

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 2 September 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Lowry, Vice Chair.

Councillors Berrow, Browne, Lock, Murphy, Stark and Thompson.

Co-opted Representatives: Janet Isaac

Apologies for absence: Councillor Dann

Also in attendance:

Councillor Glenn Jordan, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, People, Property and Governance, Paul Chapman, Head of VFM and Efficiency, Jo Atkey, Policy and Performance Officer, Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development and Grace Hughes, Operational Development Manager.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.10 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.

23. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

24. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the 8 July 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

25. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

26. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The tracking resolutions were noted by panel members.

27. **CIP 2 - INFORMING AND INVOLVING RESIDENTS UPDATE**

Councillor Glenn Jordan, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Jo Atkey, Policy and Performance Officer gave a presentation on Corporate Improvement Priority 2 – Informing and Involving Residents. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) CIP 2 had five key milestones which were –
 - improve information available to residents about opportunities to get involved and have a say;
 - under new LSP governance arrangements, establish an NI4 action plan identifying partnership-wide responsibilities in relation to involving residents in decisions in their local areas;
 - co-ordinate public engagement and consultation processes at neighbourhood level to support the Localities working model;
 - deliver training to increase staff and councillor awareness of best practice engagement and consultation practice;
 - establish a central research function to improve analysis and use of information and data in support of service planning;
- (b) the council's website had been improved making it a more user friendly service;
- (c) the creation of a consultation portal enabled consultation information to be more readily available through the website;
- (d) regular meetings with partner organisations were being held to share information about engagement and consultation activities with the aim to be more joined up and make better use from public feedback;
- (e) localities working was being implemented enabling local residents to engage with the council and its partners, and in the process delivering better engagement opportunities;
- (f) a training programme was being provided to councillors and staff from the council and its partners ensuring that councillors and staff were better informed on how to engage and consult with residents;
- (g) to improve information and data management in support of service planning, the Council and partner organisations were

improving how they shared information and data. Neighbourhood profiles would soon be published on the Council's website;

- (h) further delivery of CIP 2 would incorporate –
- the impact of new government policies;
 - the continued importance of utilising customer feedback and residents perceptions in shaping services and delivering emerging city wide priorities.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (i) the Place Survey had been withdrawn following the changes in Government;
- (j) as a result of the withdrawal of the Place Survey there was no requirement for local authorities to undertake perception surveys, however Plymouth would aim to make better use of information gathered via consultations and other surveys;
- (k) the neighbourhood profiles would all be consistent in their approach and follow the same format containing information about health, crime rates, area demographics and local leisure facilities;
- (l) the website was designed to be used by people with visual impairments, however it was realised that this was not the definitive answer to engagement and there were other channels for residents to use such as focus groups and neighbourhood forums.

Agreed that –

- (1) the panel continues to value the views of our customers in service planning and playing a role in monitoring how that feedback is used;
- (2) the Democratic Support Officer would disseminate a copy of the CIP 2 presentation to all members of the Panel;
- (3) Jo Atkey, Policy and Performance Officer would send to all Panel members a link for the neighbourhood profiles, once they were live, and a link to the consultation portal.

The Chair thanked Jo Atkey, Policy and Performance Officer for her attendance.

28. **CIP 13 - SUPPORTING COUNCIL STAFF TO PERFORM BETTER UPDATE**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance and Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development gave a presentation on Corporate Improvement Priority 13 – Supporting Council Staff to Perform Better. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) CIP 13 – Supporting Council Staff to Perform Better aimed to ensure effective staff development and to ensure performance management arrangements existed to help the council achieve excellence by 2012;
- (b) the key activities in achieving the priority were –
 - to equip managers and staff to manage change and improve performance;
 - to embed performance management arrangements across the council;
 - to improve the quality of information gathered on the workforce, their capacity and productivity;
- (c) many of the milestones within the key activities were completed early which allowed scope for CIP 13 to stretch its targets including monitoring staff productivity to enable staff to deliver services more effectively and efficiently and to develop better working relationships with partners in order to reduce the duplication of work;
- (d) of the 16 milestones within CIP 13 there had been 13 completed, two part completed and one which hadn't been completed, this was the Communications Strategy which was a work in progress and was designed to improve communication with staff to ensure they felt informed;
- (e) in completing the milestones CIP 13 had some big successes including the Single Status Agreement, Job Evaluation, and the Competency Framework Appraisals;
- (f) there was a corporate drive to improve workforce development following the successful development of the workforce within Children's Services;
- (g) at the end of 2010 the staff survey would be conducted which would aim to improve the quality of information gathered on the workforce;
- (h) in order to achieve the stretch targets of CIP 13 activities have been identified to be undertaken which include –

- modernising terms and conditions around leave ensuring that there was a flexible approach;
 - embedding competencies and performance-linked pay;
 - designing and implementing a reward and recognition scheme for staff who exceeded expectations;
- (i) CIP 13 had witnessed a very strong and targeted approach and a lot of success but it was also recognised that there was still a long way to go in achieving its desired outcomes.

In response to councillors questions it was reported that –

- (j) changes to staffing levels and the way the authority worked could not be ruled out, however, nothing would happen until details of the spending review had been released;
- (k) the results of the staff survey would be used as a tool for benchmarking;
- (l) although the Communications Strategy had not been achieved it was understood that engaging with staff was vital and that this was being achieved by regular dialogue on financial positions being included in all employees payslips;
- (m) staff and management were being informed about change and encouraged to change the way they worked in a number of different ways including –
- a management development programme advising staff on change and how to deal with change;
 - presentations at Departmental Management Teams and Team Plymouth;
 - a new policy on change management;
 - customer service training in a new programme called FISH;
- (n) employee skill gaps were being addressed via the appraisal system and also by an apprenticeship and graduate programme which had been introduced.

Agreed that –

- (1) due to the Panel's concern about how the council is communicating with staff internally a request be made to Richard

Longford, Head of Communications in respect of the Communications Strategy asking for a report highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the Communications Strategies through a SWOT analysis to be provided by 10 September 2010.

29. **APPRAISAL REVIEW**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development gave an update on the Appraisal Review. Grace Hughes, Operational Development Manager was also in attendance to provide an overview of how the appraisal system was implemented in the catering department. Councillors were informed by Grace Hughes that –

- (a) the competency based appraisal system is a much more communicative system than previous appraisal systems and was a really good management tool to improve staff abilities and improve service delivery;
- (b) in its early stages the appraisal system had a few problems due to its complexities, however, following a training system held with catering managers the progress made by staff was immense;
- (c) the new competency based appraisal system should be applauded for its ability to improve staff performance and to drive services forward.

In response to members questions it was reported that –

- (d) the appraisal system had been linked to pay ensuring that if an employee did not meet the required standards in the set criteria they would not receive the increments in pay scales. There was also an appeal's process in place if the employee was not happy with their appraisal;
- (e) the reason for the high number of worker supervisor's who did not meet expectations was due to the complexity of the appraisal system when it was introduced, it was hoped that the results from the recent appraisals would rectify this situation following the training that was given;
- (f) as part of the single status agreement the bonus system was abolished and now people were only rewarded with incremental rises if they met the expectation criteria;
- (g) the idea of introducing a recognition scheme for employees who exceed expectations was being looked into;
- (h) 360° Feedback forms allowed staff the opportunity to provide feedback on colleagues performance against the criteria, it was

hoped that the feedback mechanism would be more widely introduced over the next couple of years.

Agreed that –

- (1) the report and progress made against CIP 13 be noted;
- (2) the panel continues to support and take an interest in the development of staff and the results and impact of the appraisal and competency systems;
- (3) to receive a report on the results from the current round of appraisals at the panel's meeting on 13 January 2011.

The Chair thanked Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development and Grace Hughes, Operational Development Manager for their attendance.

30. **CIP 14 - PROVIDING BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY UPDATE**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance and Paul Chapman, Head of VFM and Efficiency gave a presentation on Corporate Improvement Priority 14 – Providing Better Value for Money and the VFM Quarterly Update. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) VFM was the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- (b) in achieving better value for money the council were working towards National Indicator 179 – Efficiencies;
- (c) the three year efficiency target between 2008 – 2011 had been revised and now stood at £31m, meaning that the council had to find a further £21m between now and March 2011;
- (d) the forecast for the efficiencies the council would achieve by March 2011 was £29.1m rather than £21m and was set out by how much each department would save as follows –
 - Community services - £10.2m;
 - Corporate Support – £2.7m;
 - Development - £6.6m;
 - Chief Executives - £0.1m;
 - Children & Young People - £9.4m;
- (e) the council had submitted their efficiency savings for 2008/09

which were £5.4m and 2009/10 which were £9.9m;

- (f) the savings achieved in 2008/09 and 2009/10 were on-going savings and the efficiency initiatives contained in the delivery plans for the departments fit the criteria of the NI179 performance indicator;
- (g) corporately there was a review of business administration focussing on four key processes – order to cash, purchase to pay, entry to exit and record to report. In addition to this there was a movement to standardise basic administration roles;
- (h) staff were being regularly consulted with on what VFM means to them, not just in terms of money savings but also in providing an effective and efficient service;
- (i) the council was reasonably confident in achieving the £31m efficiency target and that the final submission date for NI 179 was on 22 July 2011.

Councillors were also informed on how the VFM ethos was being embedded across the council. It was reported that –

- (j) departmental programme boards had been created to scrutinise departmental delivery plans on efficiencies, spread VFM message across the council and reduce areas of duplication;
- (k) a member of the VFM team attended the departmental programme boards to ensure that in reviewing the departmental delivery plans the finance teams and lead business managers considered the service improvements alongside the financial evidence required by the NI179 criteria;
- (l) the information from the delivery plans were included in monthly and quarterly budget reports ensuring that members were being kept up to date;
- (m) a VFM visit programme had been developed and budget manager training was being updated to include more guidance on VFM and the NI179 criteria to encourage and reinforce VFM ethos across Council.

Councillors were given an overview of how corporate sustainability was being improved in relation to one of the key milestones within CIP 14. Councillors were informed that -

- (n) there had been many achievements in relation to the Environmental Policy 2009/2013, the Carbon Management Plan 2008/2013 and the Climate Change Action Plan 2009/2011 including, amongst others –

- an achieved reduction of 5.2% in 2009/10 carbon footprint against the rolling target of 4% per year;
 - registration for the Carbon Reduction Commitment completed over a month in advance of the deadline;
 - SALIX funding had been secured for projects to the value of £710,000;
 - the lowest recorded Eco, Carbon and Greenhouse Gas footprints in the South West;
 - a Climate Change Commission being fully established to begin work in October 2010;
- (o) as a result of the positive work achieved in sustainability the city had been awarded one of nine national pilot projects to establish and deliver a Local Carbon Framework.

In response to councillors questions it was reported that –

- (p) all council's were measured against achieving savings of 3% in 2008/09, 3% in 2009/10 and 4% in 2010/11, the baseline was 2007/08;
- (q) the reason for the large efficiency saving in Community Services was due to major changes within Adult Social Care as a result of an acknowledgement that the service delivery was outdated;
- (r) departmental delivery plans had created priorities and allocated resources to ensure that service delivery would not be compromised whilst efficiency savings were being delivered.

Agreed that the Democratic Support Officer would disseminate a copy of the CIP 14 presentation and a copy of the latest CIP 14(Sustainability) Progress Update to all members of the Panel.

31. **VFM QUARTERLY UPDATE**

This item was discussed in conjunction with agenda item 30. CIP 14 – Providing Better Value for Money update.

32. **BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance and Paul Chapman, Head of VFM and Efficiency presented the Budget and Performance Report. Members were informed that –

- (a) the Council's in-year budget planning efficiencies of £10m did not

include the further government enforced in-year efficiencies of £4m (as set out in Appendix C of the report);

- (b) the government enforced efficiency savings demonstrate the extra pressures being put on departments as these had not been budgeted for;
- (c) spend to save investments were being explored as possible ways to improve service delivery and generate income;

It was commented by councillors that –

- (d) the Corporate Support section in the report was relevant to the Panel and the other sections contained within the report were not the panels remit, these would be reviewed by the appropriate panels;
- (e) the report didn't provide enough information about the Corporate Support efficiency savings against core services - an explanation showing how the £691k was being broken down would have been helpful.

Agreed that a written response from David Northey be requested and emailed to panel members providing a breakdown of the £691k efficiencies in Corporate Support core services.

The Chair thanked Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance and Paul Chapman, Head of VFM and Efficiency for their attendance.

33. **QUARTERLY SCRUTINY REPORT**

Agreed that the first quarterly scrutiny report be noted.

34. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Agreed to approve the revised work programme for 2010/11.

35. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.