

WEST DEVON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE



Minutes of a meeting of the **West Devon Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee** held on **Tuesday, 9th June, 2015** at **3.30 pm** at the

Present: **Councillors:**

Chairman Cllr Musgrave
Vice Chairman Cllr Yelland

Cllr Davies

Cllr Edmonds
Cllr Kimber
Cllr Sellis

In attendance:

Councillors:
Cllr Cloke
Cllr Moody
Cllr Pearce

Cllr Leech
Cllr Parker
Cllr Sheldon

Officers:
Head of Paid Service
Executive Director (Service
Delivery & Commercial
Development)

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
***O&S(I) 1**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs L J G Hockridge, J R McInnes and C Mott.
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
***O&S(I) 2**
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 were none made.
- 3. Committee Terms of Reference**
***O&S(I) 3**

Being the first meeting of the newly established Committee, its draft terms of reference were presented for consideration.

In consideration, the following points were raised:-

- The close linkages of the Committee to the Audit Committee were noted;
- The importance of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the two Scrutiny Committees working together to ensure that there was no duplication of effort was also recognised;
- The recognition in the draft terms of reference of the ability to work jointly with the South Hams District Council Scrutiny Panel was welcomed;
- In light of the general consensus of the Committee being that the draft Terms of Reference were too detailed, the Panel requested that officers revisit the document and present a revised streamlined version to the next meeting.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That officers be tasked with presenting a streamlined version of the draft terms of reference to the next Committee meeting.

4. Public Forum *O&S(I) 4

The Chairman informed that the creation of a Public Forum was a new and exciting concept. Whilst no questions (or issues) had been raised by the public for consideration at this meeting, the Chairman commented that it was incumbent upon Members to promote this concept amongst their local communities.

5. Hub Committee Forward Plan *O&S(I) 5

The most recent (published 4 June 2015) Hub Committee Forward Plan was presented for consideration.

In discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the main purpose of this standing agenda item. It was noted that the main purpose was to enable lead Hub Committee Members to be called to Committee meetings to update Scrutiny Members on specific items which were scheduled to come forward to the Hub Committee, thereby enabling early scrutiny of proposed agenda items;
- (b) the income generation agenda. In reply to a number of Members emphasising the importance of income generation, officers informed that a number of business cases would be presented to Members for consideration. The Chairman of the Audit Committee highlighted the value of a paper produced by Grant Thornton on the formation of a trading company and confirmed that he would send this report to the Committee Members;

- (c) an acceptance that the Forward Plan would evolve during the course of the year. Whilst not currently illustrated on the Forward Plan, a Member wished for the importance (and sensitivity) of the Bus Depot matter to be noted;
- (d) the importance of Scrutiny focusing its attention on strategic (high-level) issues. In recognising the potential tension between early scrutiny and the ability to call-in a decision, a request was made for a clear pathway to be provided to all Members that outlines the decision-making process;
- (e) there being future Learning and Development opportunities for Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Forward Plan be noted.

6. **Update on Transformation Programme T18**

***O&S(I) 6**

The Executive Director (Service Delivery and Commercial Services) provided a verbal progress update on the Transformation Programme.

In the ensuing debate, specific reference was made to:-

- the main recent focus being on ensuring that the organisational structure was in place. In particular, it was noted that Phase 1(b) of the recruitment process had just gone live on 1 June 2015 and the number of posts on the combined establishments had been reduced by 110 (reducing the staffing budget by 25%).

Since the new technology was not in place yet, there was a huge pressure on staff and Members were asked to not underestimate the impact that this was having on staff. However, the Executive Directors wished to put on record their gratitude at the resilience and work rate of members of staff, who were responding amazingly. Nonetheless, the Committee was informed that the next three months would be difficult for the Council, as it was currently entering the most uncomfortable phase of the Programme. However, officers reassured the Committee that the Programme was a good plan and Members and the community would see service improvements within the next few months.

When questioned, officers advised that negotiations were currently taking place with Unions with regard to the merits of bringing Phase 2 of the recruitment process forward to an earlier date;

- the high percentage of agency staff being employed by the Council. Whilst a cause for concern, the Committee recognised that this was a

direct consequence of such a large organisational restructure. However, since Phase 1(b) had now gone live, the Council was now in a position to be able to start to recruit externally, although some posts would have to be kept back until the completion of Phase 2. Nonetheless, some Members did still wish to express their disappointment at the number of experienced members of staff who had recently left the Council;

- the new technology. Members were advised that the technology delay was attributed to the extent of the work involved in mapping every single process and function, before it is then tested and scripted on to the new system;
- the Locality model. Officers confirmed that the Locality team would be in operation within the next few months and it was envisaged that a Member Locality Briefing would be held on the afternoon of Monday, 6 July;
- an all Member Briefing on the Programme, which had been scheduled to take place on Thursday, 23 June at 2.30pm. Some newly elected Members stated that they were struggling to understand the details of the Programme. In reply, officers informed that they would send out the reports which had previously been considered by the Council and the Executive Directors advised that they were also more than happy to meet smaller groups of Members to talk through the history of the Programme;
- a general sense of positivity. Some Members made reference to the revolutionary nature of the Programme and the Council being trail blazers in this regard. Furthermore, the Panel noted that the Council had been shortlisted for a CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) national award for its recruitment process against a behavioural framework and other Councils were keen on the Council sharing its experiences with them.

7.

Performance Indicators (Q4 2014/15)

***O&S(I) 7**

The Panel considered a report that provided Members with information on the Key Performance Indicators at the end of Quarter 4 for 2014/15.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Officers highlighted the new agenda report format and confirmed that they would welcome any Member feedback (both positive and negative) on this new format;

- (b) With regard to the planning performance indicators, officers had spoken to a number of colleagues who were all experiencing similar issues and, in particular, were struggling to recruit planning officers. However, officers were totally committed to improving service performance and were fully aware of the reputational issues associated with below average performance caused by capacity issues. The Committee was informed that measures had been put in place to improve performance, with neighbouring authorities currently assisting with processing (but not determining) applications and through the use of agency planners. Officers also confirmed that it was their intention to commission an external planning review into the service;

- (c) Officers advised that the 'red status' of the average call answer time performance measure was largely attributed to capacity issues. Although recognising the need to improve upon this trend, officers were of the view that call answer time was in fact an indication of activity and not a performance measure and the focus in this regard should be on outcomes;

- (d) The Committee welcomed the officer recommendation whereby an update on both the Development Management Service and Customer Services should be presented to the meeting on 6 October 2015;

- (e) Members supported the officer suggestion whereby a joint West Devon/South Hams Task and Finish Group review should be undertaken into the appropriateness of the performance indicators which were presented in the future;

- (f) The Committee discussed the merits of undertaking exit interviews with staff upon their leaving the employ of the Council. Whilst it was recognised that there were advantages to this activity, the majority of Members did not feel that the benefits merited the level of resource that this would involve;

- (g) The ambitious nature of the current performance measures was recognised by the Committee;

- (h) In reply to a question, officers confirmed that the Developers Forum had been re-established recently. Feedback had indicated that the first meeting had been successful and it was hoped that the lead Hub Committee Member and Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee could be involved in the future.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the Key Performance Indicators for Quarter 4 be noted;
2. That Members note the proposals to present an update on both the Development Management Service and Customer Services to the Committee meeting on 6 October 2015; and
3. That the Panel endorse a joint review with South Hams District Council being undertaken into the Performance Measures and welcome a report being presented back to Members in the autumn.

8. **Members Proposal Form for Potential Agenda Items**

***O&S(I) 8**

Members were supportive of the proposal form being adopted and recognised the importance of the key objectives and outcomes sections of this document.

Furthermore, Members felt it would be pertinent for any submitted forms to be determined within seven working days of receipt.

It was also noted that nothing would be excluded from consideration and each submitted form would be reviewed by a Panel comprising of the Head of Paid Service and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Proposal Form be adopted as the means for submitting future agenda item requests, with submitted forms being determined within seven working days of receipt.

9. **Draft Work Programme 2015/16**

***O&S(I) 9**

The Committee considered its draft 2015/16 Work Programme and made reference to the following additions and amendments:-

- (a) the creation of a joint Performance Indicator review Task and Finish Group. Cllr Musgrave confirmed his willingness to lead upon the Group, with Cllrs Davies, Evans and Yelland supporting him in this review;
- (b) the Committee's annual report. The constitutional requirement to produce an annual report was recognised and it was agreed that a draft version should be presented to the meeting on 8 March 2016, before then being presented to Annual Council;
- (c) the opportunity for the Committee to invite Hub Committee Members to give an update on their areas of responsibility at future meetings was noted;

(d) in light of the Committee decision on the Performance Indicators report (O&S(I) 7 above refers), the need to add the service updates on both the Development Management and Customer Services to the agenda for 6 October 2015 meeting was acknowledged.

The Meeting concluded at 5.20 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
