

RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 21 JULY 2011 AT 10.00AM

PRESENT: Councillor Layden (Chairman), Councillors Allison, Bainbridge, Boaden (as substitute for Cllr Hendry), Bowman S, and Whalen.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor Ellis – Performance and Development Portfolio Holder

ROSP.43/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bowditch, Hendry and Watson and from the Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Mallinson.

ROSP.44/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

ROSP.45/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 31 March 2011 and 16 June 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meetings and signed by the Chairman.

ROSP.46/11 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

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

ROSP.47/11 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.20/11 which provided an overview of matters related to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work.

Mrs Edwards reported:

- That the Forward Plan of Executive key decisions, covering the period 1 July – 31 October 2011 had been published on 17 June 2011 and was included in the Overview Report. There were two items in the Plan relevant to this Panel and both would be considered by the Panel at its meeting on 25 August:

KD.016/11 – The Medium Term Financial Plan (including the Corporate Charging Policy) and the Capital Strategy 2012/13 to 2017/18

KD.017/11 – Asset Management Plan 2011-16.

She added that the 1 August to 30 November 2011 Plan had been published on 18 July 2011 and no further items relevant to this Panel had been added.

- The Scrutiny Chairs Group met on 5 July 2011 and the minutes of the meeting had been included in the report for Members' information.
- The Capital Projects Task and Finish Groups report would be considered by the Executive on 26 July 2011 and their response would be submitted to this Panel on 25 August 2011.
- The Work Programme had been amended following the Development Session and had been circulated. She drew Members attention to the Shared Services/Partnership report which had been moved from the August meeting to the October meeting.

RESOLVED –1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Forward Plan items relevant to this Panel be noted.

2) That the minutes of the Scrutiny Chairs Group be noted.

ROSP.48/11 EMPLOYEE OPINION SURVEY

The Organisational Development Manager (Ms Titley) presented the results of the Employee Opinion Survey 2011 (CE.21/11).

Ms Titley reported that employee opinion surveys had been carried out within the Council for a number of years and offered an opportunity to engage with staff and find out their views about working for the City Council. The most recent survey took place between January and February 2011 and 342 surveys had been returned which gave a response rate of 46%, compared with 43% when the survey was last carried out in 2008.

Ms Titley explained that several of the questions within the survey were open ended and staff had been encouraged to respond honestly as the results would be anonymous.

In outlining the key findings from the survey, Miss Titley explained that staff wanted more information from the Senior Management Team, from service managers and from their line managers. They wanted to receive information from within the authority and not from external sources such as the media. She added that staff understood that difficult decisions needed to be made but asked for reassurance that the decisions would be made quickly and that staff would be kept informed of the decisions.

Ms Titley then outlined the results from the survey before informing the Panel that the results had been considered by the Senior Management Team and shared with staff through Management Briefings, Chief Executive's briefings and Chief Executive's newsletters. As improved communication was the key issue raised by staff, regular Chief Executive briefings would continue as well as the monthly Chief Executive's newsletter. Members of the Senior

Management Team would also attend team meetings in their directorates to talk to staff about the changes that were taking place.

The Policy and Communications Team were producing structure charts, an updated version of the A-Z directory and floor plans for the Civic Centre as well as working with ICT Connect and the Customer Services team to update the internal telephone directory to give staff and Members accurate information about the roles of teams and staff and where they were located within the Council. Ms Titley added that in response to the many requests that managers listen to ideas from staff, the Strategic Director would lead a 'Challenge and Change' group where staff could take their ideas on how to improve services.

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

- The Panel was satisfied that the response rate for the Survey had been higher than comparative authorities but felt that it would be useful to carry out the survey on a more frequent basis.

Ms Titley clarified that the Survey would be carried out on an annual basis, there had been some delay with the last survey but the next one would be carried out at the beginning of 2012. She added that consideration was also being given to conducting a mini survey to gauge the reaction to the changes in response to the Survey.

- Members were concerned that there had been a significant decline in the satisfaction rate with regard to internal communications and felt that this should be addressed immediately, either with regard to the way information was delivered or by ensuring the message being delivered was honest and clear.

Ms Titley explained that internal communication was a key priority from the Survey and work was being undertaken to address the issues raised. She agreed that a consistent message needed to be delivered through a variety of methods to reach all staff within the authority.

A Member suggested that internal communication may be accessed more if it came from Directorates and line managers rather than the Chief Executive.

- Members asked that the new structure charts, A-Z directory and floor plans were circulated to all Members as well as staff.

Ms Titley confirmed that all of the new information would be circulated to Members and had been prepared with both Members and Staff in mind.

- Members asked for more information on the Holiday Purchase Scheme that was being introduced.

Ms Titley explained that a report had been considered by the Employment Panel at its meeting 8 July 2011 and was available to view on the City

Council's website. All of the local District Councils apart from Allerdale Borough Council and Copeland District Council offered Holiday Purchase Schemes; the Holiday Purchase Scheme would allow staff to purchase up to 10 additional days per year. One of the benefits to staff was that they could pay for the additional days over a twelve month period opposed to unpaid leave which would be paid for from the following month's salary. She added it was difficult to estimate the income that would be generated by the holiday purchase scheme as it was dependent on the number of staff who chose to purchase additional holidays and the grade that they were on. It was recommended that, for the pilot programme, the income was initially used to fund employer pension contributions and any additional administrative support needed, with any extra income under £20,000 being used for other employee health and wellbeing initiatives, any income over £20,000 could be used as a saving.

The purchase of additional days would be subject to the same organisational requirements as taking annual leave. Managers would have to ensure that any additional leave would not affect the service provided.

- The report stated that there had been some examples given within the Survey of staff having a negative experience of approaching their line manager or Personnel with regard to a dignity and respect matter, had this issue been investigated further?

Ms Titley responded that the Survey had not provided any specific incidents. Dr Gooding added that if a member of staff felt that they had a negative experience approaching either their line manager or the Personnel section then they could approach a number of other officers or Unions for support.

- A Member highlighted the benefits that staff had suggested and felt that the Council should be managing expectations as many of the suggestions were unrealistic especially during the current economic climate.

A Member further commented that the benefits were only suggestions and added that it was valuable to boost staff morale and the suggestions should be considered, if not now but in the future when the Council's finances were more stable.

Ms Titley commented that the Organisational Development Team were preparing an Employee Benefit Booklet which would show the whole package that was available to staff.

- The Survey showed an increase in staff that had been unable to undertake learning relevant to their role, were alternative means of training being investigated?

Ms Titley informed the Panel that the training and qualification budgets had not been cut and she was unaware of where the budget limitations were. She confirmed that she was working to identify and resolve any issues.

Members gave some consideration to the future monitoring of the report and Ms Titley asked the Panel if a report on the Organisational Development Plan including an update on employee sickness and the employee opinion survey would be appropriate.

RESOLVED – That an update on the Employee Opinion Survey, Sickness Absence and monitoring of the Organisational Development Plan report be incorporated into the quarterly performance reports.

ROSP.49/11 PROJECT ASSURANCE GROUP

The Strategic Director and Deputy Chief Executive (Governance and Resources) (Dr Gooding) submitted report CE.20/11 which gave a summary of significant projects that were being undertaken.

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

- It was noted that the YMCA would be the agents for the new Community Resource Centre, had this originally been the intention and would the Centre be available for the whole community?

Dr Gooding confirmed that it had always been the intention for an external organisation to act as agents for the Centre and the YMCA had been successful through a tendering process. The Centre would provide support for all the community with the emphasis on vulnerable people who were or about to become homeless.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Panel that the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel had received a detailed report on the Centre at its meeting on 14 July 2011 and the report was available to view on the Council's website.

- Why had the Kingstown Industrial Estate project been re-profiled?

The Assistant Director (Resources) explained that the Council were in the process of agreeing a work project plan with the County Council which would result in a more robust project, it would need to be re profiled as it would not be completed in the current financial year. He agreed to provide an update on the reprofiling of the project in the next Project Assurance Group report.

- Members felt that the comments made in the report with regard to the Customer Contact Centre Shared Service were not clear or helpful in terms of monitoring.

Dr Gooding reminded the Panel that it had been the aim of the Shared Service for Carlisle City Council to provide customer contact services on behalf of Cumbria County Council and Allerdale Borough Council from the City Council's Customer Service Centre. Following discussions Allerdale Borough Council had decided that they did not want to be part of the Shared Service, this would allow the City Council to progress with their productive relationship with the County Council and deliver the Shared Service from the

City Council's Customer Service Centre. There would be a number of models to be considered and a business case would be brought through this Panel before a decision was taken by the Council. He added that the City Council would have the opportunity to provide a better service for the same money and there would be clear savings for the County Council.

- A Member asked for clarification regarding the 'Lean Systems Thinking'.

Dr Gooding responded that the Council should always be reviewing its services and Lean Systems Thinking was a system of reviewing services using the public's point of view and involved the people who were actually delivering the service to make any necessary changes.

- Would the Town Hall Project be going ahead?

Mr Mason explained that there had been a reduction in the grant for the Town Hall Project and work was being carried out to investigate what work could be carried out, if any, with the grant available.

- Was there a criteria to determine which projects would be considered by the Project Assurance Group?

Dr Gooding confirmed that there was a scheme that used to score projects and if they were scored higher than a certain threshold they were classed as a significant project.

- The Panel congratulated everyone who had been involved in the extremely successful Carlisle Roman Gateway Project. The Performance and Development Portfolio Holder congratulated the two Strategic Director's who had been involved in the project management.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Panel looked forward to scrutinising the Customer Contact Shared Service Business Case at a future meeting.

2) That an update on the Kingstown Industrial Estate project be included in the next Project Assurance Group report.

ROSP.50/11 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT

The Strategic Director and Deputy Chief Executive (Governance and Resources) (Dr Gooding) submitted report CE.19/11 which updated the Panel on risk management arrangements and the Corporate Risk Register.

Dr Gooding reported that the risks associated with delivering the Council's Corporate Plan had been reviewed by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Corporate Risk Management Group. A number of the risks associated with delivering the Plan had reached their target risk and could be removed from the Register but would remain on the respective service area operational risk register. New corporate risks in delivering the 2011/12

Corporate Plan objectives would be identified by SMT along with appropriate control strategies and would be reported to the Panel in October.

Dr Gooding added that the risk associated with providing Disabled Facilities Grants had escalated due to the significant reduction in budget available and the risk had been incorporated into the Register.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Panel that the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel had agreed a Task and Finish Group to look at the Disabled Facilities Grants in detail.

Dr Gooding highlighted a recent health check of the Council's risk management arrangements which assessed the level of maturity of risk management principles at a strategic level. The check highlighted the Council's strengths and weaknesses and an action plan for further development had been drafted and circulated to the Panel for their comments.

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

- Did Riverside Carlisle contribute to the financing of the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)?

Mr Mason confirmed that Riverside Carlisle had contributed £150,000 in the first half of the year to the DFGs and were expected to contribute a further £150,000 in the second half of the year. This would leave a potential shortfall of £550,000. He added that the problem was likely to increase as the County Council and the Health Authorities priority was to keep people in their own homes.

The Performance and Development Portfolio Holder added that the shortfall had increased due the change in the criteria for the DFGs as it allowed more people to apply for the Grants. He explained that the Council had a statutory responsibility for the Grants and all grants were paid.

- A Member highlighted some issues within the Wards regarding the speed that the Grants were paid and the communication between the Council and the applicant. Concerns were also raised that the issues regarding the Grants would have a negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

Dr Gooding agreed to investigate the issues and how they could be addressed and include the work in the next Risk Management report.

- Why had there not been formal monitoring reports in place for existing shared services?

Dr Gooding responded that the services were monitored but there was no programmed monitoring reports in place. The monitoring of the shared services needed to be more open and available to more Members of the Council.

- The Healthcheck aimed to achieve a consistent level 3 in management of risk, was this lower than the Council should be?

Dr Gooding explained that the Audit Commission raised concerns about the risk management with partnerships but had made no suggestions on how the Council should manage the risk. The Healthcheck allowed the Authority to carry out their own assessment which showed that the Authority understood its own internal risks but identified partnership risks. The assessment allowed for a more consistent approach.

The Performance and Development Portfolio Holder added that Members of the Council sat on the boards for shared services but there was a need for a more open line of accountability and an opportunity for Members to discuss the issues. He suggested that the minutes of the Joint Management Team would be an appropriate opportunity for the Panel to discuss the risks.

RESOLVED –That the Corporate Risk Management report be welcomed and the Panel looked forward to the next monitoring report in October.

ROSP.51/11 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the minutes) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

ROSP.52/11 ASSET REVIEW BUSINESS PLAN – DISPOSAL PROGRAMME

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of Paragraph 3)

The Property Services Manager (Mr Simmons) presented report RD.24/11 which provided an update and briefing note on the Asset Review Business Plan disposal programme.

The matter was considered by the Executive on 27 June 2011 (EX.81.11). The decision of the Executive was:

“That the Executive:

1. Noted the position and progress with the programme to dispose of surplus assets as detailed within Report RD.17/11.
2. Authorised the release and freehold disposal of the properties set out in the Appendix to the report (with the exception of Asset Plan Reference Numbers 257 and 275 which were deferred pending the receipt of a

written response from the Assistant Director (Resources), subject to final terms agreed by the Property Services Manager.”

Mr Simmons, Dr Gooding and Mr Mason then responded to issues raised by Members of the Panel. They clarified the order of work and the valuations for a number of the assets. They also outlined a number of options available for a variety of the assets.

Mr Simmons added that a working group had been formed to begin work on the re-investment options for the capital from the sale of assets, he confirmed that the Panel would be involved in the discussions at an early date.

RESOLVED – 1) That an update on the Asset Review Business Plan Disposal Programme, including an update on the proposed sale of Morton, be brought to the Panel in October.

2) That the Panel encouraged the consideration of the re-investment options for the capital from the sale of assets to take place as soon as possible and requested that the Panel be involved in the discussions at the earliest possible stage.

(The meeting ended at 12.38pm)