

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 19 September 2006.

**Present:**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillor David Booth (Chair of Committee)

“ Bob Hicks (Vice-Chair)

“ George Atkinson

“ Les Caborn

“ Tom Cavanagh

“ Chris Davis

“ Brian Moss

“ Philip Morris-Jones

“ Heather Timms

“ Sid Tooth

“ John Vereker

**Also in attendance**

Councillor Alan Farnell (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Resources)

Councillor Peter Fowler (Performance and Development)

**Officers:**

**Resources Directorate**

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources.

Phil Evans, Head of Traded Services and Facilities Management.

**Performance and Development Directorate**

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development.

Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Service and Access.

Mandeep Kalsi, Administrative Officer.

Pete Keeley, Member Services.

Bob Perks, Head of Human Resources.

Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager.

Steve Smith, Head of Property.

Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer.

## **1. General**

### **(1) Apologies**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Nina Knapman.

### **(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Personal interests relating to any item on the agenda arising by virtue of the members serving as District/Borough councillors are declared below:

Councillor Tom Cavanagh, Member of Rugby Borough Council.

Councillor Les Caborn, Member of Warwick District Council.

Councillor Gordon Collett, Member of the Rugby Borough Council.

Councillor Chris Davis, Member of Warwick District Council.

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

Councillor Heather Timms, Member of Rugby Borough Council.

Councillor Sid Tooth, Member of the North Warwickshire Borough Council.

#### Other Interests

Councillor David Booth declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4 in view of his wife's involvement with a breakfast club

### **(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 25 July 2006 (copy attached) and Matters Arising**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 25 July 2006 be approved.

There were no matters arising.

## **2. Strategic Direction of the Performance and Development Portfolio.**

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor Peter Fowler (Portfolio Holder for Performance and Development) on the portfolio and the way forward.

During his presentation Councillor Peter Fowler outlined the following issues in relation to the Performance and Development Directorate:

### **Priorities**

- Customer Service Centre
- New Performance management framework
- Local area agreement
- Strengthen human resources and organisational development

### **Issues to Address**

- Equal pay and single status
- Movement of resources and staff to respond to initiatives such as the Customer Service Centre
- Governance arrangements especially in partnerships

### **Other Key Areas**

- Strengthening the Council's community leadership role
- Branding, media profile and internal communications
- Maintaining a strong governance and probity framework
- Voluntary and Community Sector strategy
- Equalities and diversity

In response to questions from members the meeting was advised that, following the reorganisation of departments/directorates, changes to central HR processes were in a transitional stage. The more specialist skills would remain in directorates

A short report would be submitted to a future meeting outlining current arrangements for meetings with the trade unions on a directorate, corporate and member level.

The Chair then thanked Councillor Fowler for his presentation.

## **3. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)**

There were no public questions.

#### **4. Demand for School Meals**

The Committee considered the Joint Report of the Strategic Directors for Resources and Children, Young People and Families which presented information regarding the impact on the Council's catering service of a current downturn in demand for school meals. The report had been requested by the Committee at a previous meeting. It presented a number of potential actions and sought the view of O&S Committee on potential future options for delivery of the school meals service.

During his introduction of the item Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, indicated that he would also submit the report to the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee having regard to the need to engage all schools in several issues such as the content of packed lunches. He added that the membership of the recommended working party should ideally be from both Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

David Booth declared a personal interest as his wife was involved with a breakfast club.

Members discussed the content of the report. The following points were made during the discussion:

- The 9% drop in demand for school meals was the result of a combination of factors including Jamie Oliver TV series.
- It was understood that private suppliers of school meals were experiencing similar problems in demand.
- Information was needed about the charges set by private contractors.
- 6 schools did not currently offer hot school meals.
- Members who had visited local schools and had received school meals should submit short reports on their findings to Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer.
- Members noted that some schools had insufficient space to provide meals for all pupils.
- It would be difficult to ensure that packed lunches were as nutritional as hot school meals.
- There were different reasons for children taking packed lunches, including the time required to take school meals and the limited time available for lunch breaks.
- The School Foods Trust was likely to focus on the need for cultural change.
- Members noted that some schools provided breakfasts and that extended school initiatives were being examined.
- The suggested working party should be fairly small and come from both Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

(1) The Committee noted the current situation in relation to the trading position of County Caterers, the potential further options for delivery of the School Meals Service.

(2) The Committee agreed to the establishment of a short life panel of six members, jointly with the Children, Young People and Family Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to assist in the development of options for the future of the service and that Councillors David Booth, Brian Moss and Heather Timms be appointed as this Committee's representatives.

## **5. Warwickshire County Council Customer Service Centre and Warwickshire Direct - Kenilworth**

The Committee considered the report of the Chair of Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members had visited the Customer Service Centre in Shire Hall and Warwickshire Direct - Kenilworth. The report summarised the findings of the two visits and made a number of recommendations on ways in which the service provided might be enhanced further.

During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

- The need for consideration to the appearance of the Centre at Kenilworth which members felt had the feel of a library rather than a One Stop Shop.
- Only small payments were permissible at the centres because of the risks associated with large amounts of cash being kept on the premises.
- A system for reporting incidences of fly tipping was being developed.
- Staff, including Team Leaders reported direct to Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Service and Access on matters of performance.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and endorsed the recommendations made within it.

## **6. Development of Customer Access for the County Council**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development.

The report appraised members of progress in regards to the customer access agenda with specific focus on the development of the Customer Service Centre and the existing One Stop Shop at Kenilworth.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Importance of monitoring back office action
- Highways enquiries had been transferred to the Call Centre

- Kenilworth people being asked for feed back – people drive priority not the council. Feedback would be shared with the District Council.
- Developments include consideration of police proposals for safer neighbourhood policing.
- Future reports should be shorter and the layout of the table in paragraph 5 should be changed to landscape.
- The Warwickshire Partnership branding would be applied to kiosks.

The Committee agreed that quarterly reporting continued.

## **7. Corporate Complaints - Follow Up Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance & Development setting out the actions responding to Members comments from the 25th July meeting.

In response to comments made during the discussion, David Carter advised members that the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had decided there was currently no need to review the Council's policy relating to vans at household waste sites.

The Committee :

1. noted the definitions of the different levels of decisions made by the Ombudsman;
2. noted the improvement actions taken as a result of directorates receiving complaints
3. requested that the additional information provided in this report be included in future reports.

## **8. Employee Absence Management**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance & Development which described the latest performance information on employee absence levels and progress in addressing the issue.

During his introduction of the item, Bob Perks, Head of Human Resources, indicated that more meaningful statistics would be produced by the HRMS system once it had been in operation for a year.

With regard to social services statistics, the information being provided so far showed that the average sickness would be reduced to 17 days. Comprehensive Adult Health Directorate figures would be delivered next year.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- With regard to the absence management in the Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate, discussions were being held with

staff to explore reasons for sickness. There was an overall downward trend in sickness levels.

- It was noted that, with regard to the CBI figures, whereas all local authorities contributed to the local government figures, it was possible that not all companies contributed to the CBIs figures.
- There was a need to recognise and publicise that 46% of staff do not have any sickness leave.
- The HRMS system will record reasons for sickness such as stress, physical injuries etc
- The appendix to future reports to the Committee should include figures “to date”.
- Significant figures relating to staff on nil pay but whose job was being kept open should be removed for the chart.
- Corporate assistance was available to overcome staffing problems.

The Committee noted the latest available performance information on absence levels and continued progress in relation to absence management and agreed that quarterly reporting should continue.

## **9. Race Equality Scheme – Progress**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which indicated progress towards achieving the County Council’s Race Equality Scheme.

Members noted that:

- There had been no findings against the Council
- The Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership was building up a base of complaints which would enable a better process for dealing with problems.

The Committee agreed that future reports should be based on exception reporting and should include statistics for assessing against equality standards. There was no need for the Equality Action Plans to be submitted provided they were available to view electronically.

## **10. Debt Recovery Update**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which indicated progress on debt recovery.

During his introduction of the item, Dave Clarke advised members that he would be meeting officers from the SWPCT to resolve the outstanding debt issues before the Trust was taken over by the new PCT.

With regard to the outstanding debts from two schools, one related to a dispute over responsibilities for capital works and the other related to a dispute about IT equipment. The two debts of the Warwick District Council were the subject of

negotiations for the charges made by the County Council in respect of highways enquiries under the local searches procedure.

Members requested that the six monthly report to the Committee should include a total figure of debts of over 42 days.

### **11. Provisional Items for Future Meetings**

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

The Chair suggested that the name of the Committee was too long and requested members to advise David Carter if they had an alternative name to suggest.

A report about ICT in Schools would be submitted to both the Committee and the Children, Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The report about the HRMS System would include details of expected savings

In response to a suggestion from the Chair that members should visit council property used by staff and property used by staff and the public, Dave Clarke indicated that care must be taken in any such visits so as not to raise staff expectations that any work required would be undertaken. This was because of resources limitations. Dave Clarke agreed to circulate a list of suitable properties for members to visit and to prepare a short questionnaire for members to complete following their visits. Members views would be shared at a future meeting of the committee.

The report about future items on partnership working and the LAA would be submitted to all committees.

### **12. Any Other Items**

There were no urgent items to consider.

The Committee rose at 12.25 p.m.