

## **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 April 2017** at **9.30 am**

#### **Present:**

**Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)**

#### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors K Henig (Vice-Chairman), J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, P Crathorne, M Wilkes, R Young and J Rowlandson

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Alvey, B Armstrong, A Shield, P Stradling and L Taylor.

#### **2 Substitute Members**

There were no substitute members.

#### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### Matters arising:

The Head of Planning and Performance provided an update to members on the following; staff appraisals and clarification regarding new posts, building control resources and the proposed CRM pilot. The Head of Projects and Business Services was also in attendance to provide an update on the CRM system including details regarding sign ups, publicity and forms. It was also noted that a members' pilot would be undertaken during the summer.

Members noted several issues with regard to the closure of cases and reporting back to the customer. Councillor Wilkes further queried at what stage the maps and overview of where issues were being reported would be built into the dashboard.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **5 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarters 3 and 4 - 2016/17**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided details of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 October 2016 until 31 March 2017 (Quarters 3 and 4) (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Wilkes asked whether CCTV for dog fouling and littering were also covered by RIPA. In response the Solicitor advised that RIPA legislation applied to those offences which would attract a minimum 6 month sentence. Flytipping was covered however dog fouling was not.

Further discussion and debate took place regarding authorisations, in particular the differing views of a Magistrate and District Judge.

### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **6 Quarter Three 2016/17 Performance Management Report**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which presented progress against the council's corporate performance framework for the Altogether Better Council priority theme for the third quarter of the 2016/17 financial year, covering the period October to December 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager reminded members of the new format for the report with a "dashboard" page which summarised the main performance issues, including customer services, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests, processing times for housing benefit and council tax reduction claims, employees wellbeing (including sickness and appraisals) and finance (council tax and business rates).

Councillor Hillary in referring to Appendix 3 of the report and reference 60/61 council tax and business rate collection raised a query with regard to comparable data. In response the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager advised that this data was only comparable at Quarter 4, year-end.

Councillor Wilkes in referring to reference 189 of the table added that more up to date figures on fuel poverty were required and suggested that this topic should be top of the agenda. Moving on to discuss performance in relation to staff losses he queried why the table only showed a decrease of 200 employees when this had in fact been nearer 400-500. In response the Head of Corporate Finance and HR advised that there were a number of reasons for this including, the recruitment of social workers within children's services. Councillor Hillary added that it would be more meaningful to provide full details of staff recruited, staff losses, ERVR etc. alongside the headcount figure. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager suggested that this could be reviewed for the next quarter's performance figures.

**Resolved:** that the content of the report be noted.

## **7 Quarter 3 December 2016: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17**

The Committee considered two reports, the first of the Corporate Director Resources and second of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided details of the forecast outturn budget position for the two service groupings highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2016 (for copy see file of Minutes).

With regard to the first report, Councillor Wilkes in referring to table 6 of the report and premises costs, asked why there was an internal recharge for occupation of civic buildings? He further asked if the council was paying rents to outside buildings could a breakdown of those costs be provided. In response the Finance Manager advised that because Resources was a central service premises costs were received for all services. Further discussion took place regarding recharges on corporate buildings and Councillor Wilkes asked for more information on premises costs. Councillor J Armstrong suggested that this could be looked at by the new committee should they wish to do so.

Further discussion took place regarding managing vacancies and early achievement of MTFP savings.

The Finance Manager then presented the second report relating to the Transformation and Partnerships service grouping. Councillor Hillary in relation to page 40 of the report and the variances relating to employees asked if the service was fully staffed why had there been an over spend. In response the Head of Finance advised that the budget was set on the basis of having 97% employees and a 3% turnover rate throughout the year.

Councillor Wilkes referred members to page 42 of the report and the table displayed at paragraph 14. He commented that there had been a considerable amount of time which had passed since the leisure centre closed at Crook and the allocated funding for replacement community facilities had still not been fully expended. He asked how long residents of Crook would have to wait to get the facilities they had been promised. Councillor J Armstrong suggested that this matter should be taken up with the relevant officer following the meeting.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the reports be noted.

## **8 Customer Feedback: Complaints Compliments and Suggestions 2016/17 - Quarter 3**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which presented the Customer Feedback: Complaints Compliments and Suggestions 2016/17 for Quarter 3 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that the council were undertaking a refresh of customer care training across the council, working alongside the organisational learning and development group.

Councillor Martin raised a query regarding social media and whether negative comments received via these channels were formally recorded. In response the Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that when contact was made in this manner it was clarified with the customer whether they wished to make a formal complaint via private message. In those cases where the customer answered yes, the complaint would be logged through the usual process. She further advised that to date, there had not been a huge amount of twitter / facebook complaints received.

Councillor Hillary commented that he thought that the bulky waste collection process of application, was extremely cumbersome and did frustrate some customers. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that processing the request was quite complex due to the different systems that had to be accessed to book the collection and take the payment.

Councillor Wilkes commented that he was aware that some customers had experienced difficulties in booking collections due to not being able to identify the right item from the list. The Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager agreed to feed the comments made back to the system team.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **9 Scrutiny Review of Attendance Management - Update on Progress against Recommendations**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources and the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which updated members on progress made against the recommendations from the Scrutiny review of Attendance Management (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Corporate Finance and HR provided a summary progress against each recommendation, also noting that at the end of quarter 4 sickness absence levels had reduced further to 10.54 days per FT employee.

Councillor Wilkes in relation to recommendation 3 of the report commented that he was unhappy to learn that more than 200 managers had still not received training on the updated policy even though it had been made compulsory in April 2016. In response the Head of Corporate Finance and HR advised that he was also unhappy that all managers had not undertaken the training and he advised that this was being actioned. Councillor Wilkes further queried what repercussions there were for those who had not completed the training. It was noted that further information regarding how often reminders were sent and what repercussions if any were in place could be provided the Councillor Wilkes following the meeting.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **10 Refresh of the Work Programme 2017-18 for Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships which provided details of the information contained within the Council Plan 2016-2019, Altogether Better Council theme and sought suggestions for the refresh of the Committee Work Programme to reflect the four objectives and associated outcomes and action areas identified within the Council Plan for the Council's Altogether Better Council priority theme (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Martin commented that he agreed with the suggested areas of work identified within the report and furthermore would strongly support a review of the councils ICT strategy. Councillor Hillary further suggested that a review of the council's capital programmes would be beneficial and could also link into the review of the ICT strategy.

**Resolved:**

- a. That Members note the information contained in the Council Plan 2016-2019, Altogether Better Council theme;
- b. That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board at its meeting on 23 June 2017 receives a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2017-2018.

## **11 Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Chairman added that as this was the last meeting of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to its merge with Management Board that he wished to extend his thanks on behalf of himself, the Vice-Chairman and the committee to all officers who had been involved with the committee.

He also passed on his thanks and best wishes to Councillors N Martin and J Hillary who would not be standing for re-election at the May elections.