

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 10 April 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, in the Chair.

Councillor Tuffin, Vice Chair.

Councillors Bowie, Bowyer, Casey, Philippa Davey, James, Monahan, Mrs Nelder, Nicholson, Stevens and Wiggins.

Apology for absence: Councillor Murphy.

Also in attendance: Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), David Northey (Head of Finance), Stuart Palmer (Assistant Director for Homes and Communities), Gemma Pearce (Team Leader Democratic Support), Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Cooperatives and Community Development), Giles Perritt (Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships), Councillor Peter Smith (Deputy Leader), Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer)

The meeting started at 4.30 pm and finished at 7.05 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.

127. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

128. **MINUTES**

The Board agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2013 are confirmed as a correct record.

129. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of chair's urgent business.

130. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

The Board considered the schedule of decisions made and noted the latest position.

131. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

The work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Customer and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel were submitted for consideration and approval.

The Board agreed –

- (1) the Customers and Communities OSP's work programme and its own work programme;
- (2) to include the Medium Term Financial Plan together with the Corporate Plan for consideration at its meeting on 8 May 2013.

132. **CALL-INS**

The Chair advised that the Cabinet member decision relating to the revised household waste recycling centre opening hours and waste acceptance criteria had been called in. The meeting to consider this call in would be held on 16 April 2013.

133. **URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

There were no urgent executive decisions to consider.

134. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS AND PRIVATE BUSINESS**

The chair advised that the decision relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 123 List had been approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 April 2013.

The Board agreed that the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 123 List should be monitored and as such included on the Growth and Prosperity OSP's work programme.

135. **CORPORATE MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Finance submitted the corporate monitoring report for February 2013, which highlighted the following main areas –

- revenue monitoring position;
- key issues and corrective actions (if required);
- capital position;
- MTFF capital programme;
- capital receipts summary;
- HR information (including sickness, grievances, disciplinaries and a workforce head count).

In response to questions raised, it was reported that –

- (a) the direction of travel for the level of staff sickness was positive and it was hoped that the targets sets would be achieved; the Chief Executive had been tasked to review current procedures to ascertain if they were robustly applied across the authority; as part of this review, managers had been made accountable for the level of staff sickness and as such this issue had been set as an appraisal objective;

- (b) as a result of the review of the Council's sickness absence policy which had been measured against policies used within the private sector, a number of issues had been considered and the policy strengthened;
- (c) invest to save schemes were being investigated in relation to reducing the cost of the insurance claims received against the Council;
- (d) the medium term financial plan was due to be scrutinised by the Board at its meeting on 8 May 2013; the plan would be submitted to Cabinet on 22 July 2013;
- (e) a staff sickness report would be submitted to the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 15 April 2013 and any specific questions relating to sickness could be directed to this meeting.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance for attending the meeting.

The Board agreed that the findings from the Support Services OSP meeting would be reported to next Board meeting on 8 May 2013.

136. **CABINET MEMBERS**

The Chair welcomed the Deputy Leader who provided a brief overview of his areas of responsibility, which included –

- human resources;
- customer services including libraries;
- business continuity and civil protection;
- ICT;
- democracy and governance;
- member development;
- leisure management contract;
- events, culture, heritage and museums (including Mount Edgcumbe);
- sports development.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that –

- (a) consultants had been appointed to look at best practice and review the library service; proposals such as the introduction of wi fi in libraries was currently being undertaken;
- (b) work was currently being undertaken to draft a viable business plan for Mount Edgcumbe; in conjunction with this piece of work, options were being investigated to achieve savings of £66,000; (Cornwall Council had agreed to cut its contribution to Mount Edgcumbe by £66,000);

- (c) long term sickness statistics were not included within the private sector's sickness absence policies; due to the work that had already been implemented, staff sickness had reduced over the last two months.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Leader for attending the meeting.

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Cooperatives and Community Development and the Assistant Director for Homes and Communities who provided a brief overview of the current areas of work being undertaken, which included –

- community asset transfer policy;
- Community Safety Partnership;
- voluntary community sector review;
- localism impact on neighbourhood working;
- housing delivery plan;
- child poverty;
- support cooperative ethos across the authority;
- energy cooperative;
- fair trade;
- welfare reform.

In response to a question raised, the community asset transfer policy would be submitted to Cabinet for approval in May 2013; each request could be taken on its own merits and transfers made on the basis of what was the best option for the community (however, transfers would not be made on income generating asset); ward councillors would be involved with this process and the policy would be reviewed after 12 months.

137. **RESTRUCTURE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Chair and Vice Chair together with the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships and the Team Leader (Democratic Support) presented the restructure of Overview and Scrutiny report, which highlighted the following key points -

- (a) the aim of the proposals to restructure the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and panels was to improve effectiveness, modernise the function and also bring it in line with the Council's priorities;
- (b) the proposed new structure included a Cooperative Scrutiny Board (the board) and four panels –
- Your Plymouth
 - Working Plymouth
 - Ambitious Plymouth
 - Caring Plymouth

- (c) membership of the board would consist of four Chairs and four Vice Chairs and two non Chair members (10 members in total); each of the four panels would consist of 12 members including a Chair and Vice Chair;
- (d) the four panels would be chaired by a member from the majority political group with the Vice Chair from the opposition political group; one of the opposition Vice Chairs would take the role of the Chair of the Cooperative Scrutiny Board;
- (e) the board would be able to set up Cooperative Scrutiny Reviews, the purpose of which would be to undertake scrutiny work which would be time and remit specific; the review would consist of at least three members which were drawn from a pool of any non-executive members; members would be asked to register their interests and would receive priority placements on reviews which were of interest to them;
- (f) in order to improve communication links a summary of scrutiny activity would be provided to Cabinet on a monthly basis, a monthly circular would also be produced and circulated to all scrutiny members providing details of activity from the board and information on forthcoming Cooperative Scrutiny Reviews.

During discussion, the following issues were raised –

- (g) the perceived lack of consultation with the minority group regarding the proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny function;
- (h) the omission of 'overview' in the name of the board (Cooperative Scrutiny Board);
- (i) the title of the Working Plymouth panel did not fully encompass its scope;
- (j) the terms of reference for Caring Plymouth would need to include an overarching responsibility for the leadership of delivery of services to children and young people, as per advise provided by the Assistant Director for Education, Learning and Family Support.

The Board agreed to recommend the following to Council (subject to the appropriate amendments) –

- (1) a new scrutiny structure is approved (as detailed in the report);
- (2) the new terms of reference for Cooperative Scrutiny and each of the panels are approved and incorporated into the constitution;

- (3) statutory health scrutiny functions (other than referral of matters to the Secretary of State for Health) are delegated to the Caring Plymouth panel.

138. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were no recommendations to consider.

139. **PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENTS (PIDS)**

There were no project initiation documents (PIDS) to consider.

140. **TASK AND FINISH UPDATES/REPORTS**

Councillor Tuffin, Chair of the library modernisation task and finish group presented the report, which outlined the following –

- the scrutiny approach;
- findings;
- conclusion;
- recommendations.

Councillor Tuffin took the opportunity to thank councillors who had sat on the review (Councillors Casey, Jordan and Martin Leaves) and Darin Halifax (Community Cohesion Officer) and Katey Johns (Democratic Support Officer) for their support during the task and finish group.

The Board agreed to recommend the task and finish group report on Library Modernisation to Cabinet for its approval.

141. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

Agreed that under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 9 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information act, 2000.

142. **NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES (NNDRI) FORM 2013/14 BUDGET (E3)**

Following discussions relating to the Council's arrangements for the business rates retention scheme, which had been introduced from 1 April 2013, the Board requested that further clarification was provided relating to the process adopted by the Council.