

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 14 November 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 Peter Fowler (Performance and Development)

Officers:

Resources Directorate

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources.
Tonino Cuiffini, Head of ICT.
Steve Smith, Head of Property.

Performance and Development Directorate

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development.
Pete Keeley, Member Services.
Bob Perks, Head of Human Resources.
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer.

**1. General
(1) Apologies**

None.

(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 -2007/09 to 2009/10 Spending Proposals in view of his membership of the Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service Joint Management Committee.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 19 September 2006 and Matters Arising

(i) Minutes

Councillor George Atkinson referred to Minute 10 – Debt Recovery and indicated that the Committee had requested a six monthly report of all debts, distinguishing those over 42 days and indicating a value and number of debts including those below £30,000 and that the minutes should reflect this.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 19 September 2006 be approved.

(ii) Matters Arising

(a) Minute 4 – Demand for School Meals

In response to comments from Councillor George Atkinson, Dave Clarke indicated that information about charges set by private contractors would be submitted to the members panel.

(b) Minute 10 – Debt Recovery Update

In response to comments from Councillor George Atkinson, Dave Clarke indicated that he would inform all members of the Committee of the latest situation regarding payment of outstanding debts by the Primary Care Trust.

(c) Minute 11 – Provisional Items

(A) ICT in Schools.

In response to comments from the Chair it was agreed that the Chair and Councillors Les Caborn and Brian Moss should represent the Committee on the Members Panel to examine ICT in Schools.

(b) Visits to County Properties

The Chair reported that he had visited some properties and along with other Members would be reporting to a future meeting.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

There were no public questions.

3. Corporate Business Plan Targets - Development and Resources

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Directors of Performance and Development and Resources which presented the targets included in the Development and Resources section of the Corporate Business Plan 2006/2009.

During the discussion members noted that the public had difficulties in distinguishing between county and district service provision and acknowledged the importance of coordinated services and economies of scale.

The Committee endorsed the report.

4. 2007/08 to 2009/10 Spending Proposals

The Committee considered the details of the 2007/08 to 2009/10 revenue and capital spending proposals of the Performance and Development and the Resources Directorates and other services, as indicated below. The Committee's views were sought on both the spending proposals and the funding options proposed.

(1) Performance and Development Directorate

Following introductory comments from David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development, Members were advised of the main features of the Council's financial Planning Strategy. The budget consultations to be undertaken would present an opportunity to explain the aims of efficiency savings and what use could be made of the resultant savings.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- o The re-engineering of the Council's business process involving a shift to Adult Health and Community Services would impact on the use of savings expected from the Customer Service Centre. There would be a need for continued funding because the expected savings would not be achieved as a result.
- o With regard to the impact of 2 ½ % efficiency savings on grants to voluntary organisations there would be no impact on the grants made. The savings were made across the whole budget not in respect of individual accompaniments.
- o The service Level Agreements with voluntary organisations needed to be monitored to ensure that public money is being spent efficiently.

(2) Resources

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, introduced the report.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- o County Caterers had not broken even and the deficit would be met from the Resources Directorate's budget. The Council was required to provide a meals serve for those children needing free school meals. If the Council wanted to continue running the current service in 2007/08 Members would need to decide whether to subsidise or pass on the costs.
- o With regard to the resources required for the metering of electricity, gas and water, currently there are poor metering arrangements. The proposals would enable sub metering to give detailed charging and encourage savings. It was possible to achieve the 15 % savings that were made by other councils.

(3) Other Services

Members were advised of the costs of the closure of the county stores some years ago and the reason why costs were still included in Other Services.

5. Development of a Corporate Capital Receipts Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which sought the views of the Committee on the draft capital receipts strategy prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

Following introductory comments from Dave Clare, Strategic Director of Resources, the following points were made during the discussion:

- o The policy to use capital receipts initially to repay debts was based on the higher interest rates that were being paid for older debts. This general policy would be amended if interest rates changed.
- o With regard to justification for earmarking capital receipts, the receipt should address areas of greatest need and it was agreed that the fourth bullet point in paragraph 7.9 should be amended to read:
 - “Why the earmarking of the receipts should link to the capital investment being proposed.”
- o The first action to be undertaken for the disposal of school land would be for the governors to take a decision that the land is surplus to the school’s needs. The Council would then examine if there was an alternative use. If not the land would be disposed of subject to the agreement of Secretary of State. It was proposed that 30% of the resultant capital receipt would be allocated to the donor school.

The Committee agreed:

That the draft Capital Receipts Strategy be recommended to the Cabinet for approval, subject to the amendment of the for the bullet point as detailed above.

6. Performance Reports Half Year 2006/2007

The Committee is asked to consider the reports relating to the performance for the half year 2006/2007 for the Performance and Development and the Resources Directorate, in particular to:

- (i) Endorse any remedial actions and
- (ii) Request any additional information required

(1) Performance and Development

In response to comments from Members, David Carter indicated that although only 19% of Overview and Scrutiny Committee decisions overall had been implemented, if recommendations relating to the acute services

review where removed from the calculation, the resultant statistic would show be that nearly 70% of decisions had been implemented.

With regard to the estimated £3m media cost benefits of advertising, the figure would be revisited in the near future.

(2) Resources

The performance figures were noted

7. e-Government – Achievement to Date, and the Future

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which gave details on achievements and future activities beyond the e-Government target dates, including the new Transformational Government initiative.

Following introductory comments from Dave Clarke, the following points were made during the discussion:

- It was difficult to identify whether people accessing the Council's website were actually seeking a service or were just surfing.
- There was on going debate about a single website for all Warwickshire Councils.
- With regard to there being no website provision for receipts for payments via the website, members were advised that no complaints had been received to this and that printing the page concerned was often considered to be adequate.
- The proposed joint venture with the Warwick District Council relating to the Customer Service Centre would be a big move towards integration.
- Statistics on use of the Customer Service Centre would be circulated to members.

The Committee noted the Council's achievements in this area in the e-Government period and agreed to continue to monitor progress in the future Transformational Government arena which is currently being defined for Local Government.

8. Delivery of HR services

Councillor Bob Hicks, the Vice-Chair took the Chair for this item.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development relating to the changes in the way that HR services are delivered throughout the County Council.

The changes were aimed at a more effective exploitation of the new HRMS system, greater economies of scale and a clearer focus on the delivery of HR advice and policy development.

Following introductory comments from Bob Perks, Head of Human Resources, the Committee noted that the Cabinet had endorsed changes in the way that Human Resources (HR) services were delivered throughout the County Council, as set out in the report, including the creation of a single unit for transactional purposes.

The Committee requested a progress report at the next meeting.

9. ICT Date Problem

The Committee noted the contents of the report from the Strategic Director of Resources and the actions taken.

10. 2006/07 Efficiency Savings – Performance & Development Progress Report

The Committee is asked to note the progress made by the Performance & Development and Resources Directorates in delivering the efficiency savings in 2006/07 required as part of the 2006/07 budget.

(1) Performance and Development

The progress made was noted.

(2) Resources Directorate Progress Report

In response to comments from member Dave Clarke explained the differences between the savings required from a Directorate and a corporate perspective.

Members noted that delays with the sale of the Council's land at Aylesford in Warwick would not prejudice the Council achieving the Gershon targets.

The three year targets would be achieved within two years without the Aylesford receipt.

It was suggested that parish councils could achieve cost benefits in purchasing goods from ESPO.

11. 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.

If possible reports relating to the Corporate Property Strategy Review, ICT Strategy review and Single Status would be submitted to the next meeting.

The Chair encouraged Members to visits council properties in their divisions and to make short reports back to the Committee.

12. Any Other Items

there were no items to consider.

13. Report Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

The Committee decided to consider the next item in public.

14. School Summer Holiday 2006 - Building and Engineering Projects

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which informed Members on the school building and engineering projects during the 2006 summer holiday.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Schools undertook maintenance arrangements themselves and there was little the Council could do to influence schools apart from ensuring requirements such as Health and Safety matters were followed.
- Criteria for contract depended on the size of the contract. Selection from approved suppliers and the use of penalty clauses should be enforced.
- The Council had to rely of information provided by contractors relating to the amount of work they had the capacity for.
- An updating report would be submitted to a future meeting.

The Committee rose at 11.40 a.m.

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Chair
