

MINUTES

FINANCE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

03 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present:

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

Also in attendance:

Councillor Tiley (Portfolio Holder, Finance and Resources)
Councillor Harden (Portfolio Holder, Resident and Regulatory Services)

Officers:

Sally Marshall	Chief Executive
Steve Baker	Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic & Regulatory Services
James Deane	Assistant Director, Finance & Resources
Linda Dargue	Insurance & Risk Manager
Jim Doyle	Group Manager, Democratic Services
Matt Rawdon	Group Manager, People
Richard Baker	Group Manager, Financial Services
Ben Trueman	Group Manager, Information, Communication & Technology
Mark Housden	Commercial Contracts Lead Officer
Trudi Coston	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

The meeting started at 7.30pm

OS/170/14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 02 July 2014 were confirmed by the members present and then signed by the Chairman.

OS/171/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Doole, N Hollinghurst and Organ.

OS/172/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

OS/173/14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

OS/174/14 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN

None

OS/175/14 ACTION POINT FEEDBACK

Councillor B Chapman advised the committee that the action point item wasn't included in the agenda as there were no outstanding actions. He noted that the Staff Stress Survey information requested at the previous meeting from Shane Flynn had been circulated via email prior to the meeting and asked if anyone had any questions on the matter.

Councillor Marshall referred to the points for 'I am subject to bullying at work', 'I have unrealistic time pressures' and 'I have unachievable deadlines', and expressed her concern. She felt the percentage was significantly high and will also increase when hot-desking is permanently introduced. She asked what action was being taken to reduce these pressures. M Rawdon said he had taken on this piece of work now that S Flynn had left DBC and explained that further work needed to be completed to put the matter in to context. He said they were awaiting national figures to be released in order to see a comparison with other Local Authorities. He was unable to answer any further questions until that time and advised he would return with a report to the committee in due course.

Outcome:

The committee noted the findings of the survey, including the comments made by Councillor Marshall, and agreed to receive further advice on the matter at future meetings.

Action:

M Rawdon to update the committee when possible.

OS/176/14 QUARTER ONE FINANCE AND RESOURCES PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT 2014/15

J Deane introduced the report and welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor B Chapman (on behalf of Councillor Doole) referred to RBF01 on page 7 of the report. He said it was a very pleasing quarter and asked how it was achieved. J Deane said it had been an indicator for years but they had started to focus on it in more detail over the past few months. He explained that they made sure they collected all the data from beginning to end of the process to identify where the hold-ups had occurred. This enabled them to add resources where they were needed and take more control.

Councillor Harden arrived at 7.40 pm.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Action:

None.

OS/177/14 QUARTER ONE PERFORMANCE AND PROJECTS PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT 2014/15

S Marshall informed the committee that S Flynn had left DBC last week and a replacement had been appointed. Robert Smythe will commence in October.

S Marshall advised of an error within the report that read quarter 1 was January to March which should have said April to June.

S Marshall said there were various new performance indicators in the report in relation to productivity and desk to staff ratio, which was all part of Dacorum Anywhere programme and was progressing well. Following S Flynn's departure, she advised they had decided to encourage Group Managers to become involved as Project Managers to gain corporate responsibility and gain insight in to Corporate Projects. She referred to page 20 of the agenda relating to electronic document filing system and explained they had gone live with the housing service this week and the early indication given was all appeared to be going well.

B Trueman said they had success with the PSN which was problematic last year but much more stable now. He referred to paragraph 6.4 and explained they were undertaking a system review to ensure the current systems were fit for purpose. He advised that although they had met the performance targets this quarter, next quarter would be negatively affected by the PC outage in August. He said resilience would be in place from next week to avoid a repeat incident of that type in the future.

Councillor Marshall referred to paragraph 4.4 and said she thought the productivity target of 55% would have been higher. She asked where the target percentage had come from and if it was the same at other Local Authorities. S Marshall said she would investigate the matter and feedback to the committee.

Councillor Marshall referred to paragraph 4.10 and queried if staff would be provided with lockers. S Marshall confirmed each employee will be given a small plastic box for their belongings instead of drawers, and a locker to put it in.

Councillor Ayling referred to paragraph 5.5 and sought clarification on what would happen with confidential mail. S Marshall advised Cassy O'Neil was leading the matter and had met with each team leadership to make specific arrangements.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

Action:

S Marshall to advise of the productivity baseline figure.

OS/178/14 QUARTER ONE LEGAL GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND PEOPLE PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT 2014/15

S Baker referred to page 36 of the report relating to Get Set, Go Dacorum, and was pleased to advise that Sport England had officially announced Dacorum were successful in the application for the Community Sports Activation Fund and were awarded the grant for £250k. He explained the project was a three year programme and will commence on 22 September. A launch date has been set for 20 September in Randalls Park, Highfield.

S Baker advised that Licensing had signed a new agreement with PFRA (Public Fundraising Regulatory Association) which meant they had more control with charitable collections. He explained the council were now responsible for retaining cash collections, operating a booking system for direct debit collections and limiting frequency and numbers of collectors. It will also help to make responding to complaints easier.

J Doyle updated the committee on Electoral Registration. He said the team had completed the preparation for implementation of IER (Individual Electoral Registration). 83% of the current electorate had no changes to make and the other 17% had been asked to update their information. He advised that they had received 3,000 replies via the internet and 2,500 paper responses, which need to be scanned on to the system, and he anticipated it would be completed by October/November in time for the annual canvass.

Councillor Taylor said he had used the website to update his details on the electoral register and found it to be a very simple process.

Councillor Collins referred to page 36 of the report and said he felt that the amount of Press releases issued in the quarter didn't seem enough. S Baker explained they didn't hold much control over the amount of Press enquiries they received but the summer months were often quieter.

In relation to Electoral Registration, Councillor Marshall asked how many individuals made up the 17% that needed to update their details. J Doyle replied approximately 18k.

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe said he had received enquiries from residents about the Open Register. He suggested it would be useful to know of the positive reasons to join the Open Register as most individuals associate it with junk mail. J Doyle said the Electoral Commission had a set list of companies that used the Open Register which he would circulate to the committee.

Councillor Adeleke asked if the committee could be provided with a summary of the recent Press enquiries. S Baker confirmed he could provide this information.

Councillor Adeleke asked if the Apprenticeship scheme was still running. M Rawdon said there were currently four apprentices working at the council but they were undecided as to whether to run the scheme again. He explained that although there

was no guaranteed job for them at the end of their contract, the work they would have carried out will contribute towards other job opportunities and increase their level of training and knowledge on their CV.

S Marshall said those employed by the council had gone to on develop careers and had benefited from the programme.

Councillor Wyatt-Lowe queried if there was a legal reason why DBC withhold telephone numbers on outgoing calls as he felt it caused a problem if someone wanted to return the call. Councillor Marshall echoed Councillor Wyatt-Lowes concern as many individuals don't allow withheld numbers to call them. S Baker said he wasn't aware it was a problem but would look in to it. S Marshall said they had always used withheld number.

Councillor B Chapman was pleased about the ongoing Mental Health training and said it was a very important subject.

Action:

J Doyle to provide Electoral Commission list relating to the Open Register.

S Baker to summarise the recent Press enquiries.

S Baker to advise of any legal reason why DBC use withheld numbers.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

OS/179/14 QUARTER ONE RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT 2014/15

L Dargue introduced the report and advised that there would be a revised risk register coming up. She welcomed any questions from the committee.

Councillor Marshall referred to F2 on page 59 of the report where it was stated 'In July, Council: agreed amendments to Financial Regulations, adopted a new Commissioning & Procurement Strategy, and amended its Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders.' She asked where the Strategy could be found as she couldn't find it on the DBC intranet. S Baker advised that some of the information was currently being amended and he would notify the committee when it was available.

Action:

S Baker to notify the committee when the Commissioning & Procurement Strategy was available to view.

Outcome:

The committee noted the report and recommended it to cabinet for approval.

OS/180/14 QUARTER ONE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2014/15

R Baker introduced the report and explained which sections of the report related to each of the budgets. He welcomed questions from the committee.

Councillor Marshall asked if the council had a fees and charges policy. R Baker confirmed they did and it could be found on the website. Councillor Marshall asked when the policy was updated. S Marshall advised it was updated annually. R Baker said he would circulate a copy of the policy.

Councillor Adeleke referred to page 73 of the report and queried if the uninsured losses relating to insurance claims from tenants came back to the council. R Baker said he would need to look in to the matter and feed back to the committee.

Councillor Townsend referred to paragraph 6.4 and noted there were various clear reasons as to why repairs and maintenance was over budget. He queried if it had any relation to the management of repairs and maintenance. J Deane explained there had been an increased demand for responsive repairs since the self-financing regime, the quality of work had increased and tenant's expectation had also become higher. Councillor Townsend sought clarification on the self-financing regime. J Deane explained that the council had taken on its housing debt and brought back its stock a few years ago and this allowed significantly more money to be invested in the properties.

Councillor Chapman referred to paragraph 4.2 and asked the officers to investigate the cost per tonne to landfill.

Actions:

R Baker to circulate fees and charges policy.

R Baker to advise on the uninsured losses relating to insurance claims from tenants.

R Baker/J Deane to advise on landfill cost.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

OS/181/14 SHARED AND OUTSOURCED SERVICES UPDATE – CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE AND GATEWAY CONTRACT (CSCG)

M Housden said they were meeting all targets at present. He highlighted some key points throughout the report and welcomed member's questions.

Councillor Taylor referred to the non-KPI data on page 86 of the report. He said it was brilliant that 96% of enquiries were said to be resolved at first point of contact but felt that it might not always be the case. He used an example that if he called and asked for a form to be sent out to him it doesn't actually resolve the issue but would probably be classed as a resolved call as his request had been dealt with. M Housden said the focus was 'can the question be answered.' He felt it was impossible to answer what happened after the phone call had finished and suggested the remaining 4% may fall in to that category. He said the example Councillor Taylor had used was why he was so keen to push the use of the website and completing online forms.

Councillor W Wyatt-Lowe advised that 35% of Hertfordshire County Councils website was accessed from mobile phones. He asked if the council were taking in to account the increased use of mobile phones. B Trueman was unable to provide a percentage

of DBC's website access from mobile phones but said they were working on developing all types of technology and was moving in the right direction. He added that the housing department used a text messaging service.

Councillor Collins referred to paragraph 4.5 and said it was welcomed improvements. He then asked if there was any update on the reception area and face-to-face layout review. M Housden said the costings were being gathered to sieve through the different options, whilst taking in to account the building developments and the council move. He said they were planning to change the layout first and refurbish the seats in the CSU.

Councillor Collins noted the analysis was still ongoing for the use of Berkhamsted and Tring civic centres. M Housden explained they were awaiting data from the CRM system before they could progress any further.

Councillor Marshall praised the positive improvements. She said there were concerns raised at the previous meeting that calls were cut off after 20 minutes. M Housden said he was unaware of the issue but they now had a new system that can trace when callers dropped out of the queue. He said they couldn't find any evidence of a cut-off point but asked members to inform him if they received any further complaints on the matter.

Councillor Marshall asked if the issue of switchboard calls not being answered had been resolved. M Housden advised he wasn't aware of the issue. Councillor Marshall said she had received complaints from a few individuals in her ward that their calls were unanswered when calling the switchboard. M Housden asked if members were informed of this problem in the future, could they take the name, phone number and the date of the call and pass them to him so he could investigate.

Actions:

M Rawdon to update the committee on the customer focus project.

Outcome:

The report was noted.

OS/182/14 WORK PROGRAMME

March 2015

Procurement Strategy update

Before closing the meeting, Councillor Chapman asked officers if they could make sure the use of abbreviations in reports were made clear at the first instance as it can be confusing.

The meeting ended at 8.53 pm.