

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE ISSUES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 10 October 2016 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Alvey, B Armstrong, J Armstrong, G Bleasdale, J Carr, K Henig (Vice-Chairman), J Hillary, N Martin, J Rowlandson, L Taylor and R Young

1 Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Armstrong, P Crathorne and A Shield.

2 Substitute Members.

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the meeting held 11 July 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the following amendment:-

Councillor K Henig (Vice-Chairman in Chair)

Apologies for absence from Councillor J Lethbridge.

Matters Arising

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that information regarding housing benefits as raised on page 1 of the minutes had now been circulated to the full committee.

With regard to page 4 of the minutes, item 8, the Head of Planning and Performance advised that an update on the CRM review group would be given under item 9 on the agenda.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any.

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Annual Review of the Council's use of powers and approval of RIPA Policy

The Committee considered two reports of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the first which informed members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and the training undertaken by officers. The report further sought Members' approval of the Council's RIPA policy for the forthcoming year (for copy see file of minutes).

The second report provided detail relating to the Council's use of powers under the Act during the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 (Quarter 1) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Governance Solicitor advised that the Consumer Protection Manager had been invited to attend the meeting of the Committee in January 2017 to provide some further details regarding surveillance activity undertaken.

Resolved:

- (i) That the annual report on the Council's use of powers under RIPA be received.
- (ii) That the policy on the use of RIPA be approved.
- (iii) That the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 be noted and that the use of RIPA was being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remained fit for purpose.

6 Quarter 1 - 2016/17 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented progress against the council's corporate basket of indicators (PIs), Council Plan and service plan actions and reported other performance issues for the first quarter of the 2016/17 financial year, covering the period April to June 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Manager highlighted the key performance achievements for the quarter which included; council tax collection rates, income received from solar panel installations, telephone calls and customer access point footfall.

Key performance issues for the quarter included processing times for council tax reduction and housing benefit claims; average days sickness per full time equivalent, percentage of performance appraisals completed and percentage of FOI and EIR requests responded to within 20 days.

Councillor Armstrong added that he found the level of sickness absence continues to be too high, with almost half of employees accounting for 11 days+ of absence. In addition he added that he was concerned that not all appraisals were being completed on time and suggested that it would be useful to receive further information.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

7 Customer Feedback: Complaints Compliments and Suggestions 2016/17 - Quarter 1

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which presented the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions report for 2016/17 Quarter 1 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager provided a summary of the report highlighting that during quarter 1, 504 complaints were received; 45 statutory complaints and 459 corporate complaints. Of the complaints handled during quarter 1, approximately half were upheld (partially or fully) and the Local Government Ombudsman delivered decisions into 21 matters, 5 of which were upheld.

She further reported that during the quarter 286 compliments, 88 suggestions and 64 comments on the council's policies and procedures were received.

Further details were then reported in relation to statutory complaints and it was noted that during the quarter, 45 had been received; 51% relating to Children's Services and 49% to Adult Care. A summary of the complaints received relating to those two service areas was provided and actions which had been put in place as a result of complaints received.

Moving on details were reported in relation to corporate complaints, noting that 459 corporate complaints were received during quarter 1. The main reasons for those complaints were; missed collections, staff behaviour, communication, response times and the condition of the local environment.

In conclusion the Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager reported upon Local Government Ombudsman activity advising that the LGO had delivered decisions into 21 complaints. Of the 21 received, 5 were upheld. She further advised that the LGO had written to the Chief Executive Officer on 21 July 2016 providing a summary of statistics on complaints made for the year ending 31 March 2016.

Councillor Bleasdale asked what action had been taken in light of complaints made regarding staff behaviour. In response the Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that any complaint against a member of staff was taken seriously and fully investigated by the manager and HR. Following the outcome of the investigation appropriate action was taken. It was also noted that Neighbourhood Services were reviewing staff training and looking at ways to help staff, particularly those who deal with refuse collections to deal with aggression and difficult situations.

Further discussion ensued regarding contamination of bins and communication with residents. It was also noted that bin wagons were also now installed with 360° cameras and this would help in future to resolve some complaints.

Councillor Martin added that there was a lot of confusion amongst residents regarding which plastics could be recycled and added that he felt the council's website could be clearer on this topic, by showing images of the recycling labels often found on plastics to determine whether they were recyclable material. He further added that this was a common problem across the country and suggested that councils should be putting pressure on the

LGA to assist in standardising recycling across the country. Councillor Armstrong suggested that the Portfolio Holder take this matter up directly with the LGA.

In relation to a point raised regarding action taken at Stanley Louisa Centre Library to make books more accessible on shelving, Councillor Hillary queried whether this suggestion had been rolled out across all libraries. The Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager advised that this could be followed up.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

8 Revenue and Capital Outturn 2015/16 and Q1 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17

The Committee received two reports of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Resources, the first of which provided details of the outturn budget position for the Resources and Assistant Chief Executive service grouping highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the outturn position at the end of March 2016 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The second report provided details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Resources and Assistant Chief Executive's service grouping, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of June 2016.

Councillor J Armstrong reminded all members that their Neighbourhood Budget had to be committed or spent by 26 February 2017 or it would be lost. It was suggested that member support send an email reminder to all members advising of the above.

Councillor Hillary in referring to the subjective analysis headings, noted that there were no figures in the report detailing employee turnover/costs. He suggested that it would be useful to see how many staff were employed from one month to another. Where there had been a reduction in costs, he asked whether this had been due to ERVR / MTFP savings or otherwise. Where there was an increase in costs, he wanted to know whether this was a result of staff being paid more or an increase in the headcount. In summary, he asked that staff turnover rates be provided, broken down by service area against payroll costs.

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that she would look into what information could be provided, however noted that Overview and Scrutiny Management Board received similar data within their quarterly MTFP delivery report.

Resolved:

That the content of the reports be noted.

9 CRM Light Touch Review Working Group - Verbal Update

Councillor Henig provided members with an update regarding the work of the review group and provided a summary of the site visit to Northumberland County Council. She further

advised that the member support team were meeting regularly with the project team and were providing positive input into the development of the members' portal.

Members of the review group were scheduled to meet again on 2 November and a further update would be provided to the full committee in due course.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.