

RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 3 APRIL 2014 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Watson (Chairman), Councillors Allison, Mrs Atkinson, S Bowman, Dodd, J Mallinson and McDevitt.

OFFICERS Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Resources
Organisational Development Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Officer

ROSP.16/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Dr Tickner, Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder.

ROSP.17/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McDevitt declared an interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Agenda Item A.3 – Corporate Risk Register (discussions regarding the Arts Centre only). The interest related to the fact that he was a Member of the City Council's Development Control Committee.

ROSP.18/14 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

ROSP.19/14 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman highlighted minute reference ROSP.12/14 and asked the Town Clerk and Chief Executive for an update on the 'other and no response given' sickness absence reason.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that managers had been informed that the 'other' reason should only be used in exceptional circumstances. Guidance would be issued to all managers and there should be a reduction in the number of absences recorded against the reason in future reports.

RESOLVED – 1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2014 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2014 be noted.

ROSP.20/14 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.09/14 which provided an overview of matters that related to the work of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that the Notice of Key Executive Decisions had been published on 7 March 2014. The following items fell within the remit of the Panel:

KD.06/14 Asset Review Business Plan – Refresh of Disposal Programme – the item had been scheduled to be considered by the Executive 7 April 2014. Since the publication of the Notice the matter had been deferred as it was not yet ready for publication.

KD.07/14 2013/14 Provisional Outturn Reports – The reports were scheduled to be considered by the Executive on 23 June and this Panel on 26 June 2014.

Members did not raise any questions or comments on the items contained within the Notice of Key Decisions.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer drew the Panel's attention to the draft Scrutiny Annual Report which had been attached to the report as Appendix 2. Panel Members were asked to comment on the draft report before it was formally approved by the Scrutiny Chairs Group.

A Member wanted the Council to give more consideration to vulnerable people and asked that all of the Council's reports, policies and decisions reflected this.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that there was a framework in place to ensure vulnerable people and minority groups were considered as part of the decision making process and he agreed that it was worthwhile reviewing the process.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded the Panel that the Local Government Act 2000 gave Members the ability to call-in decisions if Members felt that the decision was not protecting vulnerable groups.

A Member added that he would like to see call-ins used more by the authority as a way of holding the Executive to account and having more considered discussions.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded the Panel that, with the approval of Council, an additional cycle of meetings had been added to the Civic Calendar to take place in May due to the change in date of the Elections. The Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been scheduled for 13 May 2014 but there was nothing scheduled in the Work Programme for the meeting. Members were asked if they wanted the meeting to go ahead.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to this Panel (OS.09/14) be noted.

2) That the draft Annual Report be welcomed.

3) That the meeting scheduled for 13 May 2014 be cancelled due to lack of business.

ROSP.21/14 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented report SD.08/13 giving an update on the Corporate Risk Register.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Corporate Risk Register was reviewed quarterly by the Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) and the Senior Management

Team (SMT) and the following risks had been reviewed and updated, details of which were set out in Appendix A of the report:

Asset Business Plan – Asset Disposal Strategy
Asset Business Plan – Asset Acquisition Strategy
Delivering the Carlisle Plan
Council's Income targets
Housing Needs of Vulnerable Groups
Workforce Planning

Improving Industrial Estate Performance had been removed from the Corporate Risk Register as current plans and action to improve Carlisle's industrial estates had reduced the risk to its target level. The risk would continue to be closely monitored on the Economic Development operation risk register.

The Deputy Chief Executive gave an overview of each of the Risks as set out in the Register and an update on the current actions and Target Risk Scores. He explained that the Asset Business Plan risks had been moved to the Director of Governance following the recent Senior Management Team restructure.

In considering the Corporate Risk Management report Members raised the following comments and questions:

Having declared an interest Councillor McDevitt took no part in the discussion regarding the Arts Centre.

- Members had been informed that work would begin on the Arts Centre in May and asked when the Arts Centre Business Case would be available for scrutiny?

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Business Case was under development. The building work would begin in May and the planning application would be considered by the Development Control Committee on Friday 11 April 2014. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive added that there was clear direction from the Administration that the Arts Centre would go ahead. The Business Case would be subject to scrutiny to ensure it was the best, most robust and deliverable Business Case that it could be.

- What risk was there to the Authority if Scotland became independent?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported that he would be attending a meeting in the afternoon to meet other Leaders and Chief Executives from local authorities including southern Scotland to discuss the impact on Local Government in the north of England and the Borders. The meeting was a result of the IPPR Borderland report.

The Director of Resources added that the impact on Carlisle would depend on the two Countries tax regimes.

- There was concern that the Council's usable reserves were the lowest in its benchmarking group.

The Director of Resources responded that the use of reserves to slowly reduce service costs before being replenished was planned. The Council would have to make significant savings to keep the reserves on track but it had a good track record of delivering savings.

RESOLVED – That report SD.08/14 be welcomed.

ROSP.22/14 TRANSFORMATION BOARD

The Deputy Chief Executive presented report SD.09/14 updating Members on the work of the Transformation Board.

The Deputy Chief Executive outlined the purpose of the Board reporting that the Board had assisted in the co-ordination of savings initiatives within each Directorate for the £719,000 savings target for 2014/15. £536,000 of the target had been achieved.

The Deputy Chief Executive updated the Panel on progress within each of the Directorates and detailed the progress of the Automating Services project which had progressed and expanded into a programme of delivering services in a smarter and more customer centric way.

He reminded the Panel that additional recurring savings were required beyond 2014/15 and the savings targets were detailed in the 2014/15 budget. A further £3.939m savings were required between 2015/16 and 2018/19, £1.839m to be delivered by 2015/16 and £2.1m in later years. In total the Council would have saved £9.073m which equated to an approximate 45% savings on 2010/11 controllable expenditure budget. The Deputy Chief Executive detailed how some of the future savings would be achieved as set out in the report.

In response to questions the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the savings to be achieved from Bereavement Services were on track and comparison work was being undertaken between the authority and other local authorities with regard to waste provision.

The Chairman expressed his disappointment with regard to the reduction to the neighbourhood forum grants.

Members had a detailed discussion on the way grants were given out to community groups and the effect the reduction may have. They hoped that the reduction would not affect the pro active engagement with local communities.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained the reason for the reduction in the grant to the County Council and how it was hoped that the way City Council Ward Councillors engaged with their communities would become more proactive.

RESOLVED – That the update from the Transformations Board (report SD.09/14) be welcomed.

ROSP.23/14 EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY 2014

The Organisational Development Manager submitted report CE.05/14 detailing the outcome of the 2014 Employee Opinion Survey.

The Organisational Development Manager reported that the 2014 Employee Opinion Survey had been sent to staff on 6 January. 228 surveys had been completed giving a response rate of 39.6% (based on 576 staff at 31/12/13), compared with 42.1% in 2013.

The survey had maintained several of the questions from previous years including ones on the City Council as an employer, internal communications and leadership and

management. New questions for 2014 included ones on understanding of the City Council's priorities, work/life balance and appraisals.

The Organisational Development Manager gave an overview of the questions and responses as set out in the report. She concluded by informing the Panel there was not a key issue which all staff were concerned about and any Directorate specific issues would be considered by the Director with support from the Organisational Development Team.

In considering the Employee Opinion survey results Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Members were pleased that staff morale continued to improve despite the changes that were happening within the authority and the pressure that staff were under.
- Members felt that all managers should understand the value of positive feedback on staff.
- The percentage of staff that had taken part in a team or individual appraisal was very low.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive agreed that the figure should be 100% and work was needed to make the appraisal system more relevant and easier to understand. The Organisational Development Manager added that the appraisal process for 2014 had just begun and she would report the figures to a future meeting. She added that the question with regard to appraisals would be changed to a yes/no answer in 2015 for clearer results.

- A Member commented that it was important to retain staff and questioned the level of staff and resources required to ensure the authority could move forward.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that the Medium Term Financial Plan showed a required saving of £3m and he felt that this was sensibly achievable. The Senior Management Team was looking at the running cost of the authority and comparing it to other similar authorities to identify where money was being spent to inform the options available to Members. He added that the City Council was viable for the future.

RESOLVED – That the Employee Opinion Survey 2014 (CE.05/14) be welcomed.

(The meeting ended at 11.38am)