

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 9 January 2014 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.55 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair
Councillor Neil Fawcett (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Lynda Atkins
Councillor John Christie
Councillor Sam Coates
Councillor Yvonne Constance
Councillor Mark Gray
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Charles Mathew (In place of Councillor Richard Langridge)
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor David Nimmo Smith (for Agenda Item 6)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Eira Hale, Sue Whitehead (Chief Executive's Office)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

5

Officer Attending

Maggie Scott, Head of Policy; John Jackson, Director for Community & Social Services; Jim Leivers, Director for Children's Services; Frances Craven, Deputy Director, Education & Early Intervention; Lucy Butler, Deputy Director Children's Social Care & YOS; David Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer; Val Messenger, Deputy Director of Public Health; Sue Scane, Interim Director for Environment & Economy; Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director Strategy & Infrastructure Planning; Mark Kemp, Deputy Director, Commercial.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

1/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Langridge (Councillor Charles Mathew substituting).

2/14 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

The Committee noted that the draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2014 would be made available on the website and submitted for approval to the next meeting.

3/14 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT FOR THE SECOND QUARTER 2013/14

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee had before them a paper outlining the Council's performance for the second quarter of 2013/14.

John Jackson, Director for Social & Community Services, attended during consideration of Adult Services. Responding to a question John Jackson explained how priorities were set against the 21 indicators and the importance of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in setting priorities.

There followed discussion on the figures relating to delayed discharges contract home care and pick/up reablement. John Jackson offered to come back to the next meeting to discuss further contract home care and reablement services.

Jim Leivers, Director for Children's Services and Frances Craven, Deputy Director Education & Early Intervention and Lucy Butler introduced the report in relation to Children, Education & Families commenting in particular on the underfunding in a number of key areas that meant that targets had to be prioritised.

David Etheridge attended for the Fire & Rescue Service and commented in particular on the assistance provided during the recent flooding. Members discussed on-going problems related to infrastructure such as at pumping stations and considered whether there was any potential to charge utilities for recurring problems.

Val Messenger, attended for Public Health and in response to a query about health checks advised that the relevant age group received a letter and then at least one follow up letter if they did not attend for health checks. There was some discussion about whether Public Health could be more proactive and Val Messenger acknowledged that more could be done to educate people about the importance of health checks and indicated that a big event was planned for the Kassam Stadium in early April. The numbers were monitored by the Health Improvement Board.

Sue Scane, Interim Director for Environment & Economy; Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director Strategy & Infrastructure Planning; Mark Kemp, Deputy Director, Commercial introduced the report in relation to Environment & Economy. Martin Tugwell referred to the continued increase in the number of planning applications and the 50% increase in consultations on the previous year. Added to this the consultations were themselves larger and more complex. Section 106 work was important but there was real pressure on staff where numbers had remained the same. This was evident in quarter 2, where with even one person off sick performance is affected. Additional staff had been recruited as cover but coming in did not have the experience or local knowledge of permanent staff. Members discussed what could be done to improve the situation and Sue Scane explained that it was not possible to use S106 monies to support the process and therefore draw more funding in.

Following in depth discussion with Directors about the current performance the Committee noted that, across all three Directorates, resources are stretched due to an increase in demand, which is not mirrored by funding streams, and is threatening the future performance of the Council. The committee agreed to highlight this concern to Cabinet.

4/14 THE HIGHWAYS CONTRACT WITH ATKINS / SKANSKA
(Agenda No. 6)

Deputy Director, Commercial Mark Kemp presented a report on the performance of the Highways Service Contract. The report explained the history of the contract and identified areas of good performance and areas for improvement.

Sue Scane, Interim Director for Environment & Economy, Councillor David Nimmo Smith, Cabinet member for Environment and Jim Daughton, Service Manager – Delivery attended for this item.

Responding to questions Mark Kemp confirmed that there were operational performance indicators around bridges and drainage.

Members generally welcomed the report recognising the progress made and the work still required. In particular they noted the organisational problems and the importance of recruiting the right sub-contractors; they also considered the importance of getting the level of monitoring correct and the importance of clear communications. Asked about alternative approaches to maintenance Mark Kemp referred to the work of the Transport Advisory Panel which was looking at this.

The Performance Scrutiny Committee noted the performance of Atkins in delivering the first three years of the highways contract and noted that the assignment of the contract to Skanska will give added impetus to making improvements moving forward. The Committee looked forward to receiving a further progress report in due course.

5/14 SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2013/14

(Agenda No. 7)

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The Committee at its meeting on 16 December 2013 considered a report on the directorate business strategies for 2014/15 – 2017/18 and draft budget proposals to address shortfalls in funding and other emerging pressures over the medium term. Lorna Baxter, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, together with Sue Scane, Interim Director for Environment & Economy. Mark Kemp, Deputy Director, Commercial and Martin Tugwell, Deputy Director, Strategy & Infrastructure Planning, presented a report that set out the other elements relevant to the Service & Resource Planning process; the capital programme proposals for 2014/15 – 2017/18, updated asset management plans and a draft treasury management strategy.

During discussion Members considered the role of role as the County Council “honest broker” with regard to drainage and the balance of clearing work between the Environment Agency and local farmers. There was reference to a previous Scrutiny Flood review. They also looked at local issues and how that fed into the Transport Asset Management Plan. The Committee was advised that work was on-going to update area strategies. They noted that the Council had still not received information on its final capital allocation.

Following consideration the Committee noted the report and confirmed that they had no specific comments to refer to Cabinet.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

2014