

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 27 January 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor McDonald, Vice Chair.

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

Apologies for absence: Councillors Dann and Lowry and Janet Isaac (Co-opted representative)

Also in attendance: Councillor Ian Bowyer – Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, Councillor Sam Leaves – Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation, Ian Gallin – Assistant Chief Executive, Tim Howes - Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance, Andrew Pearson – Member Learning and Development Officer, David Shepperd - Head of Legal Services, Rosie Clahane – Operations Manager, Eve Skuse – Head of Organisational Development and David Northey, Head of Finance.

The meeting started at 10.00am and finished at 1.00pm.

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.

50. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

51. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

52. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

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

The Panel noted its tracking resolutions and confirmed that dates should be set to scrutinise the 'Invest to Save' project and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Resource Plan.

54. **CORPORATE TRANSFORMATION PROGRESS REVIEW**

Councillor Sam Leaves, Cabinet Member for Performance and Transformation and Ian Gallin, Assistant Chief Executive gave a presentation on the Corporate Transformational Change Programme. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) the Transformational Change Programme was an evolving process driven by the city's vision and revenue pressures to create £30m savings over the next three years;
- (b) the Plymouth Report had also helped drive the programme through shared priorities and agreed targets with partnership agencies;
- (c) examples of transformation already in place in the Council were given as creating a leaner approach within the Revenues and Benefits department and also through the actions taken as part of the Accommodation Strategy;
- (d) the programme aimed to make the council a more efficient organisation and had four key areas, which were service delivery transformation, structural transformation, cultural transformation and a common core;
- (e) each of the key areas had significant issues and projects that were to be transformed to improve efficiency, examples included:
 - service delivery transformation – Adult Social Care, Children's Services and the experience of customers (customer services);
 - structural transformation – outsourcing leisure management, business management and administrative support (reducing duplication);
 - cultural transformation – the communications strategy, developing leaders and terms and conditions;
 - common core – the Accommodation Strategy, governance arrangements and revised corporate priorities;
- (f) progress reports against key work streams would be included in finance and performance reports. A corporate strategic calendar would also be produced, which would include key milestone dates, council meeting dates and key dates from partnership agencies.

In response to councillors questions it was reported that –

- (g) the progress of the programme would be measured with reference to a range of factors including satisfaction surveys, monitoring value for money, benchmarking transformation and delivering budget delivery plans;
- (h) some areas of transformation and improvements were being strived for in collaborative working with partnership agencies.
- (i) there was no longer any overarching requirement or expectation for local authorities to have a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), however, it was felt that bringing city leaders together and aligning partnership agencies was vitally important in delivering the transformational change programme and the vision and priorities for the City;
- (j) the LSP theme groups would continue to require changes to reflect changing policy and legislation. For example the Growth Board replacing the Wealthy Theme Group to fit with the Local Enterprise Partnership agenda. The introduction of a Health and Wellbeing Board would also need to be addressed;
- (k) the proposed Public Sector Board (final designation of title to be confirmed) was a new arrangement that would assist in driving transformational change forward across a number of organisations, predominantly in the public sector;
- (l) locality working parties were viewed as a significant element in the transformation and would be reviewed by the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel in June 2011.

Agreed that –

- (1) Councillor Sam Leaves would provide an emailed response to all Panel members about how the Growth Board would fit in with the Waterfront Strategy;
- (2) Ian Gallin, Assistant Chief Executive would distribute to all Panel members the current landscape of boards, partnerships and their structures.

Recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board receive the minutes and/or updates from the new Public Sector Board (title to be confirmed).

55. **MEMBER AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, People, Property and Governance, Tim Howes, Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance and Andrew Pearson, Member Learning and Development Officer presented

a report on member learning and development. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) member learning and development, which is underpinned by the member development strategy, aimed to assist members in developing skills and knowledge to become more effective ward councillors. To help achieve this a member learning and development plan 2010/11 was created;
- (b) the member and learning development plan 2010/11 and its action plan were implemented in October 2010,
- (c) 26 councillors had received an individual member development review, where their learning needs had been identified;
- (d) all activities undertaken by members as a result of the plan would be evaluated to ensure effective delivery of member development;
- (e) following an independent member development review one councillor had applied for and been accepted as a mentee in the Devon wide mentoring scheme. This scheme had been used as a joint submission for the Municipal Journal Awards 2011 Excellence in Democratic Services Achievement of the Year.

Following members questions it was reported that –

- (f) Charter status in member development had previously been the aim for Plymouth, but the member development programme was operating without a budget so achieving this status was difficult, although, it did still remain an aspiration;
- (g) working toward achieving Charter status had helped shape the member learning and development plan, which in turn had provided evidence toward achieving Charter status if an application was submitted in the future;
- (h) the Civic Handbook had been drafted and would soon be circulated to members for their comments.

Members commented that the independent member development reviews were excellent and all members should be encouraged to take part.

The Panel thanked Andrew Pearson for his hard work on member learning and development.

56. **LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, People, Property and Governance, David Shepperd, Head of Legal Services and Rosie Clahane,

Operations Manager gave a presentation into the role of Legal Services, their success rates and productivity and the future of the Legal Services department. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) the Legal Services department had an involvement in many of the city's activities including, amongst others, preparing contracts for construction works, highways initiatives and leisure services as well as providing comprehensive legal advice to council departments and partnership working with the University of Plymouth and the Courts Services;
- (b) there were a number of different teams and services within Legal Services, which included the Children and Young Peoples team, Commercial, Development and Corporate Services team, Community Services team, the HM Coroner and a business unit;
- (c) staffing levels within Legal Services had reduced by 25 per cent since 2006 and there was presently 53.8 full time or equivalent staff in the service;
- (d) Legal Services had a total budget of £3,029,700 which included a budget of £723,940 used by the HM Coroner;
- (e) the Legal Services department were part of a CIPFA benchmarking club that compared 59 local authorities. Plymouth Legal Services were 36 per cent below the average for net cost per 1000 population and were 72 per cent below the average for costs bought in per 1000 population when compared against its 12 closest comparators;
- (f) some of the costs saved on major projects through undertaking legal work in-house were calculated as follows –
 - the South West Devon Waste Partnership project had 1404 hours of legal time, which saved £215k in legal costs;
 - the sale of Plymouth Citybus had 843 hours of legal time, which saved £129k in legal costs;
 - the Plymouth Life Centre project had 1321 hours of legal time, which saved £202k in legal costs;
- (g) in the 2010 calendar year the Legal Services teams attended 974 court hearings. There was an increase from 2009 in childcare proceedings by 43 per cent and an increase in Environment, Trading Standards and Licensing proceedings by 60 per cent;
- (h) Legal Services had a very high success rate in court in 2010 with percentages of prosecutions as follows –

- Licensing, Trading Standards & Environment – 88 per cent success rate;
 - Housing, Litigation, Debt Recovery and Anti-Social Behaviour - 95 per cent success rate;
 - Children’s Services – 99 per cent success rate;
- (i) a new case management system, which shared information between Children’s Services, the Courts Service and Legal Services, was introduced in 2010. Through the efficiency and effectiveness of this system the Legal Services teams were well equipped to deal with the increased workload and still maintain a high success rate in court prosecutions;
- (j) as a result of the case management system being utilised the time it took to complete child care cases had been reduced from an average of 59 weeks to 48 weeks, this had enabled legal services employees to have an increased capacity to deal with other projects;
- (k) Legal Services had over the past financial year recovered £209,280 to date, which was £80k over their target and a 50 per cent increase from costs recovered in 2009/10;
- (l) the Legal Services department was a Law Society Accredited Training Adviser and had an ISO 9001 Quality Accreditation, which was verified twice yearly by external verifiers;
- (m) customer satisfaction surveys were held regularly to ensure that customer needs were continuously being met. Over the past 12 months 98.6 per cent rated the service they received as good to excellent;
- (n) to further develop Legal Services, there was an aim to implement court bundling software, which would ensure an effective and efficient service would be provided as well as to improve data security with a reduction in paper copies;
- (o) the service also aimed to improve partnership working through the Devon Solicitors Group and the University of Plymouth, which would potentially increase income and deliver shared services.

Agreed that if members had any questions they should contact David Shepperd, Head of Legal Services directly.

The Chair thanked David Shepperd, Head of Legal Services and Rosie Clahane, Operations Manager for their attendance.

57. **PROGRESS UPDATE APPRAISALS 2010**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, People, Property and Governance and Eve Skuse, Head of Organisational Development provided an update on the second round of appraisals. Councillors were informed that

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- (a) the trial appraisals, held in early 2010, provided a significant learning opportunity to ensure that the second round of appraisals were more effective;
- (b) having undertaken the trial appraisals staff and managers had gained a lot of confidence in the appraisal process and what was expected from them. This was demonstrated by the feedback provided by Grace Hughes from the Education Catering at a previous scrutiny meeting;
- (c) as a result of increased levels of confidence and a clearer understanding of expectations, the length of appraisals were reduced and the levels of staff completing an appraisal in the second round increased corporately by over four per cent up to 94.4 per cent;
- (d) due to the introduction of Manager on-line and E-forms during the appraisal process, the appraisal deadline was extended to the end of September to ensure that all managers received appropriate training on using the software;
- (e) all increments were applied with effect from 1 October 2010 to those staff who were due to receive an increment;
- (f) the level of staff completing an appraisal and the level of staff meeting or exceeding their expectations varied between departments. The most significant figures were –
 - 96 per cent of employees met or exceeded expectations;
 - 20 per cent of employees exceeded expectation in Chief Executive's Directorate compared to only 7.8 per cent in Community Services;
 - only 40.5 per cent of employees completed an appraisal in the Chief Executive's Directorate;
- (g) the evaluation of the appraisals revealed that 77 per cent of employees felt that their appraisal was fair and accurate;
- (h) as part of a process of continuous improvement, the appraisal system is currently being reviewed with managers and trade unions. Minimal changes are expected as to date feedback has

been broadly positive. Any changes to the appraisal process would be communicated by 31 March 2011.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (i) the HR department were working with the Chief Executive's Directorate to understand the reason for the low level of completed appraisals;
- (j) reasons for appraisals not being completed were often due to maternity leave, long-term sick or staff still being in a probationary period;
- (k) 23 per cent of respondents to the 2010 staff survey either disagreed, strongly disagreed or remained neutral to the statement "my appraisal was fair and accurate".

Agreed that –

- (1) the report is noted;
- (2) the Panel continue to support and take an interest in the development of staff and the results and impact of the appraisal and competency systems;
- (3) Eve Skuse, Head of Organisational Development would email to all Panel members the proportion of employees who were neutral or disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question I feel my appraisal was accurate and fair;
- (4) the Democratic Support Officer would disseminate a copy of the CIP 2 presentation to all members of the Panel.

The Chair thanked Eve Skuse, Head of Organisational Development for her attendance.

58. **QUARTERLY SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel's second quarterly scrutiny report was noted.

59. **BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance and David Northey, Head of Finance presented the Budget and Performance Report. Members were informed that the report was now outdated and had been presented at Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 24 November 2010.

The report was noted.

60. **WORK PROGRAMME**

Agreed -

- (1) to approve the revised work programme for 2010/11;
- (2) that dates be set for the three new items on the revised work programme for 2010/11.

61. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.