

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 26 November 2009

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Lowry, Vice Chair.

Councillors Berrow, Dann, Sam Leaves, Lock, Stark and Thompson.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Stevens

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.15 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

36. MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes of the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel which took place on the 29 October 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

37. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

38. FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Chair reported that there was no feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

39. SUBSTITUTIONS

The Panel received a report which highlighted that Councillor Stark had been selected as the nominated substitute for two panels. The report also requested that a substitute for the Labour group was nominated.

Resolved that Councillors Berrow and Lowry be appointed as nominated substitutes for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

(Councillor Stark left the meeting during this item)

40. QUARTERLY REPORT

Resolved to approve the report.

41. INTRODUCTION TO ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Panel heard an outline of the work that the Assistant Chief Executive would undertake in relation to Communications, Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Customer focus.

In answer to questions from members of the panel it was reported that;

- (i) there was work ongoing to improve the lines of communication between the public and the authority which included the main council telephone number;

- (ii) it was important that services need to be right at the point of delivery as this would result in customer satisfaction and reduce the amount of contacts and rework required;
- (iii) joint working was happening at both a strategic and local level, services were co-locating and there were plans to integrate commissioning;
- (iv) the inclusion of customer feedback in the bi-monthly budget and performance report, could assist in service design.

The Panel thanked the Assistant Chief Executive for his time.

42. **ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY**

The Panel received a presentation from the Head of Corporate Property on the Accommodation Strategy. It was reported that the strategy will attempt to –

- (i) reshape the Council providing increased customer service and focus;
- (ii) deliver on Gershon efficiency savings and value for money targets;
- (iii) allow the authority to become more sustainable;
- (iv) increase productivity;
- (v) allow better use of council resources.

In response to questions from members of the panel, members were informed that –

- (vi) there was work ongoing with the Police, PCT and University regarding co-locating;
- (vii) although service level agreements would standardise the process it could formalise the process too much and lead to less goodwill;
- (viii) there would be a payback period of less than five years for investment which would subsequently turn into a year on year saving;
- (ix) the proposed spend on Accommodation was £1,200,000 assuming that the council continues to occupy the civic centre;
- (x) Councillor Sam Leaves was nominated by Councillor Lowry and seconded by Councillor Thompson to act as a champion for the project and to provide assistance to Councillor Bowyer should he require it.

Resolved to review strategic next steps with regard to the accommodation, ICT and People strategy at the next meeting of the Panel.

43. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS**

Resolved -

(1) that with regard to minute 33 (1) and (2) Councillors Lowry and Stark form an ad-hoc informal working group to provide the panel with a needs analysis for a scrutiny resources task & finish group and to look at whether or not items on other panels work programmes are statutory;

(2) to note and remove the completed resolutions from the tracking document.

44. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Resolved to –

1. add a review of the business case for the accommodation strategy to the Panels work programme for January;
2. add a review of the Local Strategic Partnership back office function to the work programme for January.

45. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.