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Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 29 October 2009

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Lowry, Vice Chair.

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

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.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

27. MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2009, be confirmed as a correct record, subject to Councillor Dann's name being added to the list of those present.

28. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

29. FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Chair informed the panel that two issues had been referred to this panel from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board –

- scrutiny resources – which would be covered in this meeting;
- community engagement with the budget setting process.

In respect to community engagement with the budget setting process, the Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships informed the panel that there were various activities underway including presentations to Area Committees and a three day event in Drakes Circus Shopping Centre. The event would take place in November and would involve members of the Senior Management Team talking with members of the public and gathering their views on the Council Priorities. It was estimated that officers could speak to around 400 people over the 3 day period.

Members raised questions in relation to the advertisement of the event.

The Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships advised that the purpose of the placing the stand in the Shopping Centre was to tap into its existing footfall and so advertising was not necessary.

Resolved to –

- (1) endorse the principal of this years planned activities;
- (2) request that the Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships report back to the panel as soon as practicable to brief members on the outcome of the activities.

30. **BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE ISSUES**

No budget and performance issues had been referred from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

31. **CIP 2 - INVOLVING RESIDENTS**

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Performance and Partnerships and the Policy and Performance Officer gave a presentation on Corporate Improvement Priority 2 (CIP 2) – involving residents and informed members that –

- (i) work on this CIP was informed by national policy and legislation including ‘the duty to involve’;
- (ii) the purpose of the CIP was to improve how local people are informed, consulted and involved in the design and delivery of services and functions;
- (iii) key work included improvements to –
 - the information given to people about opportunities to have a say and get involved in service design and delivery;
 - consulting about the services and functions the Council provides;
 - involving people in service design and delivery over and above informing and consulting them;
 - how the Council acts on the information received from engagement and consultation;
- (iv) there were two national indicators (NI) measured as part of CIP 2, these were NI 3 (the level of civic participation) and NI4 (the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their local area), both of these indicators were measured as part of the biennial Place Survey.

Members questioned the Cabinet Member and the Officer in relation to –

- (v) the use of results following consultations;
- (vi) feedback given to people who take part in consultation exercises.

Members raised concerns that –

- (vii) the current system for declaring interests prevented them from becoming too involved in issues of local interest if they were to take part in decision making around the issue or prevented them from taking part in decision making if they had become involved;

Councillors were not consulted early enough during consultation exercises;

- (viii) Area Committees were ineffective as a consultation tool;

Resolved to invite the Customer Services, Performance and Partnerships and the Policy and Performance Officer back to a future meeting of this panel to provide members with --

- (1) an update on how consultation responses are used and what feedback is given to the people who take part in the consultation;
- (2) a response to the request for a relevant Councillor to be one of the first people to be consulted in any consultation that impacts on their area of responsibility or ward.

32. **ICT STRATEGY**

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Performance and Partnerships and the Assistant Director for ICT provided members with a presentation on the ICT strategy and informed members that -

- (i) £850,000 had been saved by centralising ICT;
- (ii) work had begun to standardise the many systems used by Plymouth City Council;
- (ii) ICT had five strategic objectives which were –
 - to ensure that service delivery value for money;
 - to join up ourselves and partners;
 - to ensure assets are reused and shared;
 - to fully exploit information;
 - to drive compliance and reduce risk;
- (ii) requests which may look simple on the surface often involved a complex chain of activity and processes behind the scenes;
- (iii) the service would be working to make better use of natural resources in order to improve environmental sustainability;
- (iv) often efficiency savings and cut back in departments across the Council have an impact on the ICT service;

Resolved to request that an action plan detailing current efforts as well as planned efforts in relation to achieving a more environmentally sustainable operation.

33. **PROVISION OF SCRUTINY RESOURCES**

The Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships advised members that in relation to the existing provision of scrutiny resource –

- (i) scrutiny resources – which would be covered in this meeting;
- (ii) there had recently been confirmation of lead officers for all scrutiny panels;
- (iii) scrutiny would form the basis for a large part of the personal objectives for the lead officers;

- (iv) scrutiny resource did not include only Democratic Services, but officers from within departments and partner organisations also;
- (v) panels should strive to ensure that their work programmes were in line with the work and priorities of the Council;
- (vi) the Local Strategic Partnership was bidding for a reward grant. If the bid was successful, there was some potential for scrutiny to request some of the money for more resource. At this stage it was not known for certain if this was possible, or how much might be available.

Members questioned the Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships in relation to –

- (vii) the reward grant;
- (viii) overview and scrutiny panel's existing work programmes;
- (ix) the existing resource for scrutiny in terms of staffing within the Council.

Resolved that a working group undertake to look into –

- (1) the current resource provision;
- (2) the content of panel's work programmes, including details around whether items were statutory considerations or not.

34. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.