

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 9 February 2012

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Lowry, Vice Chair.

Councillors Berrow, Casey, Delbridge, Lock, Murphy, Penberthy, Rennie, Reynolds and Stark.

Co-opted Representatives: Janet Isaac, University of Plymouth.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Evans

Also in attendance: Councillor Ian Bowyer – Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People, Councillor Richard Ball – Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Neville Cannon – Head of Information and Communication Technology, Chris Trevitt – Head of Capital and Assets, David Northey – Head of Finance and Ross Johnston – Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.20 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.

64. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

65. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 24 November 2011 at 10am and 24 November 2011 at 4pm are confirmed as a correct record.

66. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

Order of Business

The order of business on the agenda was amended as set out below in the minutes.

67. **SOCIAL NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION REVIEW**

Councillor Richard Ball, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Neville Cannon, Assistant Director for ICT gave a presentation reviewing social networking and communication. Members were invited to watch two videos, which provided a context into modern technology and how it could be transformed in the future. A demonstration on current ICT software that was currently being integrated across the Council was also provided. Members were then informed that –

- (a) the council was currently undertaking the biggest implementation of ICT anywhere in the world outside of the USA. The ICT package being incorporated across the council was inspiring Devon local authorities to improve ICT;
- (b) the council had delivered many improvements to ICT including –
 - a fully functional data centre, which had improved the council's reliability;
 - a virtual desktop, which had enabled hot-desking;
 - a Lync package, which had improved the council's telephony system and further enabled hot-desking;
 - service specific software improvements such as Microsoft Dynamics, which had improved management of data and the customers' experience;
 - share point, which had improved the customers' experience and improved data sharing internally and with partners;
- (c) the above ICT improvements had delivered enhanced visual and audio quality for users;
- (d) implementing the ICT software had realised further benefits including reducing staff travel costs and improved data sharing and collaboration with partners;
- (e) the main difficulty in delivering the ICT software was the speed of integrating the technology in line with the Accommodation Strategy.

Councillors were provided with an update on social networking and informed that –

- (f) the council used social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook in a controlled manner, for example libraries and museums promoted news and events;
- (g) the council currently experienced more logs on its Facebook pages than on its website;
- (h) the council was becoming a more dynamic authority in terms of its use of social networking sites, however, it was still necessary for the council to continue to move forward to improve communication activities and become a modern council.

Following questions from councillors it was reported that –

- (i) the council took ICT security extremely seriously and utilised one of the best firewalls to secure its information;
- (j) the council complied with all security standards, monitored its networks and penetration tested all ICT software implemented to ensure that the potential of hacking was mitigated;
- (k) the council's security policy had been used in national standard policy guidelines and the council's Information Security Officer sat on a national security body;
- (l) YouTube would be enabled corporately for a trial period to see how it impacted on services;
- (m) the council was trying to promote business led change through more effective communication with businesses, customers and partners and ICT was seen to be a major enabler of this and was a key element in sharing information with partners whilst keeping information secure.

The Chair, on behalf of the committee, thanked Councillor Richard Ball, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Neville Cannon, Assistant Director for ICT for an interesting presentation and congratulated Neville Cannon on his contribution to ICT in the past and wished him luck in his new role.

68. **INVEST TO SAVE PROJECTS UPDATE**

Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People and David Northey, Head of Finance provided an update on 'invest to save' projects. Members were informed that –

- (a) the purpose of the 'invest to save' projects was to increase revenue budget savings and reduce budget pressures by investing monies in projects that would achieve future budget savings;
- (b) the report highlighted the six current 'invest to save' projects, which were –
 - Parent and Child Assessments;
 - Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
 - Accommodation Strategy Phase II;
 - Procurement;
 - CareFirst;
 - Western Approach Car Park Modernisation;
- (c) all six projects were being acutely monitored and whilst CareFirst and

the accommodation strategy were on-going, the other four were anticipated to be completed in 2012/13. It was hoped that a full evaluation or status report of each project would be completed within the next six months in order to fully understand the impact and success of each project on service improvements and budget savings;

- (d) if future 'invest to save' schemes were proposed then the Cabinet could potentially borrow money to enable schemes and projects to be achieved.

Following members questions it was reported that –

- (e) the National Archives had indicated that they were satisfied with the council's proposal for its History Centre Scheme, planned as part of the Accommodation Strategy, to relocate some of the library service, museum and records office into one location;
- (f) the £19.056m acquired following the sale of Citybus had been transferred from the Capital Receipt Reserve into the general Capital Receipts Programme and would now be used to fund a number of projects which were currently funded by unsupported borrowing;
- (g) the Performance and Finance Report (including Capital Programme update) submitted to Cabinet on 15 November 2011 explained further the consolidation of the Capital Receipts Programme.

Agreed that –

- (1) the panel request that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board recommend that Cabinet consider how future 'invest to save' schemes supported by robust business cases are to be financed;
- (2) the report is noted.

69. **PROCUREMENT SERVICE UPDATE**

Councillor Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People and Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets, were in attendance to provide an update on the Procurement Service. Members were informed that –

- (a) the procurement service was part of an 'invest to save' project, which aimed to achieve tangible savings of £4m over three years with an estimated efficiency saving of £800k in 2011/12;
- (b) two of the main elements of the procurement project were the Procure to Pay (P2P) strategy, which focussed on spend with a value under £75k, and the Category Management approach led by Agilysis, which concentrated on identifying spend with a value of over £75k;
- (c) the P2P strategy had delivered efficiencies across the whole of the

council and would be targeting travel expenses in the near future to achieve further efficiency savings.

Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets was thanked for his attendance.

70. **EXTRACT FROM PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORT**

Ian Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and People, David Northey, Head of Finance presented the Performance and Finance report. Members were informed that –

- (a) staff sickness had been improved significantly since December 2010 with a recorded reduction of 3.45 days per FTE. Following a corporate drive to improve sickness absence it now stood at an average level of 9.71 days per FTE which was still some way off the council's ambitious target of 6 days per FTE;
- (b) the budget delivery plan to restructure Legal Services had been commenced;
- (c) the budget delivery plan to restructure Democratic Services had yet to commence however, it was still considered to be an important aspect in reducing the council's budget as the council was still in a difficult financial position;
- (d) in total the council had reduced its number of employees by 516 since December 2010 with only 61 employees leaving as a result of redundancy;
- (e) agency staff accounted for 5.36 per cent of the monthly wage bill of all council employees, which was slightly over the council's target of 5 per cent.

It was commented by members that although Councillor Ricketts had given his apologies due to a prior commitment, it was disappointing that he was not in attendance for the second successive meeting, where the Performance and Finance report was under discussion.

Agreed that –

- (1) David Northey, Head of Finance, would provide an update to all members on the current situation with legal services restructure;
- (2) David Northey, Head of Finance, would provide an update to all members on the proposed budget delivery plans in Democratic Support;
- (3) David Northey, Head of Finance, would provide an update to all members on the exact cost of 5.36 per cent of agency workers and the total number of agency workers employed across the council.

71. **SCRUTINY TRAINING REPORT**

The panel noted the scrutiny training report.

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

The panel noted the tracking resolution document.

73. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted its work programme.

74. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.