

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 23 June 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor Lowry, in the Chair.

Councillor Stark, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Berrow, Casey, Delbridge, Mrs Dolan, Evans, Murphy, Thompson and Wildy.

Co-opted Representatives: Janet Isaac, University of Plymouth

Apologies for absence: Councillors Lock, James, Rennie, Reynolds and Stevens.

Also in attendance: Councillor Ian Bowyer – Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People, Councillor Steven Ricketts – Cabinet Member for Performance, Transformation and Governance, Councillor Richard Ball – Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Adam Broome – Director for Corporate Support, Neville Cannon – Assistant Director for ICT, Mark Grimley – Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development, Chris Trevitt - Head of Capital and Assets, David Northey – Head of Finance and Paul Chapman, Head of Value for Money and Efficiencies.

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.

1. TO NOTE THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The panel noted the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair as agreed at the Annual General Meeting held on 20 May 2011.

Election of Vice-Chair

Agreed that Councillor Stark is appointed as Vice Chair of the Panel for this meeting.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the newly elected councillors and newly appointed members to the first meeting of the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made in accordance with the code of conduct in relation to items under discussion at this meeting –

Name	Subject	Reason	Interest
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3. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The panel agreed to confirm Janet Isaac as co-opted representative to the panel for the municipal year 2011-2012.

4. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2011 are confirmed as a correct record.

5. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

6. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members reviewed the terms of reference and agreed that they are noted subject to the following amendments –

- (1) the word 'review' replace 'consider' in bullet point five so that the sentence reads 'To review Equality Impact Assessments against new and existing policies';
- (2) the word 'consider' replace 'investigate' in bullet point six so that the sentence reads 'To consider local issues to find out how the council and its partners can improve to meet the needs of local people'.

7. **VALUE FOR MONEY (VFM) UPDATE**

Paul Chapman, the Head of Value for Money (VFM) and Efficiencies, provided the Panel with a VFM Quarterly Update. Councillors were informed that –

- (a) the VFM team comprised of two members of staff; Paul Chapman, Head of VFM and Efficiencies and Laura Harris, VFM Programme Manager;
- (b) achieving VFM was a key priority for Plymouth City Council and was monitored by internal delivery plans to achieve financial savings and deliver improved or the same standard of services;
- (c) each departmental budget remains the individual Director's responsibility with an overview being provided by the Corporate Management Team(CMT);
- (d) there were currently no central government external monitoring arrangements or central data reporting mechanisms although this was being

reviewed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The Council were still required to demonstrate delivery of VFM to other external auditors through the delivery plans and external auditor reports on specific projects such as the Procur 2 Pay project;

- (e) the 2010-2011 budget outturn was just £105k over on the budget of £201,930M;
- (f) in 2010-2011 the council realised savings of £9.185M which was the reason for coming in so close to the challenging outturn budget;
- (g) two of the major projects that assisted the council in achieving high levels of savings were the Procur 2 Pay project and a project in Children' Social Care – Residential Care;
- (h) savings of £13.3M needed to be achieved in 2011-2012 to meet this years outturn budget;
- (i) to achieve this challenging target cross-cutting delivery plans had been created; these would be monitored by CMT and through quarterly performance and finance reports;
- (j) VFM undertook analysis which included benchmarking through The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), using a performance team to review performance against finance and utilising scorecards to report on VFM performance against key performance indicators;
- (k) benchmarking would be proactively used in future to monitor against similar authorities and to enable a full picture to be developed for budget setting in 2012-2013;
- (l) going forward, the Council aimed to continue to develop the approach of driving VFM from capital investment by ensuring that invest to save projects were carefully considered and evaluated to ensure that they provide a maximum return on investment. Current projects included the Accommodation Strategy, the Care First system and the launch of a new transaction website.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (n) the biggest financial impact in 2011-2012 was proposed to be in the Procurement department as there were a number of cross-cutting implications for the whole authority, in order to achieve the greatest savings possible the Council have enlisted the assistance of an external company to deliver the highest level of efficiencies corporately;
- (o) the tangible savings of £60K in the ordering of non-catalogue items was across the whole department and was £10K above the proposed target set at the start of 2012-2011;

- (p) the council's expenditure of purchasing goods and services was approximately £228M, in order to reduce this figure there was a commitment to develop a supply chain with more locally based companies.

Agreed to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that departmental delivery plans are shared with the relevant scrutiny panels so that value for money in each service area can be monitored to identify where efficiencies have been achieved.

8. **CORPORATE SUPPORT DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW**

Councillor Steven Ricketts, Cabinet Member for Transformation, Performance and Governance, Councillor Richard Ball, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Councillor Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People, Adam Broome, Director for Corporate Support, Neville Cannon, Assistant Director for ICT and Mark Grimley, Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development presented an overview of the Corporate Support Directorate.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) scrutiny was recognised to be an important aspect on holding decision makers to account although, there was a need to avoid duplication of scrutiny as the Corporate Support directorate was cross-cutting and was subjected to being scrutinised from this panel, Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny panel and the Audit Committee;
- (b) the 2011-2012 Corporate Support budget was £26.849M which was a demanding target to meet as it was a reduction of approximately £5M on the previous years budget;
- (c) the Corporate Support Directorate consisted of five separate departments; these departments have had their own successes in 2010-2011 and face their own individual challenges for 2011-2012. The departments, their successes and challenges included–
 - Customer Services and Business Transformation
- (d) received Govmetric Council of the year in 2010-2011, led a staff wellness programme where sickness was reduced by 47 per cent year on year and introduced a new telephony system;
- (e) received over 1 million contacts per year, which was only 32 per cent of total contact with the council; the national benchmark was 81 per cent, improving this percentage was one of the challenges facing the department;
- (f) other major challenges in the department for 2011-2012 included inputting council 'info points' into libraries and developing a single system transactional web site;

- Finance, Assets and Efficiencies

- (g) realised efficiencies and savings in 2010-2011 from Phase I of the Accommodation Strategy, a departmental restructure and improved carbon management as well as increasing income through an out of hours debt collection programme;
- (h) had become a more effective service by implementing 'buyer' roles in the procurement department, publishing council spending on anything over £500 and improving the budgeting setting process;
- (i) in 2010-2011 a major restructure had begun in the Revenues and Benefits, Customer Services and Incomes and Creditors section and the Cashiers section had been closed; this restructure would be further taken forward in 2011-2012;
- (j) other delivery plans in 2011-2012 included the restructuring of corporate properties, further savings in procurement of £1.2M, Phase II of the Accommodation Strategy and an attempt to maximise government funding on Housing Benefit;

- Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)

- (k) delivered in 2010-2011 a new telephony system, the tell us once programme, protocols on information sharing with partners and achieved savings of £500K, and through the sale of licenses for software packages realised an income generation of £100K;
- (l) delivered new technologies such as the Microsoft Lync system on Floor 4, Civic Centre, a Care First system upgrade and enabled hot-desking to be rolled out. To achieve this ICT awarded contracts to two providers, all of these improvements ensured that ICT were a more reliable service in 2010-2011 with a 99.74 per cent reliability rate on all secure systems;
- (m) aspired to reduce the number of systems and applications used corporately, which would enable the delivery of a single version of the truth and improve the sharing of information with partners whilst keeping data secure;
- (n) in 2010-2011 there would be a number of challenges which included meeting the needs of the organisation with reduced resources, professionalise data management with staff training and less systems and endeavour to agree a long-term vision and investment for future ICT service provision;

- Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR & OD)

- (o) so far in 2011-2012 have assisted in the establishment of Academies,

held discussions with unions on terms and conditions, delivered the Enterprise Leadership Programme and automated on-line recruitment and redeployment;

- (p) faced significant challenges across the forthcoming year which included managing down the cost of the workforce whilst minimising the number of redundancies;
- (q) further demands faced this year included a re-ballot into terms and conditions, developing a single point of contact with the roll-out of new enterprise software systems and developing trading with school academies;
 - Democracy and Governance
- (r) in 2010-2011 a number of efficiencies and savings were achieved which included major in-year savings in the region of £500K on legal advice provided on major-projects, implementation of 'tell us once' in Registration Service and the completion of insurance tender and review of risk financing strategy;
- (s) had a successful year with elected members receiving individual training assessments for the first time, risk management performance scoring very highly against nationally benchmarked standards and the Electoral Service exceeding Electoral Commission Performance Standards;
- (t) in 2011-2012 challenges for the department would include seeking to adopt a new constitution, relocation of the Register Office, the implementation of the Localism Bill and potential changes to the Coroners Service and the Justice Act.

Following questions from members it was reported that –

- (u) the council had undertaken to analyse pay point transactions and it was hoped that libraries would be able to provide a similar service in the future;
- (v) Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be reviewing communication with customers using social networking means.

Agreed that Adam Broome, Director for Corporate Support would distribute to all panel members the analysis of customers using pay point services.

9. **UPDATE ON CORPORATE PROPERTY - CORPORATE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY**

Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets presented a report on the Corporate Accommodation Strategy and informed councillors that –

- (a) the Accommodation Strategy was an invest to save project with the aim of providing financial savings by predominantly reviewing the ways of working within the Council; part of this was to review the buildings that the council occupied to identify ways of using office space more efficiently;
- (b) the first phase of the strategy was launched in August 2010 and reviewed all corporate properties, as a result of the review the council planned to vacate and dispose of a number of properties, to enable the vacation there was also a need to utilise other properties in a more efficient manner;
- (c) the first phase of the strategy was approaching the point where a resolution on the future of the Civic Centre site was needed to progress further so as a result the strategies second phase had been brought forward.

A Gantt chart was circulated to members illustrating the schedule of the Accommodation Strategy. Following questions from members it was reported that –

- (d) the chart would be amended to be more easily understandable and readable and re-circulated to members after the meeting;
- (e) no contracts had been signed for the disposal of vacant sites;
- (f) when properties were vacated the sites were left in a safe condition, however, if the property had no future sale value then the property was demolished and the land left in a safe condition to be sold as appropriate given the state of the property market;
- (g) parking and accessibility was an issue at Pounds House, although, work was planned to rectify this situation in order to progress the transfer of the Register Office to Pounds House.

Agreed that –

- (1) Councillor Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People would be involved in requests for reports or presentations at an earlier stage to ensure that panel members receive the correct and relevant information;
- (2) Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets would provide a report to the next meeting of the panel on Pounds House to cover aspects including future use, user accessibility and consultation.

10. **FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT (FOURTH QUARTER)**

The Joint Finance and Performance Report was noted.

11. **DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2011/2012**

The panel noted the previous work programme for 2010-2011 and agreed to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board the following items for inclusion for 2011-2012 Support Services OSP work programme:

- update on terms and conditions;
- review of senior management restructuring;
- review of the redeployment policy;
- update on the appraisal process;
- sickness review;
- school academies transfer;
- ICT Strategy;
- social networking and communication review;
- coroner's service review;
- procurement update;
- future of cashiers and pay points;
- value for money - Quarterly update;
- accommodation strategy;
- people's Strategy;
- data sharing between agencies.

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

The panel noted their tracking resolutions and were informed that there was no feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

13. **FUTURE DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS**

The panel noted the dates and times of its future meetings, as follows –

Thursday 21 July 2011
Thursday 15 September 2011
Thursday 27 October 2011 (provisional)
Wednesday 23 November 2011
Thursday 19 January 2012
Thursday 15 March 2012

14. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.