

Minutes of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 24 April 2007.

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor David Booth (Chair of Committee)
“ Bob Hicks (Vice-Chair)
“ George Atkinson
“ Les Caborn
“ Tom Cavanagh
“ Chris Davis
“ Nina Knapman
“ Brian Moss
“ Phillip Morris-Jones
“ Sid Tooth
“ John Vereker

Also in attendance

Officers:

Performance and Development Directorate

Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Service and Access.

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development.

Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources.

Pete Keeley, Member Services.

Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer.

Resources Directorate

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources.

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of IT.

Other Officers

Andy Jones Head of Revenues and Customer Services,
Warwick District Council.

Tony McAlvey, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

1. General (1) Apologies

were received from Councillors Heather Timms and Peter Fowler (Cabinet Member for Performance & Development).

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

Other Interests

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 27 February 2007 and Matters Arising.

(i) Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 27 February, 2007 be approved and be signed by the Chair.

(ii) Matters Arising

(a) Minute 5 - ICT Resources

In response to comments from Councillor Philip Morris-Jones, Tonino Cuiffini reported that legal issues and security issues were being examined relating to the use of non council computers for council business, including e-mails.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

There were no public questions.

3. Warwickshire County Council Customer Service Centre and Warwickshire Direct - Kenilworth and Library

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

In June 2006, Members were able to visit the Customer Service Centre in Shire Hall and Warwickshire Direct - Kenilworth and Library. The purpose of the report was to appraise members of progress against the recommendations made in the

scrutiny report to this committee on 19th September 2006. .

Following introductory comments from Kushal Birla members received presentations from Andy Jones, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, Warwick District Council and from John Macalvey, of the Bedworth Borough Council.

Andrew Jones – Head of Revenues and Customer Services, Warwick District Council

“Live” Projects

- Warwickshire Direct – Kenilworth
- Warwick Library
- Warwickshire Direct – Whitnash

“Business Case” Stage

- Leamington One Stop Shop – The Royal Pump Rooms
- Integrated Customer Service Centre at Shire Hall
- Lillington One Stop Shop – Lillington Library
- Warwick One Stop Shop – Shire Hall

What’s Worked (I)

- Warwickshire Direct – Kenilworth: Unqualified success; customer reaction; staff response; third party support
- True Shared Service – Property; IT; Staffing; Purchasing; Corporate Support
- Led to agreed strategy for customer access across Warwick District
- Trust to develop co-location at Warwick Library
- “Saved” District service in Warwick

What’s Worked (II)

- Cross-party buy-in to move on to next One Stop Shop – Whitnash
- Sharing ideas – Best Practice
- Making use of different skills, knowledge, experience
- Increased customer accessibilityInterest countrywide and acknowledgement in the White Paper

Why it’s Worked

- Trust relationship developed between officers
- Officer perseverance – passionate for it to work
- Member interest and involvement
- Engaging with staff throughout
- Comprehensive training
- Relationship with private sector
- Give and take – compromise required
- Not just about the technology
- Use Press to your advantage
- Regular Project meetings

Not so well!

- Given scope.... very little not worked
- District potentially more nimble as a smaller organisation
- IT costs! County Recharge cost structure has caused issues
- Restructure – Came at a difficult time
- Management arrangements at middle tiers – now resolved
- Budget – Ambitious plans come with a cost

Conclusion

- Trust most important
- Worth the work – Rewarding professionally and for the customer
- Interests are not lost
- Lots more to do!

John McAlvey of the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council advised the Committee of the progress being made in the Borough. In particular he mentioned:

- There would not be any barriers between the two councils in the provision of joined up customer services
- The Borough Council had agreed to introduce a new IT system which would be integrated with the County Council's system to greatly improve joint operations.
- The Borough Council project was felt to be approximately 18 months behind the project with the Warwick District Council but would be developed using the lessons learnt from earlier projects.
- A centre at the Town Hall at Nuneaton was an ideal single point for contact which would be able to provide access to the full range of services of both councils.
- It was intended that similar facilities should be provided at the County Council's premises at King's House, Bedworth.
- There were still some issues to be resolved such as the provision of cashiers services.
- Local Members must have an input into any proposals.

During the discussion on the points made Members were advised:

- That if things went as intended, cashiers services would be integrated at one stop shops.
- The development of payment services through the Councils website was being pursued.
- The services at the new centre at Atherstone were developing and a progress report would be prepared for the Committee. Also, consideration would be given to a visit being made to the Atherstone centre when it had been in operation for a little time.

- It was intended that ultimately there would be integrated access through all council town halls
- Lessons had been learnt about financial aspects from the projects at Warwick and Atherstone and the financial officer of the councils would be considering the financial equity of all developments
- The County Council was bearing the costs of piloting the Kiosk facilities at Rugby.
- A Rugby town centre location was being discussed to determine whether the Library or the Town Hall was the most suitable location for a joint One Stop Shop.

The Committee expressed its appreciation to both Andy and John for the presentations made.

Resolved:

- (1) That members acknowledge progress being made against the recommendations in the scrutiny report to this Committee on 19th September 2006.
- (2) That progress continues to be reported to the Committee and a report be prepared about the services provided at the Atherstone One Stop Shop.

4. A Review of Warwickshire County Council Reserves and the Development of a Reserves Policy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which examined the level of reserves and proposed a policy for the operation of reserves for the County Council.

Following introductory comments from Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were made during the discussion:

- The level of the Council's reserves were determined by the Cabinet and Council and were monitored as a matter routine.
- The Council's insurers were increasingly reluctant to enter into agreements with councils who managed their own claims bearing in mind that they had their own claims managers
- The majority of schools participated in the Council's insurance scheme.
- Members' attention was drawn to the assessment of the reserves as part of CPA.
- Adult, Health and Community Services was a demand led service which was expected to be overdrawn although in the future a nil balance should be

achieved.

- The levels of reserves are based on risk assessments and Members were kept informed by regular reporting.
- The levels of reserves were considered during the Council's robust budget preparation process and the options open to Members would be made clearer in future.
- Interest from money held in the reserve was treated as a short term opportunity cost provided the value of the service to be provided could be assessed.

Resolved:

That Members note the review of the County Council's reserves and recommend the draft policy for the operation of reserves to Cabinet for approval.

5. ICT Strategy 2007 - 2012

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which related to a new ICT Strategy for the Authority.

Following introductory comments from Tonino Ciuffini, Head of ICT, Members discussed several aspects of the proposed Strategy and made the following points:

- The new strategy would operate within existing budgets
- ICT work would be charged at a day rate to services such as Warwickshire Direct which enabled greater flexibility in the use of corporate staff.
- Consideration was being given to the use of the council's website and other ICT communication methods, such as e-mail and text messages, for reporting potholes and action to be taken on them.
- The Strategy had an easy to follow format which should be used as a style for other strategies.
- The reference to "that suit them" in the first bullet point under "This will allow Warwickshire County Council to:" on page 5 of the Strategy should more appropriately read "that appeal to them".

Resolved

That the Committee supports the implementation of the new ICT Strategy with the reference to "that suit them" in first bullet point under "This will allow Warwickshire County Council to:" on page 5 of the Strategy being amended to read "that appeal to them".

6. Employee Absence Management

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which was the latest in a series of quarterly reports which described the latest performance information on employee absence levels.

During his introduction of the item, David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development indicated that the overall trend in employee absence was downwards

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The type of sickness absence should be defined.
- Absence management was monitored by managers and this included regularity of sickness.
- It was noted that 40% of staff had no sickness leave at all.
- Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed absence figures in that Directorate. The Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee had responsibility to examine matters corporately and draw attention of other Overview and Scrutiny Committees to any issues.
- There was a need to have regard to types of sickness particularly if sickness was disability related.

Resolved:

That the Committee note the latest available performance information on absence levels and continued progress in relation to absence management and requested that reporting should continue highlighting hot and cold spot issues.

7. HRMS Project

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources relating to the progress made on HRMS Project.

During the discussion Members noted that:

- Regard was always had to the cost of such projects and the expected savings to the Council.
- Routine transactions were now being transferred to the new unit.
- The new arrangements provided for Directorate HR advice.
- A demonstration would be arranged for Committee Members.

Members noted the report.

8. Debt Recovery - Update

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

During his introduction of the item Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, reported that the references to North Warwickshire and South Warwickshire in the table in paragraph 3.1 were references to the former North Warwickshire and South Warwickshire Primary Care Trusts.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- There had been improvements overall in the number of outstanding debts. Almost £500,000 had been repaid.
- In response to an enquiry about whether the debts were in respect of group invoices or individual invoices, Members were advised that that the value of each invoice depended on the arrangements for payment included in the agreement entered into for the service concerned.
- There was a danger that any more detailed approach to administering debt recovery would increase costs.
- Schools had own bank account
- The amount owed to the Council by the Warwickshire Primary Care Trust was increasing
- It was expected that the old PCT debts would be repaid by September.

Resolved:

That the Committee acknowledge the improvements being made in debt recovery and request that regular reporting continues.

9. Items for Future Meetings

The report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development.

The report detailed actions take on certain previous decisions, provisional items for future meetings of the Committee and future Cabinet decisions relevant to the work of the Committee.

Members requested that the trade unions be invited to attend a future meeting when absence management was to be discussed

10. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items to consider.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 12.35 p.m.