

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 8 July 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Lowry, Vice Chair.

Councillors Berrow, Browne, Dann, Lock, Stark, Thompson and Vincent (as substitute)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Murphy

Also in attendance:

Councillor Glenn Jordan, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Councillor Sam Leaves, Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, Adam Broome, Director for Corporate Support, Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets and Efficiencies, Neville Cannon, Assistant Director for ICT, Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development, Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets and Paul Chapman, Head of VFM and Efficiencies

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.

14. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

15. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the 3 June 2010 are approved as a correct record.

16. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

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

The Panel received a copy of its tracking resolutions.

Agreed that with regard to Minute 33 (1) and 33 (2) these resolutions be removed from the tracking resolutions document as the panel was reviewing the content of their work programme.

18. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The Democratic Support Officer informed the panel the University of Plymouth had nominated Janet Isaac, Head of Strategic Planning to be co-opted onto the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Agreed that Janet Isaac be formally invited to take up the role of co-opted representative onto the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel starting at the panel's next meeting to be held on 3 September 2010.

19. **CORPORATE SUPPORT DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW**

Councillor Sam Leaves, Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, Councillor Glenn Jordan, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Adam Broome, Director for Corporate Support gave a presentation on the overview of the Corporate Support Directorate. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) the Corporate Structure had been in existence since April 2009 and covered five areas including Customer Services and Business Transformation; Finance, Assets and Efficiencies; ICT; Human Resources and Organisational Development and Democracy and Governance. Assistant Directors had been employed in these five areas since January 2010;
- (b) Corporate Support's net spend was £32,297m, which was approximately one sixth of the council's overall net spend of £200m, however, the gross budget of Corporate Support was the biggest of any of the council departments due to the allocation of benefits;
- (c) in 2009/10 Corporate Support significantly under spent but remained on target to achieve the set delivery plans. In 2010/11 there have been increased demands as a result of a rise in in-year savings and the effects of budget constraints have created a great challenge in achieving the set delivery plans;
- (d) the department have been involved in many key achievements over the past 12 months, including –
 - the new competency appraisal process, which had full agreement from the trade unions;
 - the sale of Citybus and the housing stock transfer to Plymouth Community Homes;
 - the Registration Service received a good inspection;
 - the Cashier Service have received accreditation, becoming

- the first cashier service in the UK to do so;
 - the Customer Service team received an excellence award;
 - both the Corporate Property & Capital Projects and Legal & Risk Management Services have received ISO 9001, which had been regarded as an excellent achievement;
 - the FISH programme which had been trialed in Customer Services had worked really well and the possibility of rolling it out over the rest of the authority was being looked into;
 - there had been a 99% availability across all core systems within the department;
- (e) there were some significant challenges and priorities ahead in the department, including –
- the need to be flexible when dealing with economic challenges, this had been demonstrated with decision made by central government regarding Building Schools for the Future;
 - major investment in ICT was required to maintain the departments standards and to ensure that the department had the capacity to provide the support that was required;
 - the growing public demand for services despite the budget constraints within the department was challenging;
 - implementing changes to policies and procedures to ensure that there was a more flexible approach;
 - adopting a new constitution;
- (f) Corporate Support was trying to achieve all of the delivery plans, challenges and priorities with pace, by using joined up working, improving staff attitudes and motivation and by incorporating a ‘one version of the truth’ ethos into all the work undertaken in order to become more customer aware and provide the best standard of work possible;
- (g) these delivery plans and future achievements were being targeted by focusing on, amongst others –
- hot-desking, as had been demonstrated on Floor 5;
 - a procurement initiative aimed at cutting waste and innovating called ‘buyer roll-out’;

- improvement in data quality with initiatives such as ‘tell us once’ and ‘single point of contact’ aimed at better communication across departments and improved service delivery.

Members of the panel put forward questions to which the following responses were provided –

- (h) the authority were aware as to how much it would cost to maintain the Civic Centre and this had been worked out in partnership with English Heritage;
- (i) an internal helpdesk would be put into operation in order to improve service provision to internal customers;
- (j) it was hoped that once the locality working solution was fully operational and neighbourhood officers had been appointed the burden on councillors’ casework would be reduced and that Neighbourhood Officers would provide great assistance to councillors;
- (k) the council’s Health and Safety Team were very strong and this was confirmed by the excellent accident at work figures produced.

Recommended that an urgent update on the progress of locality working and the appointment of Neighbourhood Officers be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

The Chair thanked Councillor Sam Leaves, Councillor Glenn Jordan and Adam Broome for their attendance and for the helpful and interesting presentation and offered his congratulations for all the key achievements.

20. **ACCOMMODATION, PEOPLE'S AND ICT STRATEGIES**

Councillor Sam Leaves, Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, Councillor Glenn Jordan, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets and Efficiencies, Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development, Neville Cannon, Assistant Director for ICT and Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets gave a presentation on the Accommodation, People’s and ICT strategies. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) the three strategies formed the common core of a corporate approach to transformation. This transformation was focused on three key areas service delivery, structural and cultural transformation;
- (b) the Accommodation Strategy began in June 2009 and a detailed

business case and timeline were being followed. A report is going to Cabinet in August 2010 with the aim of creating a cultural change in the authority improving the way the council works and saves money;

- (c) the cultural change was demonstrated through the transformation on floor 5 in the Civic Centre which had created a more spacious and comfortable environment for staff as a result of hot-desking and an open-plan office. The change on floor 5 was designed by staff themselves in consultation with unions and provided a great example as to what the Accommodation Strategy could achieve;
- (d) the cultural change in offices were based on the ratio of eight desks to 10 people, and as an authority the aim was to implement this across the council and reduce the use of major council buildings to three relinquishing six council satellite offices, this change would generate huge financial savings;
- (e) joined up working, shared services and co-location with the Health organisations was being sought as this would increase money saving potential;
- (f) the strategy aimed to save money through the following revenue saving options –
 - reduction in building lease costs;
 - reduction in rates, operational costs and energy costs, thus improving the council's carbon footprint and also creating a reduction in carbon tax liability;
 - less PC's, printers and licenses through hot-desking and also a reduction in repairs and maintenance;
 - potential capital receipts through the sale of buildings;
- (g) it was anticipated that the revenue savings would start to accrue from 2011/12;
- (h) in order for the Accommodation Strategy to be successful it was vital that it worked in partnership with the People's Strategy and the ICT Strategy. A great improvement was required in ICT provisioned functionality in order for the Accommodation Strategy to be implemented fully;
- (j) invest to save options were key to the ICT Strategy being successful in achieving its objectives which were –
 - to ensure value for money was being achieved;

- to create improved joined up working internally and externally with partners to ensure assets were being re-used and shared appropriately;
 - to exploit all information provided ensuring that information was reliable and from a trustworthy source;
 - to reduce the risks from ICT equipment failures;
- (k) there was universal agreement for the need to invest in ICT. However, it was understood that the Accommodation Strategy represented only one of three required investment streams and therefore it was noted that the investment included in the Accommodation Strategy should be further supported by investment in the two remaining strands if the full benefits are to be achieved by the council;
- (l) updated ICT requirements were important and Microsoft Windows 7, Office 2010 and Exchange 2010 were already decided, funded and being planned;
- (m) an improvement in the telephony operation was paramount to the ICT Strategy being successful and the Accommodation and Customer Services Strategies were also heavily reliant on this improvement for them to be successful;
- (n) other ICT improvements that are key to the success of the Accommodation and People's strategies include –
- the implementation of an Office Communication Server (OCS) which will improve officer communication and relinquish the need to keep the outdated internal telephone directory;
 - a data centre being built at Windsor House in order to ensure business continuity if anything happened to the Civic Centre;
- (o) the implementation of the whole ICT Strategy would not only assist the Accommodation and People's Strategies but would aid the transformation agenda and also –
- improve access to information across all council services;
 - improve self service for external customers through the creation of a transitional website where people can

- process payments online;
 - provide better and more consistent electronic storage reducing the need for paper storage;
 - improve data quality and communication across all departments;
- (p) the People's Strategy was now in its final year and was a major driver behind the transformation agenda;
- (q) the People's Strategy was aiming to create a productive and skilled workforce. This was being achieved by the creation of a competency framework which had been approved by the Unions, also a new appraisal system had been introduced with 90% of staff having had their appraisals undertaken;
- (r) the strategy also identified the need to plan for medium term skill improvements and the development of the future workforce of the council. This was a big challenge and where the three strategies integrated best as the need to have improved ICT and ICT skills and a better communicated approach to improve customer service was key;
- (s) the People's Strategy also aimed to –
- engage with staff and support them through organisational change;
 - create policies that support good people management and promote diversity;
- (t) there were some major link's between the three strategies including –
- they were all striving to support organisational change;
 - they all identified a need to improve skill's and communication of staff;
 - they all require improvements in ICT to ensure that the strategies were implemented successfully.

Members of the panel were also informed that the three strategies were working in a completely joined up approach alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Constitution.

Agreed that –

- (1) Chris Trevitt, the Head of Capital and Assets would disseminate

information surrounding the cost of marketing and maintaining the Civic Centre and the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance of all the council's buildings to Support Services Overview and Scrutiny panel members;

- (2) the Democratic Support Officer send a copy of the presentation to all Support Services Overview and Scrutiny panel members;
- (3) following Cabinet reviewing the strategies a comprehensive managers report on the strategies identifying their risks and how they work together be submitted to a future meeting of the panel.

The Chair thanked Councillor Sam Leaves, Councillor Glenn Jordan and all the officers for their attendance.

21. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel received a copy of their work programme for 2010/2011.

Agreed to -

- (1) remove 'as referred by Management Board' after the title 'Budget and Performance Issues';
- (2) request a Budget and Performance update to be provided at all Support Services Overview and Scrutiny meeting's from David Northey, Head of Finance.

22. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.