

MINUTES
FINANCE & RESOURCES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

02 SEPTEMBER 2015

Present:

Cllr Ashbourn	Cllr Douris (Vice Chair)
Cllr Barnes	Cllr Imarni
Cllr Birnie	Cllr Mills
Cllr Cllr B Chapman (Chairman)	Cllr Silwal
Cllr Clark	Cllr Taylor
Cllr E Collins	Cllr Tindall

Also Present: Councillor Elliot – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources
Councillor Harden – Portfolio Holder for Residents and Corporate Services

Officers:

D Skinner	Assistant Director (Finance & Resources)
R Smyth	Assistant Director (Performance & Projects)
M Brookes	Group Manager – Legal Governance
J Doyle	Group Manager – Democratic Services
B Hosier	Group Manager – Commissioning, Procurement and Compliance
S Baker	Assistant Director – Chief Executive’s Unit (MO)
C Berry Ottoway	Digital Project Management Team Leader
M Rawdon	Group Manager – People
M Housden	Commercial Contracts and Supplier Relationship Lead Officer
L Collins	Member Support Officer (Minutes)

OS/160/15 MINUTES

The Chairman welcomed all new Members to the committee.

The minutes of the Finance & Resources OSC meeting held on 16 June 2015 were confirmed by the Members present and signed by the Chairman.

OS/161/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Fethney.

OS/162/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

OS/163/15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

OS/164/15 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO A CALL – IN

None.

OS/165/15 ACTION POINTS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman of the committee went through the action points from the previous meeting and the responses to those points. All Members agreed the action points.

The Chair pointed out that Officers had only sent two responses to the action points a day before the meeting. He suggested that it would be more beneficial to Members if they could provide the answers prior to the meeting to allow Members time to digest or comment on their responses.

The Chairman informed Members that the order of the meeting would be amended at the request from the officers. Item 8, Budget Monitoring Q1 would be moved to item 7 and Item 7 would move to item 8. All Members were in agreement with this.

OS/166/ 15 BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 1 2015/16

David Skinner, Assistant Director for Finance and Resources presented the Budget Monitoring Quarter 1 2015/16 report on behalf of R Baker and highlighted some key areas within the report;

- Finance and Resources - £479k over budget
- Strategic Planning and Environment - £279k
- Housing and Community – £27k

One significant area highlighted was income. Officers said they had forecast to undercover £110k from the resident property portfolio. The reason for this was due to inflation being applied at 2.8% and this may have been too optimistic. This may have been too ambitious given the current economic climate. Measures will be put in place as they go through the property register to see if there is anything they can do.

- Car parking income will be within the budget.

Questions

Councillor Douris referred to page 59 3.2 and said that he was surprised to see the pressure on the void properties. He asked if this had changed and if so why.

D Skinner confirmed that there had been some pressure but explained that it may reduce as they go through the quarter.

Councillor Douris wanted clarification that this was an anticipated over budget.

D Skinner confirmed that this was correct.

Councillor Harden arrived at 7.40pm

Councillor Douris referred to page 59 3.3 and the use of Liberata. He asked if the Council needed to commission Liberata.

D Skinner said there were a number of properties that they found that DBC were not aware of and therefore may consider using them again if it was the most efficient and effective way of generating the additional income. He also pointed out that they would recover additional monies from Hertfordshire County Council.

Councillor Tindal referred to page 59 3.3 and the under-budgeting of the costs of cleaning. He asked how it was possible to under-budget in this area by £20k.

D Skinner confirmed that this was an error in the budgeting and would be rectified.

Councillor Tindal referred to page 59 3.3 and the third parties £54k over budget and asked the officer to confirm what the delays were.

D Skinner pointed out that they looked at the existing contractors and anticipated recruiting a new payroll provider but this hasn't happened as of yet. Negotiations are due to take place which will hopefully happen next year.

Councillor Tindall pointed out that there had been a lot of estimations throughout the agenda with regards to the budget and reiterated that this would need to be looked at closely over the forthcoming year.

Councillor Douris referred to page 63 7.2, line 64 and the overspend of £33k on the Hemel Gym Refurbishment. He asked if this was a human error.

D Skinner explained that they are working through the budget setting process and will make sure that this error doesn't take place again.

Councillor Douris reiterated that it is very important to have a very high level of accuracy.

Councillor Tindall referred to car parking refurbishment project in the town and asked the officers if there would be any provision for smart machines in order to help tailor the car park charges.

D Skinner said that this was more of an infrastructure issue and that they will consider the policy in due course for consideration.

Outcome

The Committee noted the forecast outturn report.

OS/167/15 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE AND OPERATIONAL RISK REGISTER REPORT 2014/15 – LEGAL GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND PEOPLE

S Baker, Assistant Director – Chief Executive's Unit (MO) presented the Quarter 1 Performance and Operational Risk Register for Legal Governance, Democratic, Commissioning & Procurement and People. He drew Members attention to the 5 new performance indicators for the Commissioning and Procurement Service which was set out in annexe 1 to the report. He added that there had been no change to the risk scores since the previous report. In the previous report HR06 was red, this had now moved to an amber score which he felt was encouraging.

Questions

Councillor Tindall referred to page 7 and the June-August start dates. He asked the officer if they could add targets to those and inform Members of the outcome.

M Rawdon said that he would report back to Members with this information.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 8 and the Health Trust moving into the Council owned premises 39/41 The Marlowes. He asked the officers to confirm whether they would be paying rent to cover Council costs.

M Brooks confirmed that he had been dealing with the legal documentation regarding this. He added that they would be paying a market rate which would cover all costs and produce an income.

Councillor Douris referred to page 9 no 15, and asked what proportion of returns had been done online.

J Doyle confirmed that from 1st December 2014-1st September 2015, there had been 21k deletions, 3 times more than they have had in previous years which may have had a lot to do with the general election. To date there have been 50% returns with a number of months to go.

Councillor Douris said that he thought this number was very low.

J Doyle explained that all the forms went out last year were 2 sides of A4. Because of transition arrangements they have had to be very strict about how the forms have been sent out this year. This years forms are 2 sides of A3. Due to the way the forms have been sent out we have not had as much emphasis on the automated responses.

Councillor Birnie reported that the reports listed are still suffering from acronym recognitions not being explained and asked if officers could resolve this issue for the next meeting going forward.

The Chair added that this was a very important point made.

Councillor Douris referred to page 13, apprenticeships. He asked if the Council are actively seeking to have any care leavers on the apprenticeships scheme.

B Hosier said that this is not something that is currently being looked at, however it is something that could be included in future tenders.

Councillor Douris mentioned that Hertfordshire County Council does take on care leavers. He mentioned that the Council have a passion for the ongoing welfare of care leavers and recognise that care leavers may need that little bit of extra help.

The Chair asked officers to look at this further and report back to the Committee at a later date.

S Baker confirmed that they would report back at a later date to update Members.

Councillor Tindall referred to page 15 item 6 regarding the new layout. He asked if they have retained an area in Customer Services for staff to deal with a member of the public who has been affected by domestic abuse to be interviewed in confidence.

M Housden confirmed that there are two rooms in the CSU area to deal with sensitive issues as well as all face to face staff having had specific training to be able to cope with these issues.

The Chair asked why the average wait time for June had increased to 2 minutes 53 seconds.

M Housden confirmed that the average wait time related to how long it takes someone to be answered from the CSU. It relates to the number of calls coming through, the time of day or staff being trained. The longest wait time is 30 minutes but reiterated that it was not the average.

The Chair said that he had some concerns that this has gone on for more than 3 months now and asked if there can be any improvements made within the CSU.

Councillor Douris made reference to the reduction of 20% of calls being answered in 20 seconds and asked if this related to staffing issues.

M Housden said that the measurements of calls answered in 20 seconds relates to calls being answered at Dacorum Borough Council. All calls received at Dacorum Borough Council are answered by an automated system, so this is a measurement of automated calls answered in 20 seconds. He confirmed that this will be the last time that this figure will be reported on as this is not a true or accurate measurement.

Councillor Harden asked if Members could be provided with a list of data confirming the longest wait times as Members are concerned that 30 minutes is a long time to wait.

M Housden said that he will provide Members with the data however the longest wait time is the most extreme.

B Hosier added that Quarter 1 (end of May, June) is the busiest time in the Customer Service Centre. The more people that call during this busy period the longer wait times will be. He confirmed that M Housden is working closely with Digital Dacorum in terms of channel shifting and encouraging people to use the self service system.

Action:

1. M Rawdon to provide members with details on the June-August targets.

2. M Housden to provide Members with a breakdown of call wait times.
3. B Hosier to further look at the apprentices and report back to committee.

Outcome:

Members noted the report.

OS/168/15 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE AND OPERATIONAL RISK REGISTER REPORTS – PERFORMANCE AND PROJECTS

R Smyth, Assistant Director for Performance & Projects presented the Quarter 1 Performance and Operational Risk Register Report for Performance and Projects. He highlighted a number of areas that had taken place since the last quarter:

1. The majority of the performance had been positive.
2. 6 out of 7 indicators were green
3. The only red indicator related to IT – due to the new started requests. This has now been resolved.
4. There is a new report which has just been created which will look at high priority indicators. They will be working with the Assistant Directors from each department and have identified the indicators they have considered to be most important.
5. There have been no changes in PPR_011. A number of new controls have been put in place.

Questions

Councillor Tindall referred to page 35, 2.2 monitoring performance. He asked the officer to confirm how long it takes to process a new starter and how they are measured.

R Smyth mentioned that their main focus was on the service resolutions, however they are not aware of any new starters that were not able to start as a result of this.

Councillor Douris mentioned that over the weekend the link to the Old Town Hall was down on the Councils website. He asked if there are any plans in place to recognise the failure of the website so that minimal disruption can be caused to the members of the public.

R Smyth explained to Members that they monitor the activity of the website and will undertake regular reviews to make sure that they are aware of any ongoing issues.

Councillor Douris asked if the broken links would be fixed out of hours alternatively if this was not the case the Council would be losing revenue.

R Smyth confirmed that he would take the issues mentioned to the web team to look into further. He mentioned that as part of the Digital Dacorum project, that the Councils website is also under current review.

Outcome:

Members noted the report.

OS/169/15 INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL DACORUM

R Smyth, Assistant Director for Performance and Projects and C Berry Ottoway, Digital Project Management Team Leader gave a presentation to Members on the introduction to Digital Dacorum.

They highlighted a few of the key areas:

- It is a 2yr programme. It is not just an IT project but a transformation programme looking at all of the changes across the organisation.

Vision

- Their vision is to transform the way the Council communicates with residents. Digital Dacorum is an online experience for people to access the services of the Council.
- 5% people use the internet, 65% of people have access to the internet on their phones. The relationship between service providers are changing at a dramatic rate.
- It is important to provide high levels of service and offer the right support to those that use the online services.
- 10 projects in total – Project 1 – looks at Website design
- Projects 2-8 – Content Management & Digital Media
- Projects 3,4,9 – Service redesign, website functionality & Direct debits
- Projects 5 & 10 – E signatures and CRM.
- Project 6 - Channel Shift
- Project 7 – Supporting Digital Inclusion
- The programme will run initially for a 2 year period upon which will a review will take place to assess what needs to be changed and any new technologies that have evolved.

Questions

Councillor Taylor pointed out that the last page of the presentation given was not included on the report.

R Smyth said that he would provide the presentation slides to Members.

Councillor Tindall asked if Members would receive a report which details how they are going to detail all of the new services online.

R Smyth said they will be looking at meeting with Tarren with regards to the library and the Forum and plans going forward.

Councillor Tindall asked if there are any plans to work with the libraries in Dacorum as they have the staff and facilities to help people get online.

R Smyth mentioned that the new website would be launched in February 2016 and it will provide a fantastic focal point to communicate with Members and the public.

Councillor Harden informed Members that regular articles are put in Dacorum Digest so people are aware of what is happening. He also mentioned that they will be working with Northgate in how they design their letters that go out to residents.

The Chair said its good practise to promote what you want to achieve.

M Housden explained to Members that they have already been working with Northgate to promote using their online services and already have a message on their phone system which says that this service is online and lists the website. The CSU staff have already been told to promote to customers the use of using the online services.

Councillor Douris asked if the officers will be working with BT and Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that those areas within the borough that are not yet connected to broadband will have access to this.

R Smyth said that they will contact Hertfordshire County Council regarding these issues. There is a digital high street board and works being done in regenerating the high street.

The Chair highlighted the need for infinity to be introduced into all areas as this is a problem that many people face.

Councillor Birnie asked if there was a programme that actively collects addresses when people access the website and services.

C Berry Ottoway mentioned that they are currently working with Northgate so every interaction that they have they will be updating. At present several of the forms have been redesigned to ensure that all of them now have the e mails included. They are also looking to cleanse all data and add to it as people use the services.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation and Councillor Harden for his update to Members.

OS/170/15 WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The Committee agreed to defer Item 7C – Q1 Performance and Operational Report for Finance and Resources until the next meeting which will take place on 7th October 2015.

The meeting ended at 9.05pm.