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MINUTES

FINANCE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

04 JUNE 2014

Present:

Adeleke	Marshall
Clark	Taylor
B Chapman (Chairman)	Townsend (Vice-Chairman)
Doole	W Wyatt-Lowe
N Hollinghurst	

Also in attendance:

Officers:

Martin Hone	Corporate Director – Finance & Operations
Steve Baker	Assistant Director – Legal, Democratic & Regulatory Services
Shane Flynn	Assistant Director – Performance & Projects
James Deane	Assistant Director - Finance & Resources
Linda Dargue	Insurance & Risk Manager
Ben Hosier	Group Manager (Procurement, Commissioning & Compliance)
Mark Brookes	Group Manager (Legal)
Jim Doyle	Group Manager (Democratic Services)
Matt Rawdon	Group Manager (People)
Mark Housden	Commercial Contracts Lead Officer
Heather Overhead	Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer
Clare Thorley	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting started at 7.30pm

OS/108 /14 MINUTES

Minutes of the meetings held on 04 March 2014 were confirmed by the members present and were then signed by the Chairman.

OS/109/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Collins and Organ.

OS/110/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

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OS/111/14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

OS/112/14 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN

None

OS/113/14 QUARTER 4 RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT 2013/2014

L Dargue presented the report and said that in relation to the previous Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny meeting a risk had been added in relation to information security following the Members request.

There were no questions.

Outcome:

The report was noted and was recommended to Cabinet for approval.

OS/114/14 QUARTER 4 FINANCE & RESOURCES PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT 2013/2014

J Deane introduced the report. There were no questions.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

OS/115/14 QUARTER 4 LEGAL GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND PEOPLE PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT 2013/2014

S Baker introduced the report and said it contained the usual Corvu outputs for his area but that he had brought along his Group Managers to provide some context for the reports.

Councillor Doole asked a question in relation to the CSU call answer times. Councillor Doole asked what baseline the call answer time was being measured against for calls specifically to the CSU unit and not direct external calls to Dacorum. S Flynn said that there was a meeting on Monday with CSU to re-establish indicators for CSU calls.

The Chairman offered his congratulations to the Legal Team who had worked on a number of cases that had been successful on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council.

Councillor Taylor asked what the process was if a member of the public had to contact the Council on a weekend. He said that he had recently tried to call a staff member based at the Council on a weekend and had great difficulty doing so. Councillor Taylor asked what provisions there were for emergency numbers. S Flynn said that the emergency number was still in place and was available on the website. S Flynn said

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that with the start of the new Housing Maintenance Contract more effort would be put into providing out of hours contact numbers.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that there did need to be a provision for reporting maintenance issues related to Council assets/issues during weekends as he had experienced difficulty in reporting things such as noise nuisance previously.

Councillor Harden said that efforts were being made to encourage a channel shift amongst residents whereby they reported issues like this via the website.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe asked if plans had started for the incoming Councillors in terms of member development in 2015. Councillor Taylor responded and said that the Member Development Steering Group had begun work on this and Michelle Anderson from Member Support had outlined the budget for the new induction process. Councillor Taylor said that there were also plans to run an open session for prospective candidates in February.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe asked if there were any stipulations in Dacorum Borough Council's licensing policy for taxis regarding wheelchair access. M Brookes said that he would look into this for Councillor Wyatt-Lowe.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe then said that he had recently been to a Public Sector Business show and had seen a company that seemed to be tackling absence management very effectively and that it may be worth the HR team having a look at. M Rawdon said that he would be happy to do this as that sickness absence levels within Dacorum Borough Council was a priority, especially as we were slightly over target last year.

Councillor Adeleke also offered his congratulations for the Legal team and their successes but he wanted to query as to whether there were any financial implications for the Council with the case that was going to the Supreme Court. M Brookes said that there was no financial liability in terms of compensation but there could potentially be a claim for legal costs if the Council lost the case.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Actions:

- S Flynn - List of emergency numbers re-circulated to Members for their reference.
- M Brookes - Details on provisions for wheelchair access as stipulated by licensing policy to be circulated.
- M Brookes - Details of the recent Supreme Court Case to be circulated to Members

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OS/116/14 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE AND PROJECTS
PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT 2013/2014

S Flynn said that the performance indicators related to the CSU had now been transferred and that he would be able to give more information about the current performance issues facing the CSU during the CSCG contract update elsewhere on the agenda. The risk relating to the CSCG contract are still within the Performance and Projects risk register but these will be transferred to Steve Baker's risk register from April 2014. On specific risk relating to redundancy costs was addressed in the report and would be reviewed in more detail in the Part II section of the meeting.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe asked why Dacorum Anywhere was still a risk given that the PSQ decant would no longer be happening this year. S Flynn said that a move to the PSQ would still occur and so the Dacorum Anywhere strategy would be continuing to help facilitate this. There were no more questions.

OS/117/14 QUARTER 4 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2013/2014

M Hone introduced the report and said that it was positive as Dacorum Borough Council had come in on budget and that previously there had been a tendency to underspend. M Hone did highlight that there was some underspend on the Capital Programme and that there was some slippage on the initial predictions made earlier in the year but that there continued to be a good investment on capital infrastructure.

Councillor Marshall asked when the budget was revised, M Hone said it was revised in January 2014.

Councillor Townsend queried some figures in Appendix C and asked if they demonstrated the adjustments made, J Deane said that the report did not demonstrate the adjustments clearly, but he would circulate a clarification.

Councillor Doole asked about the £205K overspend related to the Northgate contract at paragraph 3.4 of the report and whether this figure would be calculated into the total costs/savings associated with the contract. J Deane said that the overspend related to the redundancy costs associated with the contract and the figure would be included in overall cost calculations for the Northgate contract.

Councillor Marshall said in relation to point 3.2 if the Council continually experienced costs related to the adverse winter weather conditions perhaps the budget could factor in an additional fund to account for this. M Hone and J Deane acknowledged that this could be done.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Actions:

J Deane - to circulate clarification of Appendix C to the Committee.

OS/118/14 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVISION

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J Deane introduced the report and took questions. Councillor Marshall said that she was against the amended scheme of delegations.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe said that he was uncomfortable with the idea of all General Managers being equal and that some were naturally more senior than others dependent on the field they were in and that the proposed scheme of delegations did not reflect this.

Councillor Marshall said that she would vote in favour of revised regulations providing the amendment to Annex D was discounted. S Baker said that financial regulations must state delegation levels otherwise officers would be unable to make any decisions. S Baker did say that it was possible for members to propose new thresholds in relation to the scheme if they felt it was appropriate.

The Committee then voted to recommend the report in its original format, with the inclusion of the amendments to Annex D;

7 for

3 against

Outcome:

The Committee noted and recommended the proposed revisions to the Financial Regulations prior to submission to Cabinet for approval.

Actions:

None

OS/119/14 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

H Overhead introduced the report and said she would be happy to take any questions.

The Chairman said that he could not see any provision for care homes made in the table provided in the report and also why there didn't appear to be any proposals for Markyate. H Overhead explained that the information provided concerned sites included in the viability study and didn't show sites covered by section 106 funds.

OS/120/14 SHARED AND OUTSOURCED SERVICES UPDATE – CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE AND GATEWAY CONTRACT (CSCG)

M Housden said that there had recently been a Customer Service Centre strategic board meeting with Northgate, N Harden and A Williams and the Chief Executive. Northgate had taken steps to rectify the problems related to the Customer Service Centre. In addition M Rawdon had formed a customer centric focus group of officers to identify the issues around the frustration with phone system.

M Housden said that part of the problem was that Inform 360 used a large number of telephone lines and the processing of calls was not yet as effective as it could be. However new software recently installed did deal with the issue of cut-offs and calls

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not being connected, in addition the new software had doubled the amount of lines into the call centre. M Housden said that there was close monitoring of the number of calls coming in.

Councillor Townsend wanted clarification around the issues faced by the call centre. Councillor Townsend wanted to know if the issues recently occurring were a result of initial start-up problems associated with bedding in the new software or whether the service had been doing well and was now failing. M Housden said that Inform 360 was originally doing well but since its initial implementation the Council had carried out annual billing and so a high volume of calls then came in and this had contributed to the issues.

S Flynn said that there was initially significant improvement of the performance management associated with the Call Service Centre; S Flynn said that Northgate had acknowledged that reduction of resources had occurred too soon and that they initially underestimated the number of staff needed and had since hired three new members of staff.

Councillor Marshall said that she was pleased to see Northgate tackle the issues at hand but he failed to understand why Dacorum Borough Council had allowed the initial staff reduction to take place and why the channel shift to using the website was still being pushed through and that surely the current issues should be dealt with first.

S Flynn said that he appreciated that there were issues still outstanding but that the channel shift was necessary for cost reasons and that Northgate were working with Dacorum Borough Council to ensure that customer focused digital inclusion was achieved.

Councillor Marshall asked if Northgate were responsible for the channel shift. S Flynn said that Northgate was only one partner involved in this project and they wouldn't be solely responsible for it and that he was more optimistic for this phase of the project.

Councillor N Hollinghurst asked if the telephone and website service were hosted by the same company. S Flynn said they were not. Councillor N Hollinghurst said that local authority websites were similar in the fact that a large number of them seemed to be non-intuitive to use and customers often struggled to find the information they wanted. Councillor N Hollinghurst said that Dacorum Borough Council's website's search facility could be better and that a channel shift would be easier to facilitate if the website was better, specifically in relation to the search function. S Flynn said that these comments would be taken on board. M Rawdon added that the Customer Focus Project he was running would be looking at the website and back office processes to ensure these align with the channel shift strategy. The project will focus on the customer experience and identify improvements to enhance the service they receive.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe said that the website at County had a strong emphasis on accessibility for mobiles and that it might be worth M Rawdon's team liaising with County when making considerations for the channel shift.

Councillor Taylor asked if it would be possible for Northgate to cover some of the redundancy costs considering that they had got rid of highly experienced people when taking over the Customer Service Centre replacing them with less knowledgeable staff.

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S Flynn said that whilst it may be possible to discuss this issue with Northgate they were not contractually obliged to do this.

The Chairman said that the transfer over to the Northgate service continued to be a difficult process and that there had been a number of problems that were unexpected but that hopefully with careful monitoring things would begin to improve.

Councillor N Hollinghurst said that previously independent companies working with the Council had commented that the culture of the Council was resistant to change and that perhaps this was still a problem. Councillor N Harden acknowledged this had been a problem in the past but commented that Dacorum Borough Council had a new a very capable management team that all were helping to facilitate the change occurring within the Council. S Flynn commented that the risk scores relating to two risks regarding the capacity of services to embrace change had been reduced in the Performance and Projects risk register as a reflection of the Council's increased appetite for and capacity to manage change.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Action:

None

OS/121/14 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

To consider passing a resolution in the following terms:

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 items 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 these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information relating to: the financial and business affairs of a number of private companies. (Agenda item 16 & 17).

OS/122/14 PROCUREMENT REVIEW

See Part II minutes.

**OS/123/14 QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE AND PROJECTS
PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPRORT 2013/2014 - PRESENTATION**

See Part II minutes.

**OS/124/14 WORK PROGRAMME FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES
OSC**

There were no amendments to the work programme.

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The meeting ended at 9.50pm.