

MINUTES

FINANCE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

04 JUNE 2013

Present:

Adeleke	Marshall
Ayling	Organ
B Chapman (Chairman)	Taylor
Clark	Townsend (Vice – Chairman)
Collins	W Wyatt - Lowe
Doole	

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

Officers:

Steve Baker	Assistant Director – Legal, Democratic & Regulatory Services
Shane Flynn	Assistant Director – Project Governance
Sally Marshall	Corporate Director – Finance & Governance
Linda Dargue	Insurance & Risk Manager
Jim Doyle	Group Manager – Democratic Services
Dave Gill	Group Manager – Partnerships & Citizen Insight
Mark Brookes	Group Manager – Legal Governance
James Doe	Head of Planning & Regeneration
Chris Baker	Revenue & Benefits Support Manager
Louise Collins	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting started at 7.30pm.

OS/089/13 MINUTES

Minutes of the meetings held on 05 March 2013 were confirmed by the members present and were then signed by the Chairman.

OS/090/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

Councillor N Hollinghurst was absent.

OS/091/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Marshall declared an interest in Item 11 and stated that she was a trustee of the Hemel Hempstead Day Centre for the Elderly, trading as Centre in the Park. Councillor Adeleke and Councillor Taylor both declared an interest in Item 11 and stated that they both were part of the “Community Action Dacorum” group.

OS/092/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

OS/093/13 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN

None

OS/094/13 QUARTER 4 RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT 2012/13

L Dargue introduced the Quarter 4 Risk Management Report 2012/13 and highlighted to Members that there had been no changes to the Strategic Risk Register and offered to take questions from Members.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Doole referred to the Strategic Risk Register and highlighted that there had been no mention on covering security or home working and asked the officer if this was something that should have been included in the register.

L Dargue replied that a review of the strategic risk register is to be carried out, the outcome will be reported on as part of the Q1 report.

Councillor W Wyatt – Lowe referred to the previous Strategic Risk Register and said that it was very useful to have the controls section in the current Strategic Risk Register. He asked if any new controls could be put in italics so that Members could clearly see any changes. L Dargue replied that she would arrange for this to be done for future reports.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

OS/095/13 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE & OPERATIONAL RISK REGISTER REPORTS 2012/13 – LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC & REGULATORY SERVICES

S Baker introduced the Quarter 4 Performance & Operational Risk Register Report. He made reference to Page 51 of the Operational Risk Register and said that there were no issues to draw Members attention to. On Page 53 of the register he highlighted that at the previous Finance & Resources meeting back in January 2013, some cases

scores had been reduced. All information regarding this was now in the report for Members to read and mentioned that he had reviewed the whole of the Risk Register.

S Baker offered to take questions from Members.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Doole congratulated S Baker on the Risk Register and said that it was very informative.

Councillor W Wyatt – Lowe asked if there was any way that Members could be provided with Licensing information for those that are currently not on the Committee.

M Brookes replied to Councillor W Wyatt – Lowe's request and said that he would provide the main functions of his team in future reports for those Members that are currently not aware of what Licensing consists of.

Actions:

- M Brookes to provide Members with licensing information on the agenda.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

OS/096/13 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE & OPERATIONAL RISK REGISTER REPORTS 2012/13 - PERFORMANCE, IMPROVEMENT & TRANSFORMATION

S Flynn introduced the Quarter 4 Performance & Operational Risk Register Report 2012/13 on behalf of J Milsom who was unable to attend the meeting. He said that the average number of days lost in division will improve as they go forward. Reference was made to page 62, 3.1.2 and the I.T area and he mentioned that new staff have already been appointed with significant projects in place with consultancy support.

S Flynn offered to take questions from Members.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Doole said that his concern was with the key service achievement section 3.5.1. In particular, improvement projects were shown as leading to measurable improvements but no measure was given. He asked the officer if he could provide more information.

S Flynn said that he would take the Member's comments on board.

The Chair made reference to Page 64, COMMS03 and asked if there are any comparisons made in Hertfordshire or any other areas.

D Gill said that he would distribute the Herts Traffic Survey to Members for information.

Councillor Adeleke made reference to page 61 and the sickness levels in the CSU. He asked if the officer could explain why there was such high level of sickness in the CSU

and whether this was due to the changes that have taken place over the last two years.

D Gill confirmed that the levels of sickness in the CSU have not deteriorated over the last two years. He pointed out that they have actually improved. He told Members that in areas where there is constant contact with the public, staff would be at more risk of catching colds, and coughs etc so there will always be a higher level of sickness in the CSU for that reason.

Councillor Adeleke referred to page 62 and the grant aid that is distributed to small voluntary and community groups in the Borough. He asked the officer to confirm if he had any follow up plans to make sure that the money was being spent appropriately.

D Gill replied to Councillor Adeleke confirming that within the Grant Aid application process, applicants are required to fill in a Dacorum application form which is assessed by a panel. Those that succeed will have to submit a report to confirm where the funds have been spent.

Councillor Marshall referred to page 64 and the CSU02 and asked how big the problem was and if any steps are being taken to improve this area.

D Gill said that there is currently lots of work being carried out which involves avoidable contact both nationally and locally. Most industries say that there is 10-25% avoidable contact in the work place. D Gill informed Members that there is a project being rolled out over the next 6 months to a year called "through the eyes of a customer". This will enable his team to get their point across to all services within the Council.

The Chair referred to page 65 CSU05 and said that there had been great achievement made in this particular area.

Actions:

- D Gill to provide Members with information from the Herts Traffic Survey.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/097/13 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE & OPERATIONAL RISK REGISTER REPORTS 2012/13 – FINANCE & RESOURCES

S Marshall introduced the Quarter 4 Performance & Operational Risk Register Reports on behalf of J Deane. She highlighted Members attention to the fact that there was one indicator within the Financial Services area that is showing red against the agreed target. This is mainly due to there being a cash flow issue and cash being held back.

S Marshall offered to take questions from Members.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Adeleke referred to page 73 and asked if the Liberata partnership was a long term partnership.

S Marshall said that their partnership with Liberata would show an improvement in this area and over the coming year.

Councillor Adeleke asked the officer to confirm when staff will start to see the working pressure reduce.

S Marshall confirmed that they are now at the end of the welfare reform. The first change to take place would be the Council Tax changes from July to the autumn. This was beneficial to cap. From August to 2017 there will be reforms around universal credit which will be available over a 3 year period. S Marshall said that it is not clear what role Local Government will have in the front line service. She said that they will do everything they can to keep Members updated.

Councillor Collins referred to page 73 and the average time taken to decide a new claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax benefit and asked for clarification around this.

C Baker said that he would include this information in future reports to Members information.

The Chair said this would be very beneficial to all Members.

Councillor Doole referred to page 80 FR_R02 and asked for clarification around these results.

S Marshall said that she would get C Baker to review the information in the Operational Risk report and to get back to Members.

Actions:

- C Baker to provide Members with information for future reports regarding RBF01.
- C Baker to report back to Members with regards to FR_R02.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/098/13 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2012/13

S Marshall introduced the Provisional Outturn 2012/2013 report on behalf of J Deane. She informed Members that this report had already been to both Cabinet and Audit Committees prior to this committee and that they were currently in the process of compiling the annual statement of accounts.

S Marshall offered to take questions on behalf of J Deane.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Organ referred to page 86 5.1 regarding the slippage on garage maintenance. He asked if work was being conducted for this year and if these were garages that are currently being let to residents.

S Marshall said that they are currently reviewing the garage strategy and looking at ways to improve on these sites. She also pointed out to Members that it will be vital to look at maintaining garage profits.

Councillor Adeleke said that he was happy to hear that they were under budget for supplies and services however he was not happy that Repairs and Maintenance was over budget (2.23%).

S Marshall pointed out to Members that it will take some time to improve the contracts for Repairs and Maintenance. However she reassured Members that there are resources available now to help improve services.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/099/13 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

J Doe introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) update report and informed Members that it would be a new way of collecting financial contributions from new developments to help fund the provision of infrastructure required to support growth in the Borough. He informed Members that DBC is responsible for setting the charges, collecting the money and allocating the money for spend. J Doe made reference to page 100, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6 and 3.7 of the report.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Townsend asked the officer to confirm how much the Council will get from the new levy.

J Doe said that it will vary from year to year but the level from s106 obligation receipts is typically around £1 million. CIL has been estimated to deliver around £2.8 million a year, but this will depend on the level of new building started each year. He also informed Members that there is a lot of work done at County level to understand the CIL level and involvement.

Councillor Adeleke asked whether developers can challenge the CIL and asked who has the final say.

J Doe pointed out that once the CIL level has been set it cannot be challenged. The final say would be down to the Council.

Councillor Collins spoke on behalf of the residents of Berkhamsted and said that if the CIL money was to be spent elsewhere they would not be very impressed.

J Doe said that the Council has discretion as to where CIL receipts are spent, unlike many s.106 contributions which are usually limited to an area close to the development site. Spending priorities will be a matter for the Council to decide in the CIL spending plan. On the matter of the residential charge for Berkhamsted, the Council's consultants, BNP Paribas, have reviewed this and are comfortable that it remains viable – hence no recommended change here.

Councillor Organ asked the officer whether they will be addressing the concerns regarding the rates proposed.

J Doe explained to Members that there had been a range of views which have caused a slight concern. He said that the amounts secured by CIL will be higher than the S106 rates, and this does cause some concern to some developers. However the research evidence indicates they are viable, and in any case all points of concern can be tested at examination.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/100/13 REVIEW OF DISCRETIONARY POLICIES FOR REVENUE & BENEFITS

C Baker outlined the Review of Discretionary Policies for Revenue & Benefits and highlighted Members attention to the fact that there are three areas of Revenue and Benefits within which the Council which will need to be looked at;

1. The Discretionary Housing Payments Policy
2. The Discretionary Council Tax Payments Policy
3. The Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

C Baker offered to take questions from the Committee.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Taylor made a comment surrounding benefit payments being paid to the individual instead of the beneficiary and asked the officer for his view on this and if this was the correct procedure.

C Baker explained that the idea behind this is to help the individual prepare for employment and learning how to budget their money solely.

Councillor Taylor asked C Baker if he thought there would be any problems relating to high levels of costs.

C Baker said that there would be a range of support services offered to tenants to help them on budgeting and offering advice and support for the individual.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/101/13 VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGIC PARTNER ORGANISATION ARRANGEMENTS AND CONSORTIUM DEVELOPMENT

D Gill outlined his report for Members on the Voluntary Sector Strategic Partner Organisation Arrangements and Consortium Development and highlighted some key areas for Members attention.

D Gill stated that the Council had a long history in supporting the voluntary sectors however lots of changes have taken place. He referred to page 127, section 7, "The

Voluntary Sector Consortium (“Dacortium”) and said that the DBC Grant has not changed since 2008 and there is no intention to increase it in the near future.

Councillors Adeleke and Taylor both declared that they had a procurinary interest in “Community Action Dacorum”.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Marshall asked when the Consortium would be set up.

D Gill stated that there are still lots of work to do however he would like to see it set up possibly over the next 12 months.

Councillor Harden, Portfolio Holder for Residents and Regulatory Services said that the Council should be looking at how we commission our services. He referred to the other Councillors comments on the funding amounts and pointed out that there are some tight budgets. However the money that is given to the voluntary sector will benefit residents in the long term and make their money go further.

Outcome:

That the report be noted.

OS/102/13 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: Shared and Outsourced Service Update – Customer Service Centre and Gateway Contract (Minute OS/104/13).

OS/103/13 WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

- L Collins to attach action point list to future agenda’s.

OS/104/13 SHARED AND OUTSOURCED SERVICES UPDATE – CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE AND GATEWAY CONTRACT

Full details can be found in the Part II minutes.

Resolved

That the report was noted.

The meeting ended at 10pm