

The Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee met at the Shire Hall, Warwick on the 22 January 2008.

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor David Booth (Chair of Committee)

“ John Haynes (Deputy Chair)

“ George Atkinson

“ Les Caborn

“ Tom Cavanagh

“ Chris Davis

“ Phillip Morris-Jones

“ B. Moss

“ Raj Randev

“ Dave Shilton

“ Ian Smith

“ John Vereker

Also in attendance

Councillor 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.

Others Present

Ben Cahill and Nigel Spence (Trade Union Representatives)

1. General

(1) Apologies

None.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillors Dave Shilton and Les Caborn declared personal interests as Members of the Warwick District Council.

Councillor Tom Cavanagh declared a personal interest as a Member of the Rugby Borough Council.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 13 November 2007 and Matters Arising.

(i) Minutes

It was agreed that Councillor John Haynes' apologies for non attendance at the last meeting should be recorded in the Minutes. It was then Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 13 November 2007 be approved as amended and be signed by the Chair.

**(ii) Matters Arising
Minute 8 - Debt Recovery**

In response to comments from Councillor George Atkinson, Dave Clarke Strategic Director of Resources, advised Members that he would circulate a briefing note about developments with the outstanding debts of the PCT and Warwick District Council that were referred to in the report to the last meeting.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

There were no questions from the public.

3. Employee Absence Management

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

During his introduction of the item, Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources, drew attention to the several points of the report, in particular:

- The reductions in levels of absence that were being achieved.
- The improvements in the method of recording absence levels.
- The work being undertaken jointly with the trade unions and Warwick University Hospital.

During the discussion the following points were noted.

- (1) The need to ensure that satisfactory arrangements were in place to assist staff to return to work following long term absence particularly absence that had

been the result of stress. This should include recognition of trigger points and the need for counselling.

(2) When possible future reports should provide some information about the level of casual absence, including patterns of such absence e.g. absence during school holidays.

Ian Crisp and Ben Cahill of the trade unions then gave a short presentation to the Committee on the involvement of the unions in absence management and areas of concern. The following points were noted:

- The Welfare model should be used to identify and resolve causes of absence leading to a reduction of absence levels.
- Absence in adult services was high nationally for many reasons including the nature of work with vulnerable people in need of physical assistance which could lead to muscular damage.
- A different approach should be used for sickness in the workplace. Adult Health and Community Services Directorate was circulating a questionnaire for staff to complete to enable the identify areas of concern.
- Flexible working arrangements should be examined to reduce absence because of child care responsibilities.
- There should be more recognition of how well staff are doing.
- Information about work related sickness should be separated from non work sickness

The Chair thanked Ian and Ben for their presentations to the Committee.

The following points were noted during further discussion:

(3) The information provided to the Committee was at a high level and possibly did not reflect the amount of work being undertaken on the detailed aspects of absence management.

(4) There could be benefits in people returning to work in phased manner.

(5) Trigger points should be used to identify any developing problem that could impact on an individual employee's welfare

(6) With regard to risk assessments, Members noted that Health and Safety representatives had the right to call for such assessments.

(7) The Council had an established Family Friendly Policy

(8) Seasonal sickness – winter /summer – was taken into account in the calculation of absence levels.

(9) The establishment of criteria should be considered that would enable a more uniform self diagnosis of illness.

That the Committee then noted the latest available performance information on absence levels and continued progress being made in relation to absence management.

It was agreed that reporting should continue and this should define absence types such as work related absence, an analysis of long term absence, details of the support given for long term absence and information about casual absence.

4. Action on 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 take 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 were relevant to the work of the Committee, as taken from the Forward Planning System.

The Chair reported that he had discussed responsibilities for examining the School Meals issue with the Chair of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and had agreed that that Committee should take matters forward.

With regard to customer focus, the Chair suggested that the Committee should examine matters as widely as possible and include areas other than the call centre. It was agreed that a Members Panel (2-2-2) should be established. The Chair and Councillors John Haynes and Raj Randev indicated that they would serve on the panel.

Issues surrounding the Governments consultations on the Supplementary Business Rate should be included in the Committee's work programme. Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce should be invited to make a ten minute presentation on their views to the Committee when the item was to be discussed.

Members noted that David Carter and Dave Clarke would submit a joint report on the printing budget to the next meeting.

The Chair reported that he had requested a report to a later meeting monitoring the achievements of the Black and Minority Ethnic projects in Warwickshire which had received grants approved by the Cabinet on the 10 January.

With regard to progress on the refurbishment of the Council Chamber, the Chair indicated that the notes of the Members Panel would be circulated to all Committee Members who would then be able to feedback any views to Panel Members.

The other items in the report were noted.

5. Local Area Agreement (LAA) Six Monthly Performance

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which detailed performance of the LAA over the first six months.

Chris Elliot, the Chief Executive of the Warwick District Council and Leader of Stronger Communities block, was unable to attend the meeting. Members requested a short briefing note for the next meeting if Chris was unable to attend then.

During his introduction of the item Nick Gower-Johnson outlined the main points in the report, including:

- The process to be followed including governance arrangements
- Projects and access to appropriate grant funding were generally for two years.

Members discussed several aspects of the report, including:

- (1) Although Members were advised that the performance of a project which was 65% on target was considered acceptable, there was some concern about the level of performance on several projects and the implications for obtaining grant.
- (2) Members noted that most of the projects were generally over a two year period and that performance would improve in many areas as the projects continued. This would be reflected in the LAA Quarter 3 Performance report to the next meeting.
- (3) With regard to the presentation of information in future reports, Members requested that:
 - (i) Consideration should be given to the provision of more quantifiable detail relating to the performance of projects and the level of grants likely to be achieved.
 - (ii) Coloured diagrams etc should be designed so that they can be read easily when printed in black and white.
 - (iii) The report to the next meeting should include a description of the roles of block leaders and performance leaders
- (4) The costs of preparing the LAA have been met by redirecting existing resources.
- (5) Regard must be had to pump priming aspects of all funding.
- (6) Consideration should be given to the possibility of underspend under climate change and the environment being used for drainage works to alleviate flooding.
- (7) The Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would examine the performance of the Healthier Schools project which when completed was expected to meet at least 60% of its target.
- (8) New LAA reward grant had not yet determined but target rewards will continue from the old LAA

(9) The Leaders Liaison Group had asked for details of last years LAA spending and this information could be built into the next report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(10) It was suggested that not all Members of the Council were fully aware of the LAA process and that consideration should be given to the need for further Member briefings/seminars.

The Committee:

- (1) welcomed the comprehensive performance management information contained in the report;
- (2) having commented on the progress made to date in relation to the six blocks of the LAA, endorsed the remedial actions suggested by the Block Leader in respect of those measures that are currently forecasted to miss target;

6. Use of Resources 2007 Assessment

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which appraised Members of the key achievements and lessons learned from the Use of Resources 2007 Assessment.

The Chair indicated that he had asked for the report so that Members could see if there were any lessons from the successful Assessment which could be transferred to other areas of work.

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, felt that the main reason for the success of the Assessment was the existence of a finance community, the principle of which could possibly be used for other support services.

The Committee expressed their congratulations to Dave Clarke and his staff in the achievement.

7. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items to consider.

The Committee rose at 12.05 p.m.

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Chair