

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 25th April 2006

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor David Booth (Chair of Committee)
“ John Whitehouse (Deputy Chair)
“ D. Cavanagh
“ Les Caborn
“ Bob Hicks
“ Katherine King (replacing Frank McCarney)
“ Philip Morris-Jones
“ Brian Moss
“ Heather Timms

Also in attendance

Councillor Alan Farnell (Cabinet Member for Policy and Governancde)
Councillor Alan Cockburn (Cabinet Member foor Corporate Services)

Councillor M Doody (for part of the meeting)

Officers:

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development.
Martyn Davey, Director of Contract and Management Services.
Pete Keeley, Member Services.
Graham Shaw, Financial Manager
Oliver Winters, Head of Finance, Resources Directorate.
Jane Pollard, Head of Scrutiny Performance and Development Directorate.

1. General

(1) Apologies

were received from Councillors Chris Davis and John Vereker.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Les Caborn, Member of the Warwick District Council.

Councillor Tom Cavanagh, Member of Rugby Borough Council.

Councillor Bob Hicks, Member of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

Councillor Brian Moss, member of the North Warwickshire Borough Council.

Councillor Heather Timms, Member of the Rugby Borough Council.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 28th February 2006

(i) Minutes

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 28th February 2006 be approved.

There were no matters arising.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Capital Planning.

The Committee received a presentation from Oliver Winters, Roger Newham and on capital planning which provided members with an understanding of the key concepts and issues. The presentation covered topics such as the definition of capital investment, the assets owned by the County Council, the background to the key considerations in capital planning and the current processes for agreeing the capital programme.

A copy of the slides used is attached to these minutes.

Following the presentation the following points were raised:-

The Government were consulting on possible changes concerning taxes on development including the use of Section 106 agreement money by local authorities.

A further report was requested relating to the Council's response to the Government's consultation.

Comparisons with other local authorities such as Dorset re spending less on assets differently

Examination of the way structure lease period/freehold.

Capital receipt Strategy is being prepared which is included in the Corporate Business Plan likely within a year.

Will be a report to the committee
Also report on the backlog of repairs to county buildings and the benefits of undertaking repairs.
Capital Reciets Stratgey.

4. Members' Computing

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Director of Resources relating to the provision of computers for members.

The report reviewed the background to the decision to replace members' computers following the elections in May 2005, the subsequent implementation problems, actions taken to address them, the issues still outstanding, and the plans for the future.

During the discussion the following points were raised:-

Use of Lotus Notes

Future Member involvement

New version of Lotus Notes and Windows XP was being rolled out across the council.

There was no intention to move from Lotus Notes

Report to Cabinet on future use of blackberries including costs likely in the budget for 2007/8

Members websites and chat rooms to be explored.

New arrangements for access to the Council's network were being introduced which would overcome certain difficulties in members gaining access from different locations.

Satisfaction level amongst members was monitored.

The Committee:-

- (1) Noted the progress made in upgrading the computing facilities available to them and the plans for dealing with outstanding issues.
- (2) Requested a further report in 6 months to confirm that all outstanding issues have been fully addressed and the new arrangements are operating satisfactorily.

5. Debt Recovery Update

The Committee discussed a report from the Strategic Director of Resources.

The Committee had considered a number of reports on performance in relation to debt recovery at recent meetings. The report suggested a change of approach in relation to judging debt recovery performance.

Following introductory comments from Oliver Winters members were advised that the Strategic Director of Resources had suggested that the Committee would not want to micro manage debts. The Committee was reassured that the Council's performance was good and that it would not be beneficial for the Committee to go through each individual debt.

The Committee noted the approach suggested in the report.

6. Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which detailed items for future meetings of the Committee and Forward Plan items relevant to the work of the Committee.

Unallocated items should have a date

Best Value Report on Human Resources would be submitted in 3 months time
The Access Strategy and Governance would be submitted in the Autumn
Must not lose sight of the Corporate Property Strategy Review.

A programme relating to the consideration of the Shire Hall development had been circulated to all members and a seminar was to be arranged at the appropriate time.

A report was to be submitted on ICT for Schools and regular report would be submitted on Absence Management.

The Chair indicated that he would invite appropriate Cabinet members to the next meeting to give an outline on the plans for the future.

The quarterly report on the Corporate Call Centre should also include comments on the resource/staffing implications of operating the Centre having regard to the Council's budget decisions.

6. Any Other Items

There were no items.

7. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the following agenda items on the grounds that their presence would involve disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in the Local Government Act 1972.

8. Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on the 28th February 2006 and Matters Arising.

Resolved:-

That the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 28th February 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Debt Recovery Update

Graham Shaw circulated a briefing note giving the upto date situation with the debts concerned.

He indicated that the Strategic Director for Adult , Health and Community Services was pursuing vigourously the remianing debts relating to the Primary Care Trusts. The debt relating to the Rent Services involved a Governmnet Department and Becnch marking would be introduced and for 2006 outstanding debta amounted to 3.7% indctaing that the Council was maintaining its good record of obtaining payment of invoices.
Further updating report for the July meeting.

The Committee rose at 12.35 p.m.

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Chair