

Minutes of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 4 September 2007.

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor David Booth (Chair of Committee)

“ John Haynes (Vice-Chair)

“ George Atkinson

“ Tom Cavanagh

“ Chris Davis

“ Brian Moss

“ Phillip Morris-Jones

“ Raj Randev

“ Ian Smith

“ John Vereker

Also in attendance

Councillor Mike Doody

“ Peter Fowler (Cabinet Member for Performance and Development)

Officers:

Performance and Development Directorate

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.

1. General

(1) Apologies.

were received from Councillors Les Caborn and Dave Shilton.

(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 Tom Cavanagh, Member of Rugby Borough Council.

Councillor Mike Doody, Member of Warwick District Council.

Other Interests

Agenda Item 4 – Review of Demand for School Meals

Councillors George Atkinson, David Booth, Tom Cavanagh, Chris Davis, John Haynes, Brian Moss, Raj Randev, Ian Smith, John Vereker declared personal interests as school Governors.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 19 June 2007 and Matters Arising.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 19 June 2007 be approved and be signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

There were no questions from the public.

3. Action of Previous Decisions, Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to the Work of the Committee.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which detailed actions taken on certain previous decisions and provisional items for future meetings of the Committee. It also detailed decisions to be taken by the Cabinet in the next six months which are relevant to the work of the Committee, as taken from the Forward Planning System.

The Chair advised Members that it was intended to hold the next meeting of the Committee at the North Warwickshire Borough Council's Offices where Members would be able to see the new One Stop Shop and receive a presentation from a representative of the Borough Council about partnerships, particularly working with the public.

Members noted the items and that the Trade Unions would be invited to the November or January meeting.

4. Review of Demand for School Meals

The Committee considered the report of Councillor Heather Timms, Chair of the Review of Demand for School Meals Panel.

A panel comprising Members of the Resources, Performance and Development and Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committees

had reviewed school meal provision in Warwickshire with a view to increasing demand.

Councillor John Haynes, the Vice-Chair took the Chair for this item.

Following introductory comments from Councillor David Booth, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were noted during the debate:

- It was expected that, following implementation of the Panel's recommendations and depending on demand trend, it could take approximately 18 months for the school meals service provided by County Caterers to break even.
- The reduction in demand for school meals was a national problem.
- Any increase in the cost of individual meals had a temporary impact in reducing demand and income.
- There were difficulties in obtaining financial information about the private provision of school meals owing to commercial sensitivities although the review had obtained some information from schools who used private meals providers.
- Schools could choose which provider they wished to use for school meals.
- There could be equal pay implications for the meals service.
- There was a need for active collaboration between schools and parents towards healthy eating.

The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Working Group and officers, in particular Paul Williams from the Scrutiny Team.

The Committee supported the recommendations contained in the Review of Demand for School Meals Panel's report and recommended them to Cabinet for approval.

5. ICT and Schools

Councillor David Booth returned to the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Committee considered the report of Councillor John Whitehouse, Chair of the ICT and Schools Panel which outlined the views and recommendations of the joint scrutiny panel established to scrutinise ICT and schools.

Following introductory comments from Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were noted during the discussion:

- Pupils were offered computers that were surplus to the Council's needs and distribution was based on areas of deprivation. There was a need for all students at all levels and ages to have access to laptops.
- ICT in schools will be a budget requirement for some years.

- With regard to Appendix 6 the accuracy of the commentary regarding the reference to St Michael's school would be checked.
- Past problems with broadband connections had been resolved and there was now a high satisfaction level amongst schools with the services provided by the council. The level of security provided by the council's service was higher than other providers and the overall costs were cheaper.
- There was a need for a further report to the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee towards the end of 2008.

That the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that:

- i) Further scrutiny work should be undertaken during 2010 to feed into discussions regarding the future of the We-Learn project.
- ii) The issue of equality of access needs to be addressed during the technology refresh in 2008, and further reports made to the appropriate Committee regarding options.

6. Draft Capital Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which sought approval to the draft Capital Strategy that accompanied the report.

Following comments from Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources about the treatment of the dedicated schools grant and issues surrounding the depreciation costs of roads, the Committee agreed:

That the draft Capital Strategy be forwarded to Cabinet for approval.

7. Absence Review

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which described the outcomes of the formal review of the Council's Absence Management procedures.

During his introduction of the main points of the report, Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources, stated that satisfactory progress was being made on the review although there was still more work to be done in certain areas such as absence triggers. He advised Members that the new HR Centre was now open.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The latest figures had been used in the preparation of the report.
- The lost productivity through absence had not been costed.
- Long term illness impacted on figures

- Return to work interviews after long illnesses should always be undertaken by line managers and, on some occasions other managers would be involved.
- The Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee were examining absence in the Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate.
- Regular reporting would continue
- Work in liaison with the trade unions was important.

The Committee agreed

(1) To note the latest available performance information on absence levels and continued progress in relation to absence management.

(2) To support the following recommendations:

- The training of managers in relation to the new absence procedures is refreshed and built into the corporate Learning and Development menu as a mandatory requirement
- A standard performance management approach is developed for use within all directorates and reviewed on a six monthly basis.
- Developments of the HRMS system should continue to support the recording and reporting of absence.
- A priority for the Shared Service Centre should be a targeted improvement and streamlining of the absence input process.
- The Council's approach to positive health promotion is refined over the next six months in line with the outcomes from the Promoting Well-Being Research study.
- The Council's approach to absence management is refined as part of the ongoing review.

11. Any Other Items (Public)

There were no public items to consider.

12. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved:-

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

13. Any Other Items (Exempt)

The Chair referred to the special meeting of the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held earlier in the day to discuss future Care Accommodation. He indicated that he had attended the meeting on behalf of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the views of the meeting were to be submitted to the Cabinet on the 9 September.

The Committee rose at 12.15 a.m.

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Chair