

## **RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**THURSDAY 4 APRIL 2013 AT 10.10AM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Watson (Chairman) Councillors Betton (until 10.55am), Bowditch, Bowman S, Craig, Forrester, Mrs Parsons and Whalen.

**ALSO PRESENT** Councillor Tickner – Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder

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

### **ROSP.24/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

### **ROSP.25/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

### **ROSP.26/13 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**

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

### **ROSP.27/13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

In considering the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February, Members noted that an update on the review of the Asset Review Disposal Programme had been expected at this Panel. Members asked when a report would be submitted.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded that negotiations for the Land at Morton were still ongoing. The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder added that the review of the strategy had caused the delay in a report being submitted at the present time.

RESOLVED – 1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2012 and 3 January 2013 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

2) That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2013 and 5 March 2013 be noted.

### **ROSP.27/13 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer presented report OS.08/13 which provided an overview of matters that related to the work of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work.

The Scrutiny Officer reported:

- The Notice of Key Executive Decisions had been published on 8 March 2013 and the following issues fell within the remit of the Panel:

KD.03/13 – Vehicle and Plant replacement Provision 2013/14.

KD.05/13 – Planned Enhancements to Council Properties.

The Executive will be asked to consider both items at their meeting on 8 April 2013.

Members asked for more detail on the two Key Decision items. The Director of Resources reminded the Panel that the Council had a five year Vehicle Replacement Plan, the £259,000 that the Executive had been asked to release was for green space vehicles and he agreed to provide Members with a list of the vehicles which were being replaced alongside a copy of the mechanical sweeper work plan. He also agreed to provide a list of scheduled building enhancements.

- There were no references from the Executive.
- The Scrutiny Annual Report had been drafted and was attached to the report. Members were asked to comment on the draft report before it was formally approved by the Scrutiny Chairs Group on 18 April 2013.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Key Decision items relevant to this Panel OS.05/13 be noted.

2) That the Director of Resources circulate the following information to all Members:

List of vehicles to be replaced  
Copy of the mechanical sweeper work plan  
List of scheduled building enhancements

## **ROSP.28/13      SAVING PAPER TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted report OS.09/13 regarding the recommendation of the Task Group.

The Scrutiny Officer reminded the Panel that a recommendation of the Saving Paper Task Group had been to undertake a pilot of using Tablet technology in Committee meetings. Ten Members had taken part in the pilot and, on the whole, the pilot had been successful. The pilot Members had used MyCMIS, which was a web portal which provided Members customised access to the Committee Management Information System (CMIS). The MyCMIS portal allowed Members to access the Committees they were on but allowed no access to the rest of the meetings.

The Committee Section had worked hard to change the way agendas and reports were uploaded to CMIS and all documents were produced in a document pack which enabled Members to download all the necessary papers for Committee in one document.

Due to the change in the document pack Members of the pilot felt that the MyCMIS portal was not necessary and Members could access the full CMIS site from their tablets. The software providers had agreed to refund the cost of the licences that had been purchased for the pilot but would retain one 'ghost' licence for the Committee team. The 'ghost'

licence would allow the MyCMIS portal to be monitored for updates in the coming months and would give the Council the opportunity to review potential of the portal in the future.

The Lead Member of the Saving Paper Task Group concurred that the pilot had been successful and the Members who had struggled with the tablet did so because they had not spent enough time practising with it. He informed the Panel that the pilot members had met for an evaluation meeting and this had been extremely useful as an opportunity to raise issues and share ideas and information. He added that the move to tablets could enable IT to look at other possible savings regarding Members equipment. He moved that the Executive appointed someone to role the project out to Members.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder reported that he had been part of the pilot and he agreed that the best way to learn how to use tablets was by practising on them. He suggested that a salary sacrifice scheme be arranged for officers to purchase tablets as well as Members. He thanked officers who had been involved in the pilot for their support and for their speed in responding to issues.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that salary sacrifice schemes for tablets were possible within the public sector. He added that he was using tablet technology for meetings and had found it to be an effective way of working.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member felt that it would be useful to know how much the pilot had saved and felt that savings should be given to officers for additional support in moving towards paperless meetings. He also felt that there should be a clear training plan for Members who wanted to move to tablet technology.

The Panel discussed the options for training and some Members felt that more formal training would encourage Members to move towards tablet technology. Members also felt that informal training from other Members and officers, alongside regular drop in sessions would be beneficial.

- The Panel felt that it would be useful to have the document pack on screen in the committee rooms during the committee meetings.

The Chairman agreed that using the screens during committees would be beneficial to Members but would require a different way of working.

RESOLVED - 1) That due to the agreement not to make use of MyCMIS the Panel agree changes to recommendation 2 of the Task Group to:

“Should the pilot be successful then the use of tablets should be rolled out to all Members and Officers who indicate that they wish to move to paperless working. Consideration needs to be given to training and support. These Members and Officers should no longer be provided with paper Committee reports.”

2) That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive undertake to implement recommendations two and three of the Saving Paper Task Group as detailed in 2.1 of report OS.09/13.

## **ROSP.29/13      TRANSFORMATION BOARD**

The Deputy Chief Executive presented report SD.04/13 informing Members on the work of the Transformation Board.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Transformation activity in 2012/13 had focused on delivering the required savings of £1.38m as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The initial process had been to deliver 10% savings across all Directorates. The new Administration had made some changes to the proposals in order to minimise redundancies. The resulting programme of work was co-ordinated and monitored by the Transformation Board.

He summarised the activity of each Directorate highlighting the savings identified and outlined other transformation activities which had been closely monitored by the Transformation Board including the Automating Services project and Lean Systems Reviews which have taken place.

In considering the report members raised the following comments and questions:

- A Member said that in his opinion the report should include more information on how the savings had been achieved and what the different reviews entailed to enable further scrutiny.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that the purpose of the report was to report the savings that had been achieved so far and Members could gain more detailed information on any items they so wished.

- Did the Transformation Board report to the Executive and how often did it meet?

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Transformation Board feedback directly through Senior Management Team and Joint Management Team with individual Directorate saving plans being considered by Executive to fit in with the budget process. He added that the Board had a good, open and transparent process which allowed work to be done at an early stage.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder added that the Board was made up of people in the authority who could make changes happen and retain the quality in service. The policies and strategies come from the Executive, for example the policy to minimise the number of redundancies within the authority. It was difficult to make the savings required and it could only be achieved by the Executive working with officers and involving staff.

- A Member raised concerns that the Lean System Review of Development Control could impact on the service that was being provided.

The Deputy Chief Executive responded that Lean System Reviews would not compromise change in legislation or capacity in Development Control. The Review would identify potential savings and ensure that there was the capacity to adapt to changes in legislation. The focus of Lean Systems was to check if the systems in place were still the correct and most efficient ways of working.

- Would the reduction in the training budget effect the proposed savings from the use of tablet technology?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that if training allowed for savings to be made by using tablet technology then it would be money well spent.

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder stated that the training budget had been reduced but the Council was using the reminding budget more smartly by sharing training and by producing trainers within the authority.

- Did the £592,000 savings identified have to be found in 2013/14 and was there a plan to achieve the savings?

The Director of Resources confirmed that the savings had to be found in 2013/14 and it was hoped that this would be achieved by September/October.

The Deputy Town Clerk added that the Joint Management Team would meet to review the savings and to set in motion a timetable for the savings in partnership with the Transformation Board. He agreed to report back to a future meeting with the details of the proposed savings. He acknowledged that officers did need to pay attention to the stress and disruption of staff during the process.

- Had any further work been undertaken on closing floors within the Civic Centre?

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder confirmed that officers were monitoring office space usage within the Civic Centre with the view of letting out spare capacity when opportunity arose.

- Was the use of consultants being monitored?

The Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder explained that the use of consultants had to be agreed by the relevant Portfolio Holder and, although they had to be used on occasion, the Portfolio Holder monitored why they were required and the overall use.

RESOLVED – That the update on the Transformation Board be welcomed.

### **ROSP.30/13      EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY 2013**

The Organisational Development Manager presented report CE.04/13 summarising the results from the 2013 Employee Opinion Survey.

The Organisational Development Manager informed the Panel that the 2013 Survey had been sent to staff in January 2013. 254 surveys had been completed giving a response rate of 42.1% compared with 54.7% in 2012. A copy of the survey had been included in the report.

One of the key issues arising from the 2012 survey had been that only 46% of staff had felt valued at work. In 2013 53% of staff said that they felt valued as an employee, this was a positive result but there was more to do on this issue. The most popular reason for staff not feeling valued had been that they felt nothing had changed in the last year.

The Organisational Development Manager gave an overview of the key findings from the survey and explained that there had not been a key issue which all staff were concerned about although there were some issues specific to directorates which would be considered by the Directors with support from the Organisational Development Team.

She added that further work would take place to continue to improve internal communication and Health and Wellbeing initiatives would continue to take place.

In considering the Survey results Members raised the following comments and questions:

- The report stated that 89.4% of staff felt that the City Council was good employer yet only 53% of staff felt valued.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded the Panel that staff feeling valued had been a very big issue in 2012 and he had followed up the results of the survey by identifying the reasons that staff did not feel valued. Some of the issues had been straight forward to resolve and some issues had been out of the control of the Council. Overall there had been an increase in staff feeling valued.

- The report stated that 11.4% of staff were subjected to bullying at work; how would the Council address this very serious issue?

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that, although the number was relatively low, it was a cause for concern that there was a number at all. Follow up work was required to determine what was generally unacceptable behaviour, what was awkward management and what was a feeling of bullying when it was actually a reasonable expectation of performance.

- A Member highlighted that 60% of staff had not completed the survey.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive responded that work was being undertaken to determine why staff were not participating in the survey and how to encourage staff to complete it.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the results of the survey had been broken down to each Directorate so each Director could respond to issues in their own area.

RESOLVED – That the results of the Employee Opinion Survey 2013 be welcomed.

## **ROSP.31/13      CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted report SD.03/13 giving an update on the Corporate Risk Register.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Senior Management Team and Corporate Risk Management Group had drafted a new Corporate Risk Register which included significant risks to achieving the City Council's objectives for 2013/14. The actions required to mitigate the risks had been developed with an indication as to when the risk would reduce, by identification of a 'target risk'. The City Council was unable to eliminate risk completely by carrying out mitigation action and would be left with a residual risk. Such risk could be deleted from the Corporate Risk Register once mitigating action had

reduced the risk to target levels but they would continue to be monitored at service level via operational risk registers.

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

- Members felt that the Asset Disposal Plan was an important risk that had not been included in the register.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that Asset Management had previously been included in the risk register because there was no plan to manage the assets. The Council had a robust Plan to manage the Council's assets and as a result the risk was reduced and was no longer a corporate risk.

The Director of Resources added that the Plan remained in the Operational Risk Register and was monitored by officers. If the risk rose it would move from the Operational Risk Register to the Corporate Risk Register.

- A Member felt strongly that the biggest risk for the Council at the present time was the Welfare Reform and was concerned that the Council could not deal with the impact.

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that the Welfare Reform was a significant risk and that is why it had been included in the Corporate Risk Register. He added that the Welfare Reform Board had been set up to deal with the co-ordination of the move to Universal Credit.

The Director of Resources added that the Welfare Reform fell under the remit of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and they had received several reports on the issue.

A Member asked for more information on the impact of the benefits advice service including how much was spent on the service and how much benefits it brought it.

The Director of Resources agreed that a report to a future meeting on the benefits advice centre and monitoring information.

A Member commented that he was disappointed that the media had not attended the meeting to hear about the hard work that the Council was undertaking especially with regard to Welfare Reform.

RESOLVED – 1) That the update on the Corporate Risk Register be welcomed;

2) That a report on the effect of the Welfare Reform on the Benefits Advice Service be submitted to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel as well as the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

(The meeting ended at 12.00pm)