

MINUTES

FINANCE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

08 OCTOBER 2013

Present:

Ayling	Doole
B Chapman (Chairman)	Marshall
Clark	Taylor
Collins	W Wyatt - Lowe

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

Officers:

Shane Flynn	Assistant Director – Performance & Projects
Martin Hone	Corporate Director – Finance & Operations
Louise Collins	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting started at 7.30pm.

The Chairman announced that he would change the order of the Agenda for this particular meeting. Item 7 – Shared and Outsourced Services Update to be considered would become Item 6. Item 6 – Overview & Scrutiny Vision would change to Item 7. All Members agreed with the change of order.

OS/164/13 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 03 September 2013 were agreed by the Members present and signed by the Chairman.

OS/165/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Adeleke, N Hollinghurst and Councillor Townsend. Councillor Organ was absent.

OS/166/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

OS/167/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

Chairman

OS/168/13 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN

None

OS/169/13 SHARED AND OUTSOURCED SERVICE UPDATE – CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE AND GATEWAY CONTRACT (CSCG)

S Flynn introduced the Shared and Outsourced Services Update report and highlighted some of the key areas for Members attention. A joint Operational Board met for the first time in September and a report was received from Northgate covering the following areas:

- The CSU was performing satisfactorily with all Key Performance Indicators on target except for one which was 1% below target. A right of remedy now applies for one month but if performance is not addressed in the September results this will lead to a service credit being applied.
- Officers are currently in the process of looking at the impact that the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and Channel shift projects will have on other parts of the Council.
- Two complaints were dealt with following the last committee but none have been received since.
- A major factor influencing performance was the absence of performance management prior to contract start. This was a known issue and is one of the matters that the contract is designed to address.
- It was reported that there were a number of risks in the CSCG as at August 2013 which included;
 - Staffing rotas are not flexible enough to allow resources to match variations in customer demand.
 - No provision has been made for business continuity for telephony systems used within the Council including the CSU.
 - No desktops have been encrypted in the CSU including desktops that are in the public area.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Ayling referred to S Flynn's comment that no complaints had been received. However he pointed out that the report mentioned that two complaints had been received, one from a member of the Committee and one from a member of the public. He asked the officer what Committee had made the complaint.

S Flynn confirmed that one of the complaints had come from the Finance & Resources OSC member, Councillor Collins, although it was not specific in details and therefore no formal response was requested. The other was from a member of the public which also asked questions regarding the reasons for the outsourcing. A detailed written response was provided.

Councillor Tiley said that he too had had some personal experience within the last 7 days regarding the CSU. He said that the service which he had received was superb and faultless. He pointed out to Members that the call lasted only 2.5 minutes and congratulated the staff for their polite and helpfulness. SF agreed to pass this comment on to Northgate.

Councillor Harden arrived at 7.40pm.

Chairman

Councillor W Wyatt – Lowe made reference to the CSCG KPIs and performance figures and asked the officer to clarify how these statistics are monitored.

S Flynn explained that they are monitored monthly through the Operations Board and will be reviewed quarterly at a higher level Partnership Board which comprises senior figures from both organisations. More detailed performance monitoring information is also provided by Northgate but the first set of data needed clarification so it has not been reported to this committee. He said that once he has more information he will update Members on the progress.

Councillor Marshall expressed concern that she had experienced problems regarding call backs. She pointed out to Members at how frustrating it can be when officers do not leave full voicemail messages indicating if they are out of office or on annual leave etc. Councillor Marshall congratulated the Planning department on their brilliant service and said that the rest of the Council should follow in their footsteps.

Councillor Tiley mentioned that the CSU was not responsible for this issue, but it was an internal issue that would need to be looked at.

S Flynn said that he would look into the comments made and get back to Members with regards to the comments made. He pointed out that it is vitally important to rectify this problem for two reasons: firstly because home and remote working is increasing and officers need to ensure that they remain contactable; secondly because the Council will need to ensure that calls continue to be routed through the CSCG as there is a danger that customers will contact staff directly more often as channel shift develops. Close monitoring of call backs will be reviewed regularly to meet targets and to address issues. S Flynn said that he welcomed all feedback from Members with regards to this.

Councillor Taylor informed Members that he had recently experienced a similar issue with the CSU. However with regards to his Council Tax query, he was asked to go online and download the relevant forms to help with his query. Councillor Taylor said, whilst the service was very professional, it was not at all convenient.

Councillor Taylor referred to points highlighted on page 12, 2.4 & 2.4 regarding the revenue & capital requirements and asked how it would be possible to find these costs in the current financial year.

S Flynn confirmed that the figures that have been reported were correct. He said that officers had compared the cost of the Northgate bid against a Public Sector Comparator model which demonstrated that it provided value for money and that the Council would receive financial benefits in terms of reduced costs.

Councillor Taylor pointed out that there didn't appear to be any savings on the contract.

S Flynn replied that there would be no savings in the first year but a return on investment would be made by the fourth year. From then on savings would accrue year on year in the region of £250,000 per annum. S Flynn said that he would provide Members with a detailed cost analysis in due course.

Councillor Tiley reminded Members that had the Council not taken this route; millions of pounds would have had to be invested. He pointed out that Northgate have helped the Council a great deal.

Chairman

Councillor Doole referred to the £250k reductions in annual operating costs and asked if there would be any change over the next two years.

S Flynn said that he would come back to Members with an update with regards to this.

Councillor Collins asked if the Council would get a refund from Northgate if things were not to work out.

S Flynn explained that within the terms of the contract there are clauses governing withdrawal from the contract by either or both parties.. However, the value to be determined in any settlement would depend on a number of factors such as whether either party was at fault and in breach of the contract or if it were separation by mutual agreement. He informed Members that he has set up a purchase order for the first year only as they will monitor how things progress. The value of that order was therefore the full extent of the risk to the Council.

Councillor Harden highlighted Members attention to the fact that Northgate are very keen for the contract to go ahead minus any problems. He said that they have a good reputation to protect and want to be here for the long term.

Councillor Collins mentioned that he had concerns regarding the “get out clause” in the contract. He said that he hoped there were provisions in place should the Council wish to terminate the contract with Northgate.

S Flynn reassured Members that the legal department had thoroughly gone through the Northgate Contract in great depth and were satisfied with the “get out” clauses in the contract.

Councillor Collins made reference to page 17 Annex B and page 19 “agreed Initial Programme Roadmap”. He asked the officer if Members would need to look at this on screen.

S Flynn said that both Annex B and the “agreed initial programme roadmap” were designed to give an overview of what is included in the channel shift.

Councillor Doole referred to Councillor Collins comment on page 17 and 19 and asked the officer to explain it in more detail.

S Flynn said that he would provide Members with an update at the meeting taking place on 5th November for an update on the Customer Insight and Channel Shift programme.

Actions:

- S Flynn to update Members on issues surrounding call backs within the CSU.
- S Flynn to provide Members with a detailed cost analysis with regards to the financial monitoring process and Northgate.
- S Flynn to report back to Members with an update on the annual operating costs.
- S Flynn to update Members at the next meeting on 5th November on the Customer Insight and Channel Shift Programme.

Councillor Tiley and Harden left the meeting at 8.05pm

Outcome:

Members noted the progress and comment on the Customer Service Centre and Gateway project.

Chairman

The Chairman opened up the debate amongst Members regarding the Overview & Scrutiny Improvement Plan 2013 and said that he welcomed any feedback that Members may have.

Key points of discussion

Councillor Taylor said that he felt it would be beneficial to all Members if they had the opportunity to discuss and have an input in the OSC process through Member Development. He said added that the constitution needed to have a stronger approach to the three OSC committees as this was clearly lacking.

All Members agreed that they would feel more involved if they had the opportunity to have more of an input into the work programme.

Councillor W Wyatt – Lowe referred to the OSC Improvement Plan and asked who or what are Members supposed to be scrutinising.

Councillor Marshall said that as Members they had an obligation to look at all 3 items within the Improvement Plan.

The Chair suggested that an annual meeting with the Portfolio Holder for OSC should take place to discuss Members concerns/issues.

Councillor Ayling referred to Appendix B on page 6. He said that Members should be reviewing, suggesting and supporting the OSC process. If there is a policy which Members are interested in, this should be put forward for discussion to include on the work programme. He also added that some of the reports e.g. the Performance Reports take up too much discussion time.

It was pointed out by Councillor Ayling that all Members should have a copy of the improvement plan and it should be included on the work programme November's meeting.

The Chair drew Members attention to the examples of the Scrutiny Vision on pages 6 and 7 and asked Members to decide which of the examples they preferred to be incorporated into the Council's Vision.

The Chair said that he favoured the "Wigan" example and asked Members to think about what they are looking for in their Scrutiny Vision.

Councillor W Wyatt – Lowe informed Members that on occasions he attends seminars of which he finds very useful and would like to see incorporated into the work programme. He said that it would be useful to have the opportunity to be able to put forward his ideas to officers or the Portfolio Holder for future meetings. However at present there wasn't any opportunity to do this which he felt was a great shame.

The Chairman explained that he had some concerns with regards to allowing topics from a seminar to be included in the work programme. He explained that there would be a need to set up a task and finish group to manage all of the queries raised and at present the work programme was almost full with items for future agendas.

Councillor Taylor suggested to Members that it may be more appropriate to take forward any ideas for scrutiny to Member Development as all Members would be present to discuss the

options. At present a newsletter goes out to all Members who attend Member Development twice yearly informing them of topics of interest. He said that this would be a more beneficial way of getting Members ideas put forward to include on the work programme.

The Chair suggested to Members that if they have any ideas or topics which they would like included on the work programme, they should take them forward to Member Development at which point they would get them included in the newsletter.

Councillor Marshall said that she felt that it would be more appropriate to take forward Members ideas to Cabinet to get included on the work programme.

The Chairman explained to Members that he felt Member Development was the way forward in discussing items in more detail.

Councillor Taylor said it would be more beneficial to Members to have more than one option available to them.

Councillor W Wyatt – Lowe said that he liked the idea of using Member Development to put his ideas across. All Members are copied into group e-mails with regards to any new information which is received from seminars which he attends. He said that the same process could be used for the Finance & Resources OSC.

The Chairman suggested to Members that the “Wigan” example would be an excellent example to incorporate into the Council’s vision as all of the points met what Members were looking for in their vision.

Actions:

All Members agreed on all points in the Wigan example of the Scrutiny Vision to be incorporated into their Vision:

‘the Scrutiny Committees aim to add value to the council services that you use by:-

- *supporting the Council in achieving its vision for the borough and its strategic aims and priorities*
- *promoting open and transparent decision-making, democratic accountability and to hold the Executive to account for its actions*
- *promoting continuous improvement, best practice and innovation with the services, functions and policies which the Council has responsibilities for or influence over*
- *taking a lead role in reviewing policy and influencing matters of strategic direction*
- *monitoring performance of the directorates and key performance indicators’*

Outcome:

1. Members noted the report.
2. Members contributed suggestions via the appropriate Chairman as to the content of the Overview & Scrutiny vision.

Chairman

OS/171 /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:

OS/172/13 WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

- L Collins to add the Corporate Plan to the work programme for 5th November as an introduction.
- L Collins to add the Corporate Plan to the work programme for 7th January 2014.

OS/173/13 ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- L Collins to update Members with clarification with regards to why there are asterix points on some of the action points.
- L Collins to amend the Action Point List item and move up the agenda.

All Members expressed their concern at having the Action Points item at the end of the agenda and asked if this could be moved further up the agenda.

The meeting ended at 9.05pm