regular update provided in the meeting taking place in January 2013.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

OS/177/12 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT – PERFORMANCE, IMPROVEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION DICTORATE

D Gill outlined the quarter 1 performance report information on behalf of J Milsom who gave her apologies for not attending the meeting. He reported that the CSU apprentice role in administration had started this week along with significant improvements in the ICT improvement programme compared to 1 year ago.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Taylor pointed out that on Page 14, no 4; the Operational Risk Report was attached and not the Operational Risk Register.

D Gill apologised for the typing error and reassured him that this would be amended for future reports.

Councillor Doole expressed his concern regarding how old data is measured in comparison to new data being collected.

D Gill confirmed to the Committee that they keep records of old data. He said that the reason for change was that everyone measured differently. They are still collecting on earlier reports and will bring the information to the next meeting.

Councillor Adeleke referred to Page 13, 3.1 regarding CSU having a desk providing Housing Advice and asked if successful with the experiment, if this would be continued in the future.

D Gill confirmed that the point of the desks is for a Designated Officer to act as a referral point for customers. All complex questions would be redirected to the Benefits Advisors and confirmed that they had seen an increase on housing advice regarding homelessness. He mentioned that this pilot over the next few months would give them a better understanding as to how the set up would work and advice would be on hand and readily available for customers.

Councillor Doole referred to Page 1 of 4 of the Operational Risk Report. He asked the meaning of the title in STCO_R01.

D Gill said that a library had been developed for Members for service delivery. Some progress has been made in developing this including the 'Spotlight on Dacorum' ward profile information on the DBC website and the use of the 'Mosaic' geo-demographic tool that helps us to look at types of behaviour that would be associated with typical groups of people in areas across Dacorum. Ultimately though, our vision of a central local resource library is taking a long to develop.

Councillor Collins referred to Page 1 of 3 of the Quarterly Performance Report with regards to HRO1 and HRO2 and asked what budget was in place for members of staff.

M Rawdon said that he was unable to comment on Councillor Collins question and said that he would get back to him.

Actions:

- M Rawdon to provide Councillor Collins an update on budget information held for members of staff.

Outcome:

The report was noted

OS/178/12 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT 2012/2013

J Deane outlined the report and mentioned that the purpose of the report is to update the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Council's forecast outturn for 2012/2013 as at 30 June 2012. He said that the analysis throughout the report was based on a variance between forecast outturn and the budget approved by Full Council in February in 2012.

He referred to the HRA balance at the end of 2012/13 is forecast to be £8.732m, which is £6.359m higher than the anticipated closing balance when the budget was set by Council in February 2012.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Marshall arrived at 8.10pm.

Councillor White asked what the plans would be for the extra money in the pot.

J Deane said that they would see how the business plan would take effect and it would go to Cabinet later on in the year.

Councillor Tiley mentioned that Cabinets view was to be cautious in Year 1. He said that they would need to talk to tenants and Councillors to see what impact if any there would be.

Councillor White declared a Prejudicial Interest on this item and therefore left the meeting at 8.20pm.

The Vice – Chairman asked if there really was this amount of substantial money available.

J Deane confirmed that this was the case and as a result it proved to be a great saving.

Councillor Tiley pointed out that any decision made had to be cautiously made. Any decisions made would need to go to Full Council for approval.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/179/12 QUARTER 1 RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT 2012/13

L Dargue summarised the quarter 1 reports on the Strategic Risk Register and the Operational Risk Registers. She said that the door is always open for improvement and referred to the Strategic Risk Registers and Operational Risk Registers with regards to their positions at the end of Quarter 1.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Doole referred to page 37, M2 and asked if this table could be explained in more detail.

L Dargue informed the Committee that all Assistant Director's would now take their Operational Risk registers to the relevant Scrutiny Committee, this would give Members an increased awareness/ understanding of the operational risks within their own areas.

Councillor Doole asked if there was a way of knowing if anything has been added to both the Strategic and Operational Risk Reports or if it was possible to have the documents in a word document rather than a table format.

L Dargue said that she would look into whether she could change the body of the report and try and have it amended for the next Finance & Resources meeting.

Councillor Tiley requested that in the "Assurance Column", comments such as "No Change" or a "comment" could be added here for clarity.

L Dargue said that she was happy with this suggestion and would make the amendment.

Councillor Collins referred to the Strategic Risk Report on Page 35 section F2 and asked if there was any savings in this section.

L Dargue said that she would get back to the Committee on this as she was unaware of the answer at the time.

Actions:

- L Dargue to look into the body of the Strategic and Operational Risk Reports and add comments under the column "Assurance".
- L Dargue to review whether the tables in the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers can be made into a word document rather than table format.
- L Dargue to provide Committee with an update on savings with regards to F2 on the Strategic Risk Report.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/180/12 SHARED AND OUTSOURCED UPDATE

D Gill summarised the report and outlined the main objective "The Council is committed to a service delivery model where services are built around customer needs and not organisational structures. A model where customers have choice and convenience in the way that they interact with the Council, through a multi – channel delivery structure. This will help to ensure that all customers are dealt with fairly and to a consistent quality from any location.

By working through a transformation and improvement programme and engaging with partners, the Council aims to deliver and end to end service that adds value to the customer experience".

D Gill presented to the Scrutiny Committee with a summary of the process so far and an outline of the aspirations and developments expected for the service in the near

future. The presentation was on the Customer Services Centre & Gateway Contract. The Customer Service Centre & Gateway project has four elements which are; The Customer Service Centres at Tring, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead; and the telephone Contact Centre; the DBC website and a CRM system.

Councillor Taylor thanked D Gill for the presentation that he gave to the Scrutiny Committee. He added that it was a blessing to be able to have access to all this new technology and it is the way forward to building a better relationship with our customers. Councillor Taylor asked why our Council was not doing this and asked how many staff would be affected by all of the changes which were due to take place.

D Gill said that all research had been carried out via market research on what needed to be improved. Cabinet took the decision to see what services the Council could afford to offer customers to invest and get a better service and rapport. In total there would be 39 full time staff and 12 part time staff affected with the changes.

Councillor Taylor said that he was surprised at the numbers involved and thought that there would have been more staff affected.

D Gill confirmed that all staff will be transferred to the new provider and any effects that take place on the service will be reviewed.

P Twine confirmed that there are provisions in place within the tender documents (ITT) to ensure the performance of the CSU was maintain to a high standard. A Review of the sites revealed that at present in Tring and Berkhamsted it takes 4 seconds for a customer to be served yet in Hemel Hempstead it takes on average of 15-20 minutes. It is important to address long wait times in Hemel Hempstead and also look at whether efficiencies around the better deployment of officers that are not being fully utilised due to low customer demand in other sites.

Councillor Townsend asked how much money had been spent on the service at present.

D Gill confirmed he would be happy to provide detailed figures to the committee.

P Twine confirmed that the market test reports when received back from those suppliers who will tender are evaluated and a report will go to Cabinet. He mentioned that as part of the Cabinet report a business case would be presented demonstrating the costs of having an outsourced partner run the CSU services and undertake the innovation and improvements of the service for the future. The aim of the tender document (ITT) sent to the market has focused on encouraging providers to make savings and changes in the first 3 years of a 7 year contract.

Councillor Townsend asked how much it would cost the Council to produce the tenders ourselves instead of an outside organisation.

Councillor Harden said that all figures are available in the budget papers which will be available to view in the CSU centres. All of the budget savings will be included. P Twine said that bidders have a minimum of 35 days to respond to the Tender documents (ITT) under the EU Procurement directive. All tenders are evaluated on quality and price when they are received back in the Council.

Councillor Wyatt – Lowe commented on visiting the County Council's CSU centre and asked the officers if they were aware of their failures in meeting the contractual terms. He added that it should be clearly defined.

P Twine confirmed that he and the Assistant Director, J Milsom, had met with the County Council to undertake a lessons learnt exercise. This had prompted further work to be undertaken to ensure the legal Terms and Conditions that a provider would sign-up to are robust and this would delay the dispatch of the tender documents (ITT). The Council Legal and Procurement teams would need to review the contracts before they can be dispatched.

Councillor Wyatt – Lowe asked what the proportion of the costs would be as this was a big concern to him.

D Gill said that he would sum it up and get back to the Committee on this.

The Chair said that this was an issue for Councillor Harden to deal with and should discuss this and the issues at the next meeting of Cabinet.

Councillor Marshall referred to the Housing repairs and asked if it would be within working hours or out of hours.

D Gill confirmed that the services that they offer are in house at the moment. He said that they are working with all staff to review the services that they offer in the CSU.

P Twine confirmed that with regards to the Housing repairs re-procurement it was clearly stated in the tender documents that the Council would be facing a number of local challenges which would take place in the next 3-4 years including the Housing Repairs re-procurement. In respect of Housing Repairs which equates to approx. 49000 telephone calls, and 3000 visits would be transferred to a new Housing Repairs provider when the contract is re-procured and awarded in 2014.

Councillor Taylor asked if this item could be added to the Member Development Meetings.

Actions:

- D Gill to sum up contracts and report back to the Committee.
- Housing Repairs issues to be added to the agenda of the Member Development Meetings.

Outcome:

That the report be noted with concerns.

OS/181/12 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

That, under s.100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A Part 1 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during the item in Part II of the Agenda for this meeting, because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to:

OS/182/12 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Chair informed the Committee that there were no items due for the meeting on 2nd October 2012 and therefore asked the Committee to vote to have the meeting cancelled.

Outcome:

The Committee agreed that the meeting scheduled for the 2nd October 2012 be cancelled due to no items on the agenda.

The meeting ended at 9. 30pm