

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE



Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee** held on **Tuesday, 8th March, 2016** at **2.00 pm** at the **Chamber - Kilworthy Park**

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Musgrave
Vice Chairman Cllr Yelland

Cllr Davies
Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Evans

Cllr Kimber
Cllr Mott
Cllr Moyse

In attendance:

Councillors:
Cllr Benson
Cllr Cann OBE
Cllr Cloke
Cllr Leech
Cllr Moody

Cllr Parker
Cllr Pearce
Cllr Sampson
Cllr Stephens

Officers:
Head of Paid Service
Executive Director (Service Delivery & Commercial Development)
Group Manager – Support Services
Specialist Manager
CoP Lead – Development Management
Contact Centre Manager
Specialist – Performance & Intelligence

41. **Apologies for Absence**

***O&S(I) 41**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs L J G Hockridge, J R McInnes and D K A Sellis.

Whilst not a Committee Member, Cllr K Ball had also submitted his apologies to this meeting in his capacity as the Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group (Minute O&S(I) 50 below refers).

42. **Confirmation of Minutes**

***O&S(I) 42**

The minutes of the Meeting held on 6 October 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record

43. **Declarations of Interest**

***O&S(I) 43**

Members and officers were asked to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting, but there was none made.

44. **Public Forum**

***O&S(I) 44**

It was noted that officers had received notice from a member of the public requesting that a question be raised at this meeting in relation to financial and budgetary decisions made by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Having considered this request, both the Monitoring Officer and Chairman had ruled that the question did not comply with the Forum Procedure Rules since it was 'not about a matter for which the local authority had a responsibility.'

45. **Hub Committee Forward Plan**

***O&S(I) 45**

The most recent (published 3 March 2016) Hub Committee Forward Plan was presented for consideration.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

(a) Income generation opportunities. The Head of Paid Service informed that this report would be a part 2 agenda item and would seek to recommend that Council agree the principles relating to income generation and business development;

(b) the Homeless Strategy. The Committee was advised that there was now a need to consider a number of different approaches to Homelessness which was likely to necessitate a further delay in consideration of this agenda item;

(c) Hub Committee meetings. As a general point, the Chairman stated that there was a recognition that all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members needed to keep abreast of Hub Committee agendas and minutes. In addition, the Chairman reminded those present that all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members were able to attend and take part in the debate at Hub Committee meetings;

- (d) Committee workloads. When viewing the Forward Plan, Members questioned the apparent disparity in workload between the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) and (External) Committees. In response, the Head of Paid Service confirmed that future versions of the Forward Plan were likely to see this imbalance addressed.

46. **T18 ICT Progress Update**

***O&S(I) 46**

A report was considered that provided Members with an overview of the ICT elements of the T18 Programme. In particular, the report covered the following key areas:-

- Background of ICT projects;
- Civica relationship and performance;
- Current ICT project plan; and
- Current issues and key risks.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) In recognising the need to upgrade the contact centre telephony system, officers confirmed that this was likely to be in place during the summer months. Whilst the new system would help the contact centre, it was also recognised that, in order to make a significant difference, the overriding need was to reduce the number of calls coming into the Council by promoting channel shift. Specifically on the subject of channel shift, a Member highlighted the need to improve both the speed and responsiveness of the Council website. Whilst technically outside of the Programme, it was confirmed that officers were looking at improving the performance of the website;
- (b) A Member questioned the state of the current relationship between the Council and Civica. In reply, officers informed that the relationship was positive and the Council was seen as a very important customer by Civica. Senior Civica representatives were aware of the importance to their organisation of making the Programme work and weekly meetings continued to be held with senior Council officers;
- (c) Some Members were of the view that, when considering the launch had been light touch to date, it was commendable that over 1,800 online accounts had already been requested by customers;

In conclusion, a number of Members felt that the report was very encouraging and reassuring.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the progress to date on the T18 ICT Transformation Programme be noted.

47.

Development Management Service Update

***O&S(I) 47**

The Committee considered a report that outlined the measures that were being implemented, and were planned, to secure a sustainable improvement in performance in delivering Development Management.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) letters of representation. Some concern was expressed that letters of representation were not available on the new planning portal once the decision notice had been published. In response, officers informed that they were aware of the issue and steps were being taken to find a resolution. However, the point was also made that the Planning Advisory Service was adamant that such details should be removed from the portal once a decision had been made;
- (b) pressures on the service. Officers were grateful for, and reinforced the importance of, maintaining the support of Members. The two key pressures that the service continued to face were the backlog of applications and the capability of the Council website. It was noted that this was reflected in the main sources of customer complaints. Whilst the backlog was reducing and the website had seen recent improvements, it was recognised that there was still work to be done in the service;
- (c) presenting to the Planning and Licensing Committee. A Member stressed the importance of new officers being briefed on how to present their applications to meetings of the Planning and Licensing Committee;
- (d) staffing. At the time of this meeting, the Panel was advised that there were four agency planners being employed by the service and there remained three planning case manager vacancies. In reply to a further question, officers confirmed that the service was operating within the budget provisions approved by Members;
- (e) the upcoming peer review. When informed of the pending review, the Committee requested that the findings and (if necessary) an Improvement Plan be reported to its first meeting in the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the measures that are being implemented to improve performance within Development Management (as outlined at paragraph 4 of the presented agenda report presented to Members) be noted; and

2. That the findings and (if necessary) an Improvement Plan be reported to the first Committee meeting in the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

48.

Contact Centre Update

***O&S(I) 48**

Members were presented with their latest update report on the Contact Centre. In addition to the update, a service action plan had been produced and was appended to the report. Furthermore, the report also took the opportunity to update Members as to the latest performance trends.

In presenting the report, the Contact Centre Manager highlighted that:-

- staff were still working simultaneously on two different systems, which was not helping service performance. Nonetheless, it was noted that the performance figures for February 2016 were showing signs of improvement;
- the month of March would see a significant increase in calls as a result of annual Council Tax billing; and
- the last two vacant posts in the Contact Centre had now been filled.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) an acceptable standard call answer time. Officers confirmed that an 80% target for calls being answered within 7 minutes was a realistic aim. In reply to some Member concerns, it was noted that to achieve a target of anywhere close to 100%, there would be a need to double the number of staff employed in the Contact Centre, which would in effect lead to inefficient working practices;
- (b) the decrease in customer footfall at Kilworthy. A Member expressed his surprise that footfall had decreased and it was his perception that Kilworthy was constantly busy with customers. In reply, the lead Hub Committee Member emphasised the different costs of transactions with the Council and highlighted the consequent importance of channel shift and, as part of his role, he was championing this initiative;
- (c) website security. A Member commented that, to encourage customers to make payments via the Council website, there was a need for increased communications to be undertaken by the Council to assure residents that they could have confidence in using the facility;
- (d) responding to customers. A Member stated that he received a number of complaints from local residents who had been promised a response to an issue from an officer which had failed to materialise. In reply, the Head of Paid Service advised that this was an organisational issue which was being addressed and asked that Members let him know as and when any such examples arise.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the Panel continue to support the work being undertaken to improve Customer Services and monitor performance through regular updates; and
2. That the Action Plan (as outlined at Appendix C of the presented agenda report) be endorsed.

49. **Performance Measures**

***O&S(I) 49**

A report was considered that presented the performance measures for Quarter 3. The report highlighted that Quarter 3 indicators had tended to show a general improvement on both the Balanced Scorecard and the background report. Furthermore, the 'deep dive' report illustrated that there were issues currently with benefits processing. However, the report acknowledged that some of these issues were outside the control of the service.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the performance levels against target communicated in the Balanced Scorecard and the performance figures supplied in the background and exception report be noted; and
2. That the data and analysis provided within the 'Deep Dive' report – Benefits Processing be noted.

50. **Member Development Steering Group: Progress Update**

***O&S(I) 50**

The Committee Vice-Chairman provided a progress update on the work of the Member Development Steering Group. In so doing, she raised the following points:-

- The Group had last met on 26 January 2016 and had specifically considered the findings of the Member questionnaire;
- With regard to future Induction programmes, the Group had already formed the view that planning related training should be held over the course of one day. It was envisaged that the format of this day would be that a session relating to forward planning issues would be held in the morning, with a Development Management tailored session then being held in the afternoon. In addition, the Group had also endorsed the suggestion for a Planning and Licensing Committee tailored session to be held before the first Committee meeting proper;

- The Group had also made a series of other recommendations relating to the Induction and would be considering these in more detail at its next meeting on Monday, 14 March 2016;
- Once the Working Group had 'signed off' the Induction Programme, it would be then turning its attention to the corporate Member Learning and Development Programme;
- As a reminder, the Working Group Members were here to support fellow Members in bringing forward any potential learning and development needs.

In the ensuing discussion, a number of Members expressed their support for the format of the proposed planning related sessions and the mock Planning and Licensing Committee.

The Committee concluded by thanking the Steering Group for its excellent work in this regard.

51. **Draft Work Programme 2016/17 - Initial Thoughts**

***O&S(I) 51**

The Committee took the opportunity to express some initial thoughts relating to its 2016/17 Work Programme and proceeded to make the following comments:-

- A review into the Locality Model was requested to be scheduled for a Committee meeting early in the 2016/17 Municipal Year;
- Specifically in respect of the matrix management aspect of the Transformation Programme, a Member felt that it would be opportune to review the effectiveness of communication across the operating model as part of a future T18 Monitoring report; and
- Some Members made the point that it was difficult for both Overview and Scrutiny Committees to effectively monitor and add value to the work of the Hub Committee when considering that their Committees met nowhere near as frequently. In reply, the point was acknowledged and officers advised that the Calendar of Meetings for 2016/17 would be drafted on the basis of attempting to keep the impact to a minimum.

The Meeting concluded at 3.50 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
