

Co-operative Scrutiny Board

Wednesday 11 March 2015

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Beer, Bowie, Darcy, Philippa Davey, Jordan, Murphy, John Smith and Kate Taylor.

Apology for absence: Councillor Parker-Delaz-Ajete.

Also in attendance: Les Allen (Head of Portfolio), Ross Jago (Policy and Research Officer), Nicola Lenden (Transformation Communications Lead), Rob Pendleton (Programme Manager), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Chris Randall (Head of Finance Operations), Chris Squire (Interim Assistant Director for HR and OD), Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Transformation) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 6.10 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.

139. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors, in accordance with the code of conduct.

140. **MINUTES**

The Board agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 12 January 2015 and 19 February 2015 are confirmed as a correct record.

141. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

142. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

The Board noted its work programme for the municipal year 2014/15.

143. **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

There were no decisions taken under delegated authority.

144. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

The board considered its schedule of decisions and noted the latest position.

The Chair advised that the HR information requested (refer minute 151) had been provided for this meeting.

145. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS AND PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The Board considered the following executive decisions in the Forward Plan which were scheduled to be discussed at Cabinet between March and May 2015 –

- review and prioritisation of the capital programme;
- Devonport Market Hall refurbishment;
- Plymouth Employment and Skills plan
- phase two of the National Troubled Families Programme;
- residential and nursing care home fair price for care;
- integrated commissioning – contract award for integrated health and social care provision;
- Integrated commissioning – approval of Section 75 Agreement.

Due to an opportunity arising for the Council to acquire the long leasehold interest, it was impractical to defer the decision relating to the property investment opportunity, units 6A-9A, Kay Close, Newnham Industrial Estate, Plympton. (Please refer to minute 150).

146. **CORPORATE MONITORING REPORT (INCLUDING HR INFORMATION)**

The Head of Finance Operations and the Interim Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development presented the Corporate Monitoring report (including overtime, agency and sickness), which highlighted the following key areas –

- (a) the estimated revenue overspend at the end of the year was £1.336m as at January 2015; there had been a reduction of £0.410m since last reported to the Board;
- (b) the estimated overspend within the People directorate had improved by £400,000, as a result of further savings being identified within Homes and Communities (external funding for Families with a Future; worklessness, commissioning, lower court fees and vacancy savings);
- (c) there had been an improvement within Education, Learning and Families of £240,000; the additional savings were being achieved through maximising grant funding to cover the overall cost of the special educational needs and disabilities service together with a reduction in the teachers' pension budget.

Following questions raised by members, it was reported that –

- (d) the reduction in the teachers' pension budget related to maintained schools only and not academies;
- (e) work was currently being undertaken to finalise the budget position for February 2015, so no further update was available;
- (f) if the remainder of the contingency fund was used (£500,000), it would reduce the overall forecast overspend to under £1m;
- (g) an undertaking was given to provide a breakdown by service of the number of staff absent through stress;
- (h) it was extremely difficult to distinguish whether staff absence was due to work related stress or external factors; stress assessments were undertaken for those members of staff who had periods of absence due to ill mental health issues; however staff who were absent for just a few days would not routinely receive a stress assessment;
- (i) the occupational health referrals included mental health, wellbeing and stress related issues;
- (j) occupational health referrals were undertaken by a specialist provider IMASS Occupational Health Solutions;
- (k) an undertaking was given to provide information as to the arrangements that were being put in place to resolve the shortage of occupational health nurses.

The Board agreed to –

- (1) undertake a review on stress related sickness in the new municipal year;
- (2) seek a further breakdown of information on stress related sickness by service, area, location and the areas which are below establishment.

The Chair thanked Chris Randall and Chris Squires for attending the meeting.

147. **CO-OPERATIVE SCRUTINY BOARD'S ACHIEVEMENTS 2014/15**

The Chair asked the Board to highlight its achievements throughout 2014-15. Members identified budget scrutiny as an achievement. The Chair, Vice Chair, Lead Officer and Democratic Support Officer were delegated to pull together the achievements of the Board for submission to the Annual Scrutiny Report.

Agreed that the Chair, Vice Chair, Lead Officer and Democratic Support Officer to pull together the achievements for the Board for submission into the Annual Scrutiny Report.

148. **TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Transformation), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive), Les Allen (Head of Portfolio), Nicola Lenden (Transformation Communications Lead) and Rob Pendleton (Programme Manager) presented the Co-operative Centre of Operations (CCO) update and the communications and engagement strategy, which highlighted the following key issues –

- (a) how measures for consultation and engagement would be built into the Cooperative Centre of Operations (CCO) -
 - a new framework for communication and engagement had been set out for all of the transformation programmes;
 - under this framework, the CCO projects had created communication plans; identify stakeholders, setting out what roles they need to play and what message they should receive at different stages; the Project Boards would soon be asked to review, agree and monitor the plans;
 - the CCO has also formed an advise and enable project work stream to build an implementation plan for the 'Framework for Working with our Citizens and Communities' initiative;
- (b) the role and function of the decision making network would be made clearer -
 - in order to assist Members and officers to access the knowledge and expertise within the organisation more easily;
 - this would be achieved through a variety of actions including creating a searchable function on the Lync system/another database, cataloguing the organisation's knowledge needs and setting up communities of practice/live forums in order to grow the organisation's expertise and share knowledge;
- (c) quick wins with timescales and an update on CCO Blueprint -
 - the roll out of the iTrent HR self-service to corporate services staff would be completed by the end of March; further analysis would take place on whether the roll out would be extended to other functions or to wait for the full HR service review;

- the Integrated Health and Wellbeing support project had been successful in supporting the definition of the back office services Service Level Agreements;
 - the Strategic Centre Quick Wins project had successfully tested a range of models to enable project managers and business analysts to support key initiatives;
- (d) the CCO Blueprint had been approved by the Programme Board on 28 January 2015 and would inform detail design phases on all CCO projects;
- (e) the communications and engagement strategy would ensure that all the programme messages were consistent, clear and easy to use;
- (f) the key messages were -
- changing the way the Council did things;
 - improving the services provided;
 - being more innovative in the way the Council delivered services;
 - the financial position;
- (g) communications and engagement would be wrapped around the projects, to -
- be initiated at every level (not an after-thought but part of the planning process);
 - ensure alignment and no duplication;
 - be better planned rather than reactive, identify the cross over points in the projects
 - have a clear line of sight - this would create the co-ordinated communications plan;
- (h) the four objectives included -
- creating a communications and engagement strategy;
 - developing a co-ordinated communications and engagement plan (across all projects)
 - enabling the transformation team to create communications plans with purpose and meaningful engagement;
 - beginning to share transformation news creating a narrative.

In response to questions raised by Members, it was reported that –

- (i) an engagement exercise had been undertaken within the Finance and HR services to provide a detailed analysis of how staff were allocating their time; as part of this process, a meeting had been held with all members of staff to ascertain how they thought they added value to the work of the Council and whether they had any ideas for the future delivery of the service;
- (j) the importance of staff engagement in this process had not been under-estimated;
- (k) in order to assist in making the decision making network clearer, a searchable function on the Lync system would be created; this would enable Members and officers to access the knowledge and expertise within the Council more easily (currently it was not possible to search on the role of the person just the name);
- (l) there were a number of challenges that faced Delt in fulfilling all the objectives in the business plan; the publication of the IT Strategy would set out the overall strategic direction of the Council;
- (m) following a request from the Election Team, both programme management and analytic support were being provided for the 2015 election process;
- (n) work was currently being undertaken to refine requirements, in order to understand what the Council needed to do internally, with partners, communities and citizens in order to realise its vision;
- (o) the overall aim of the HR project was to look at transforming the service to become more efficient; work would be undertaken over the next three months which would result in the Council being in a better position to decide what the preferred model for providing this function would be;
- (p) the CCO would inform Member decisions on the future provision of services;
- (q) as principle stakeholders, Members would be consulted on the full service review being undertaken within Democratic Support.

The Board raised concerns relating to the language, terminology and the complexity of the reports which made them difficult to understand. The Board requested that all future reports were provided in an easier to read/understand format.

The Board agreed –

- (l) that the 'to be' function for both HR and Finance services is brought back for consideration in the new municipal year;

- (2) that facilities management is considered as a 'quick win' project and is brought back for consideration in the new municipal year;
- (3) that consideration is given to renaming the decision making network;
- (4) the communications and engagement strategy.

The Chair thanked the officers for attending.

149. **CALL-INS**

There were no decisions that had been called in.

150. **URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Chair reported that he had signed an urgent executive decision relating to a property investment opportunity, Units 6A – 9A Kay Close, Newnham Industrial Estate, Plympton.

The decision had been urgent due to the need to acquire the property by 13 March 2015 otherwise the investment opportunity would be lost.

The Council was currently the freehold owner of Units 6A-9A Kay Close, Newnham Industrial Estate, Plympton. The units were located within an established industrial area approximately two miles from the A38 and the Council also owned and directly leased two adjoining terraces totalling nine units on the estate in addition to a further terrace subject to a long leasehold interest.

An opportunity had arisen to acquire the long leasehold interest of Units 6A-9A Kay Close which was a high yielding multi-let industrial estate investment currently on the market for sale. There were 89 years currently remaining on the lease. The units were currently fully let and this would consolidate the Council's property holding in this location and provide further critical mass.

This had been identified as a good commercial property investment opportunity and merger of the freehold and leasehold interests will increase the value of the asset.

The Board noted the decision.

151. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no recommendations to consider.

152. **CO-OPERATIVE REVIEW(S)**

There were no co-operative review(s) to consider.

153. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.