

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 **Friday 21 November 2014 at 11.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, L Armstrong, G Bleasdale, J Buckham, Carr, K Henig (Vice-Chairman), J Hillary, A Hopgood, E Huntington, N Martin, A Shield, T Smith, P Stradling, L Taylor and R Young

1 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Wilkes and S Wilson.

2 Substitute Members.

Councillor A Hopgood substitute for Councillor M Wilkes.

3 Minutes of the meetings held on 19 September and 17 October 2014.

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 September and 17 October were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the inclusion of Councillor A Shield's apologies.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any.

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

5 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 - 2014/15

The Committee received a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided information about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 April 2014 until 30 June 2014 (Quarter 1) and 1 July 2014 until 30 September 2014 (Quarter 2) to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that it remains fit for purpose.

Councillor Hillary asked whether any of the evidence collected had been used to bring any successful prosecutions. He added that it may be helpful to include this information in future reports. The Solicitor, Governance advised that she could include details of pending prosecutions within future reports.

Resolved:

- (i) That the quarterly reports on the Council's use of RIPA for Quarters 1 and 2 be noted.
- (ii) That the Council's policy remains fit for purpose.

6 Review of Council Plan and Service Plans.

The Committee received a report and presentation of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on progress on the development of the Council Plan 2015-2018 including the draft aims and objectives contained within the Plan and the proposed performance indicator set to measure our success (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that the team were currently reviewing corporate and service planning with a view to the council plan and service plans being agreed by Council in April and a revised set of performance indicators being signed off by Cabinet in June 2015.

It was reported that the four objectives of the Altogether Better theme had remained unchanged however there had been one change to the range of outcomes to include:

- ABC6. Responding to Welfare Reform and the effects of poverty.

Members welcomed the inclusion of poverty within the revised outcome.

The Head of Planning and Performance then proceeded to run through the PIs for each theme within Altogether Better. The first related to Customer Services and it was noted that there was no proposed changes at this time to the indicator set. Councillor Hopgood suggested that an indicator should be included to measure the number of hits on facebook, twitter and other social media sites. In addition she added that she would like to see more focus on the positives and performance regarding the number of compliments should be reported.

Councillor Martin commented that none of the PIs listed, told us anything about the performance of the CRM system and suggested that this was an important piece of data. Councillor Armstrong commented that he too agreed with Councillor Martin's comments.

Councillor K Henig commented that a lot of these points had been picked under during the course of the Customer Services task and finish group and many of the principles discussed dealt with in the recommendations.

Councillor Hillary said that he did consider the CRM system to have some weaknesses and felt that it would be good to provide the customer with feedback on whether the job had been completed, in addition it would be good to advise how long a job or issue was expected to take to resolve.

Further discussion took place regarding Members reporting issues via CRM and Councillor Martin commented that in some cases it may not be the best solution to go through the CRM but to instead go direct to the Lead Officer. It was suggested that in those circumstances it was advisable to both log on to the CRM and approach the officer direct to ensure the job was recorded and followed through correctly.

Moving on the Head of Planning and Performance reported upon Use of Resources PIs. With regard to the Resources set of performance indicators Councillor L Armstrong commented that he would agree that the % of reported street lighting outages under DCC control repaired within target time (10 days) would sit better under the Altogether Safer theme. Councillor Smith commented that street lighting was one of the most reported issues and therefore she could see reasoning for it coming under this theme as it related to corporate reputation. Councillor Henig added that this could also apply to many other services and with such agreed that it would sit better under Altogether Safer.

Councillor Martin commented that in his opinion the target relating to council owned business floor space should sit under the Altogether Wealthier theme. He further commented that he failed to see the point of collecting data relating to capital receipts received, if the council were unable to control them.

Councillor Hillary raised the issue of council owned floor space, to consider monitoring any unoccupied (void) space which is not generating income. He also suggested that indicators on Council tax/business rates recovered could be made more meaningful by including the percentage change from the previous year.

Councillor J Armstrong added that he welcomed the inclusion of the 'undisputed invoices within 30 days' target as he felt that this gave a truer reflection than the existing target.

Councillor Hillary asked whether a PI should be included relating to the income generated from selling back to the grid energy generated from solar installations.

Moving on the Head of Planning and Performance reported upon the proposed PIs relating to welfare benefits and poverty. Full details of the proposed set were included within the slides.

Councillor Hopgood commented that it would be useful to see the split regarding triage between the various housing providers to enable any gaps to be identified. Councillor Hillary added that he would further like to see the impacts that welfare reform had had on the authority including costs to the authority.

Councillor Martin commented that if we are not intending to use the data for anything then he failed to see the point of collecting it unless there was an intention to measure and improve the service.

Councillor L Armstrong made reference to food banks and whether there was any data on how many people were being referred to food banks. The Head of Planning and Performance advised that the council did collect data regarding food banks and this could be provided at a future meeting.

Cllr Buckham asked where the information on Child Poverty comes from. The Head of Planning and Performance to provide information to him.

The final set of indicators related to Human Resources, Councillor Hopgood commented that in her opinion the performance data should not include schools as their inclusion distorted the figures.

Councillor Hillary commented that he would like to see appraisal and sickness absence data by service rather than as a whole. In addition he queried why performance data was collected in respect of lost shifts. Councillor Hillary suggested that it would be good to annotate these figures to explain the indicators more clearly in future reports.

In addition he queried why numbers of staff over the age of 50 was monitored. In response it was reported that this figure was used as part of equalities monitoring of our staff profile, alongside monitoring of numbers of under 25s, gender mix, and staff with a recorded disability and ethnic origin, in line with national requirements.

Councillor Hillary further asked whether details could be provided in respect of FT, PT and agency turnover rates.

Councillor Buckham further asked whether performance that included schools incorporated all schools or those that were maintained by Durham County Council only. In response the Head of Planning and Performance advised that the figures did not include free schools or academies.

In conclusion the Head of Planning and Performance advised that all feedback given at the meeting would be fed in to the review process with a view to the final performance framework being agreed in June as part of the Q4 Cabinet report.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted. In addition all comments and feedback would be fed into the review of the corporate basket of indicators.

7 Quarter 2: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15.

The Committee considered two reports of the Corporate Director Resources which provided details of the forecast of outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of September 2014 (for copy see file of Minutes).

With regard to the Resources service grouping the Finance Manager advised that the service was reporting a cash limit underspend of £1.22m (excluding Centrally Administered Costs) against a revised budget of £18.755m. This compares with the cash limit underspend of £0.398m as at Quarter 1.

The report further detailed the significant variances by subjective analysis and by Head of Service.

With regard to the capital programme it was reported that 20 of the 21 capital programme schemes were managed by ICT and a full breakdown of those schemes and actual expenditure was provided at Appendix 2.

Moving on the Finance Manager provided information relating to the Assistant Chief Executive's service grouping, highlighting that the service was reporting a cash limit underspend of £0.080m against a revised budget of £10.240m. This compares with the cash limit underspend of £0.050m as at Quarter 1.

The report further detailed the actual expenditure and the significant variances by subjective analysis and Head of Service.

Moving on the Finance Manager provided details relating to the Members Neighbourhoods Revenue Budget and AAP Area Budgets. With regard to the capital programme it was noted that the programme comprised of four schemes, Assets in the community, AAPs Capital, Members Neighbourhoods Capital and Community Facilities in Crook.

Councillor Buckham asked whether it would be possible to include in future reports details of the current position in regard to spending. It was agreed that this could be included.

Councillor J Armstrong added that he did have some concerns regarding the amount of money that was still available in the Members Neighbourhood Budget and AAP Budgets and whether schemes would be able to be delivered on time. It was noted that it was important that members had projects earmarked to ensure that funding was not lost.

Resolved:

That the content of the reports be noted.