

**Minutes of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 27 February 2007.**

**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  
“ Phillip Morris-Jones  
“ Heather Timms  
“ Sid Tooth  
“ John Vereker

**Also in attendance**

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Resources)  
Councillor Peter Fowler (Performance and Development)

**Officers:**

**Performance and Development Directorate**

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

**Resources Directorate**

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources.

**1. General**

**(1) An Apology**

was received from 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 were declared below:

Councillor Les Caborn, Member of Warwick District Council.  
Councillor Tom Cavanagh, Member of 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 Items 5 & 6 because his son worked for an IT company that dealt with local authorities.

## **(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 9 January 2007 and Matters Arising.**

### **(i) Minutes**

Councillor Brian Moss indicated that his apologies relating to non attendance at the last meeting had not been recorded in the Minutes.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 9 January, 2007 be approved, as amended.

### **(ii) Matters Arising**

#### **(a) Minute 1(3) Minutes of the 14 November 2006 meeting**

Councillor George Atkinson indicated that the reference under the Capital Receipts Strategy to the use of capital receipts to repay older debts, related to those debts with a disadvantageous interest rate.

#### **(b) Minute 3 (1) Nuneaton Registration Office**

In response to comments from Councillor Bob Hicks, David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development, reported that the resource implications of altering the opening hours at the Registration Office were being examined and that he would keep the Councillor informed of any developments.

#### **(c) Minute 4 Development of Customer Service and Access.**

Arrangements were being made for the April meeting to be held at the Council's Offices at King's House.

#### **(d) Provisional Items**

Following comments from Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, Members noted that the report relating to School Meals would now be

submitted to a later meeting.

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

There were no public questions.

## **3. 2007 Half-Year Report: Corporate & Social Care Complaints and Compliments**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which commented on the half-year reports each Directorate had produced.

Following introductory comments from Karen Smith, Customer Relations Manager, members discussed several aspects of the report and made the following points relating to how the corporate complaints procedures might be developed for the future:-

- (1) Consideration should be given to identifying separate complaints and compliments.
- (2) Summary information was required along with more detailed information on hot spot areas particularly in the corporate report.
- (3) Some categories were too wide eg complaints/compliments relating to libraries which should not be based on former departments.
- (4) Need for consistent approach for the whole authority involving best practice. In particular, Members felt that there were benefits in applying the style used by the Children, Young People and Families Directorate and the Adult Health and Community Services Directorate. Also, there could be benefits in examining the way the Police Authority reports complaints.
- (5) Members noted that it was intended to establish a benchmarking club of local authorities.
- (6) Complaints from external and internal customers should be identified.
- (7) Consideration should be given to including complaints about school admissions and SEN tribunal matters.
- (8) Consideration should be given to making it easier to submit complaints given that some potential complainants might be deterred from submitting written complaints or were fearful of possible adverse consequences.
- (9) There was a need to define what was a justifiable complaint and what was not.
- (10) Corporate monitoring systems were still being developed.
- (11) Complaints against a provider was a complaint against the Council and in the circumstances there was a need to monitor external organisations as well.
- (12) Contracts must make it clear what is expected and include provision for the monitoring of complaints.

Karen Smith indicated that she would work with members concerning processes and support for the complaints received by members

It was then agreed that Members:

- Note the half-year reports provided in each Directorate to their relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Note the variation in reporting practices and levels of analysis

#### **4. Audit of Recruitment Practice**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which summarised the findings of an internal audit undertaken into compliance with the Council's mandatory recruitment standards. It also outlined the remedial measures that were proposed as a result of the audit findings.

Following introductory comments from Bob Perks, Head of Human Resources, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were made:

- Although there could be benefits for employment agencies in not giving poor references for agency staff seeking permanent employment, the majority of employers gave an accurate reference.
- Skills of personnel managers in interpreting references.

Agreed:

- (1) To note the findings of an internal audit undertaken into standards of recruitment practice and the remedial measures that have been taken in response.
- (2) That a further report on progress as a result of those measures is sought in six months' time.

#### **5. Update on Members use of ICT**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which provided an update on Members use of ICT.

Following introductory comments from Tonino Ciuffini, Head of IT, members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were made:

- Consideration should be given to the benefits of an annual visit to the homes of each member by an IT officer who could give individual attention to members IT needs, including on training.

- Members were able to access e-mails from outside the Council and Blackberries could be set to for use abroad.
- At present Blackberries were faster to use than citrix because of the technical way they accessed corporate information, e-mails etc. There would be benefits in councillors who used Blackberries in promoting there use with non users.
- With regard to Members' IT equipment, consideration would be given to offering printer scanner machines.
- Investigations would be undertaken into the use of non Council PCs to access Council e-mails and systems.
- With regard to the Council's decision to reduce the number of paper agendas etc, some Members noted that in the previous year £40,000 had to be redirected to bolster the Member Services printing budget. Also, the Council had recently taken more out of that budget and this would place even greater emphasis on the Council's previous decision that paper copies of agendas should be sent only to members of the meeting concerned.
- It was stressed that there was a need to encourage electronic access.
- The options for the use of laptops/tablets for meetings etc would be explored with Members.

The Committee noted the progress made with regard to Members ICT facilities over the last twelve months.

## **6. Update on ICT Strategy Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which provided an update on the progress towards the development of a new ICT Strategy.

Tonino Ciuffini introduced the report. The following points were made during the discussion:

- ICT had the role of supporting partnership working.
- The possibility of giving all members access to the names, numbers etc of all councillors and officers from other councils and major public organisations.
- Strategy is a long term vision and included the possibilities of working closer with Schools ICT.

Members noted the progress towards the development of the new ICT Strategy for Warwickshire County Council for 2007 – 2012.

## **7. Update on Review of Demand for School Meals**

Councillor Heather Timms, Chair of the Members' Panel introduced the main points of the Panel's report.

Members discussed several aspects of the report and made the following points:

- There were benefits in teaching children how to cook, including wider appreciation of the nutritional aspects of food etc.
- The decreasing demand for school meals was a national problem.
- Schools, Governors and the Council all had a role in promoting school meals.
- Schools need some form of healthy eating policy relating to the contents of packed lunches.
- The reduced time taken to eat packed lunches compared to hot meals thereby leaving more socialising/play time was thought to be a major reason for the increasing popularity of packed lunches.

The Committee noted the progress to date of the School Meals Service Review Panel.

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

The Committee noted the items for future meetings of the Committee and Forward Plan items relevant to the work of the Committee and raised the following points.

- The next meeting would be held at King's House, Bedworth and would be followed by a tour of the building.
- Several reviews would be undertaken by this Committee as a result of the Council's budget decision.
- The potential for greater use of laptops by members would be included in a future report to the Committee.

Additional reports should be prepared relating to:

- o The potential savings in the printing budget and the consequences of making the savings.
- o Cabinet decisions to be taken in the next 6 months that would be relevant to the work of the Committee.
- o Actions taken/outstanding relating to decisions of the Committee (in the form of "one line" references).

**9. Any Other Items**

There were no urgent items to consider.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 11.50 a.m.