

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 21 January 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Lowry, Vice Chair.

Councillors Berrow, Dann, Sam Leaves, Lock, Stevens, Browne (Substitute for Councillor Stark), Thompson.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 1.00 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.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

47. MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes of the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel which took place on the 26 November 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

48. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

49. FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Panel received a verbal report on the contract award process from the Product Portfolio Manager. It was reported that –

- (i) All goods and services across the organisation were procured in accordance with EU and UK Procurement Law, PCC Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
- (ii) the council took advantage of opportunities for collaborative procurement and was part of the Devon Procurement Partnership;
- (iii) the contract management process ensured that the council received agreed service levels at the negotiated price and quality. Members of the strategic procurement team supported local managers in this process and managed a small number of central contracts.

In response to questions from the panel it was reported that –

- (iv) with regard to the contract award for temporary staff referred by Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, there had not yet been an invitation to tender;
- (v) Value for money was a central component of the evaluation criteria of any project, it would include an evaluation of market rates, contractor fees and process costs. It would also take account of how the council interfaces with any contractor and the efficiency of the ordering process;
- (vi) the vetting and barring scheme formed part of the evaluation criteria, contractors own policies would be assessed and health and safety technical statements were required;

- (vii) any justification for temporary staff would come from the lead department. The contract award for temporary staff was a 2nd generation contract, it was up to Human resources to evaluate any current contract as the lead department;
- (viii) the cost of an in-house temporary staffing agency was more when pension and sickness liability was considered Using an outside contractor was a cost effective solution to minimising the risk to the council.

Members commented that they would have liked more information before the meeting in order to ask pertinent questions of the Officer. The Chair reinforced that Members of the Panel are invited to come along to planning meetings where the information that panel members felt they required could be requested ahead of the business meeting.

50. INTRODUCTION TO NEW OFFICERS

- (i) **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE**
The Panel expressed disappointment that the Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance had given apologies due to a clash with induction training. Members commented that this item had been on the work programme for some time and that attendance at the Panel should have taken precedence over the induction training.

Members commented that requests for attendance at a scrutiny panel should take priority and a review of the status of scrutiny request should be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Resolved that a further meeting of the Panel be held in order to meet with the Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance.

- (ii) **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**
The Panel heard an outline of the work that the Assistant Director of Human Resources would undertake over the coming months. In response to questions from members of the panel it was reported that –
 - (i) The biggest challenge in the first three months would be coming to terms with the councils financial situation;
 - (ii) any reduction in workforce would impact on the city and through a process of planning, succession management, up skilling and talent management any impact could be lessened;
 - (iii) the Assistant Director had eight years experience in Human Resources within the public sector;
 - (iv) carbon control was an issue to be looked at, it included how employees influence their communities and would be part of a wider communications programme.
- (iii) **HEAD OF FINANCE**
The Panel heard an outline of the work that the Head of Finance would undertake over the coming months. It was reported that –
 - (i) That the Head of Finance had private sector experience in the UK, US and Japanese management models.
 - (ii) communication is a key issue, the Head of Finance has good support from the Cabinet Member and believes he is able to communicate effectively with all Members whatever there financial knowledge or experience is.

(iv) **HEAD OF VALUE FOR MONEY**

The Panel heard an outline of the work that the Head of Value for Money and Efficiencies would undertake over the coming months. It was reported that –

- (i) There would be a focus on delivering services in an effective and efficient way, providing value for money for customers;
- (ii) the new Head of VFM and efficiencies would welcome any feedback from members and would positively engage with anybody with constructive feedback.

51. CIP 14 - VALUE FOR MONEY - SUSTAINABILITY

The Panel received a presentation from the Sustainable Development Coordinator on the sustainability element of CIP 14. It was reported that –

- (i) There had been a change from voluntary to mandatory carbon management targets in the last two years;
- (ii) the Climate Change Act set out leadership, governance and accounting responsibilities;
- (iii) the Council would be treated as any other large business in regards to carbon management;
- (iv) there was a Climate Change Commission and partners in Plymouth were working well;
- (v) partnership working was essential to achieve targets and carbon accounts will become a legal requirement;
- (vi) Plymouth had achieved a good reputation for innovation in regard to climate change;

In response to questions from members of the panel, it was reported that –

- (vii) There are strict requirements in the local development framework regarding efficiency;
- (viii) the lights in the civic centre are controlled by an automated system, there had been technical issues, the department would take reports of any lights being left on;
- (ix) a reward system was under consideration to encourage staff to be more environmental conscious;
- (x) there could be a fine for not registering a carbon reduction commitment on time;
- (xi) there was a reward system if carbon targets are met;
- (xii) there was work to be done on the use of current resources, items of furniture which went to central stores could be used elsewhere rather than purchasing new equipment;
- (xiii) sustainability needed to be embedded into decision making; there is a role for members of the panel to raise the issue with colleagues;

(xiv) there was a programme of events being devised to get the message out to the public.

52. REVIEW OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BACK OFFICE FUNCTION

The panel received a presentation from the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Manager on the LSP back office function. It was reported that –

- (i) The LSP back office had overseen a number of funding streams;
- (ii) key activities included a review of the LSP, helping to deliver third sector support infrastructure, defining a process to deliver multi agency plans to tackle city priorities and LSP performance management;
- (iii) the LSP back office is responsible for establishing a clear development plan for the 2020 vision, strengthening the governance and accountability of the LSP and managing the transition to Locality working for theme groups and other LSP bodies.

In response to questions from the panel it was reported that-

- (iv) The LSP had delayed work on communications plans and activities until strong delivery plans were developed;
- (v) any future review of the LSP could include input from councillors;
- (vi) performance against some LAA targets has been improved thanks to partnership working;
- (vii) funding levels had changed on a yearly basis, it would be more difficult to secure funding in the future and reward grant would be dependent on hitting LAA targets.

53. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (TO FOLLOW)

The panel noted the briefing paper on the Internal Communication Plan.

Resolved that both the Internal and External Communication plans are placed on the work programme for a future meeting.

54. STAFF SURVEY

The panel received a briefing on the positive changes made since the last staff survey. In response to questions from members of the panel the Assistant Director for Human Resources reported that –

- (i) The competency frame work is vital and was being rolled out;
- (ii) the appraisal process was going well and 80% would be complete by the end of January;
- (iii) work is required on the internal perception of the council, employees perception of the council effects that of the public;
- (iv) Human Resources had used public sector bench marks as a minimum and had used private sector standards as stretch targets;
- (v) cooperation between teams could be increased, aspects of the accommodation strategy would address this issue;
- (vi) the accountability of managers needed to be more consistent across the authority,

criticism of managers in the staff survey would be managed by further training and up skilling;

- (vii) Appraisals would identify any problems with managers and it was not necessary to wait for the next staff survey.

Resolved to organise a visit to floor 5 of the civic centre where aspects of the accommodation strategy are being piloted.

55. **FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS**

There was no feedback from working groups.

56. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS**

Tracking resolutions were noted by members of the Panel.

57. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Resolved that as some members of the panel had left the meeting the discussion on the future work programme be deferred to the next meeting of the panel.

58. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.