

The Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee met at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone on the 13 November 2007.

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor David Booth (Chair of Committee)

“ George Atkinson

“ Les Caborn

“ Tom Cavanagh

“ Chris Davis

“ Ann Forwood

“ Phillip Morris-Jones

“ Raj Randev

“ Dave Shilton

“ Ian Smith

“ John Wells

Also in attendance

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Cabinet Member for Resources)

“ 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.

Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Service and Access.

Pete Keeley, Member Services.

Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer.

Resources Directorate

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources.

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of ICT

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Bob Trahern, Assistant Director of Revenue and Benefits

1. General

(1) An apology

was received from Councillor John Vereker.

(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 councilors were declared below:
Councillor Tom Cavanagh, Member of Rugby Borough Council.
Councillors Ann Forwood and Peter Fowler, Members of North Warwickshire Borough Council.

Other declarations

Councillor Ann Forwood declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9(1) in view of her involvement with the North Warwickshire CVS

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 4 September 2007 and Matters Arising.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 4 September 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. Report on the Development of Customer Service & Access for Warwickshire County Council

The Committee received a presentation from Bob Trahern, Assistant Director of Revenue and Benefits at the North Warwickshire Borough Council, about the development and operation of the One Stop Shop, Warwickshire Direct – North Warwickshire at Atherstone. During his presentation, he drew attention to the timetable for the introduction of the OSS, the lessons learnt from the project and, with regard to future developments, advised Members of Phase 3 of Customer Access Strategy, further work with partners and a review of accommodation.

A copy of the presentation is available with these minutes on the Committee Administration System/Warwickshire Web.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- Although the majority of enquires concerned Borough Council matters, staff linked matters together when responding to enquiries such as social services and benefits.

- Improvements had been made in the time taken to answer calls since the OSS had come into being.
- Credit union advice would be available at a later date.
- Future report to Committee will include footfall statistics for comparison purposes.
- It was possible that, following the appointment of a new Police Inspector at Atherstone, the involvement of the Police at the Centre would be increased.

The Committee expressed their appreciation to Bob Trahern for his presentation.

The Committee then considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which appraised members of progress during 2007 with regard to the development of the One Stop Shops/Kiosks and the Customer Service Centre.

Following introductory comments from Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Service and Access, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were noted.

- Future developments included:
 - One stop shop for bereavement
 - The provision of Credit Union and pensions advice
- In 12 to 18 months the County Council should have a presence in all of the Warwickshire district/borough councils.
- A review of accommodation was being undertaken at Atherstone which could have implications for the location of the OSS.
- Past recruitment issues had now been resolved.
- The importance in compatible ICT systems.
- The OSS at Whitnash would have a Police presence.
- An update on Police services at OSS generally would be reported to a future meeting.
- Police authority members and other members should pursue these issues

The Committee agreed that quarterly reporting should continue.

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 are relevant to the work of the Committee, as taken from the Forward Planning System.

The Chair requested the Committee to discuss items for their future consideration and scrutiny. He suggested that the programme should be based on an examination of a major item during the coming year and also to have an overview of the Council Chamber development.

During the discussion the following points were noted in relation to the Committee's future work programme:

- How do we deliver services such as procurement and get the results necessary to meet the challenging efficiency targets
- The impact of staff issues and changes to pay under Phases I and II of the equal pay review
- How the recommendations relating to the school meals review would be enacted having regard to the resource issues.
- The value for money review will include an examination of support services
- New approaches to services and the importance of information management particularly having regard to mobile working and customer service centres.
- Continuing work on reducing sickness absence
- Under the budget consultation process the Council should ensure that the views of the business community and other parties are obtained.
- With regard to the refurbishment of the Council Chamber, the Council had established a Members Panel who would receive update reports on the development which could be submitted also to the Committee.

The Committee agreed that the work programme should be prepared having regard to the issues referred to in the discussion, in particular to monitoring the development of Customer Service including the way it is perceived and the refurbishment of the Council Chamber.

5. Mid-year Directorate Report Card 2007/08 (April – Sept 2007).

The Committee considered reports relating to the performance indicators within the Directorate Report Cards during at the mid-year point of 2007/08 for the Performance & Development and Resources Directorates.

(1) Performance & Development Directorate

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development introduced the report. The following points were noted during the discussion:

- The data in the report related to both the corporate situation and the Performance and Development Directorate.
- There was concern about the appropriateness of some targets which should be reviewed by the Council.
- Missed targets were often missed by a small margin only.
- The Score Card had replaced EFQM performance assessment process.

(2) Resources Directorate

Following introductory comments from Dave Clarke Strategic Director of Resources, Members noted the progress made by the Resources Directorate in delivering 2007/08 efficiency savings targets.

6. Resources ICT Development Plan 2007-08 - Half yearly update report

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources.

As part of the new ICT Strategy 2007-12 recently approved at Cabinet earlier this year, it was agreed that a more formal approach would be adopted to the development and management of the Corporate ICT Development Plan, and that progress against the plan would be reported to both the SDLT and Resources O&S Committee on a half-yearly basis.

Following introductory comments from Tonino Cuiffini, Head of ICT, Members discussed several aspects of the Strategy.

Members were advised that work was being undertaken into simplifying the Member logging on process. The Committee noted the progress against the 2007/08 Corporate ICT Development Plan.

7. 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.

The report was introduced by Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources.

The following points were noted during the discussion.

- There was a need to acknowledge the different definitions for absence and sickness.
- Absence levels in Adult Health and Community Services had reduced since the introduction of performance management - absence was now being recorded correctly
- Quicker inputting of data, including schools
- Future reports should include breakdown of long term absence by Directorate
- The Unions would be invited to the January meeting to talk about absence management.

The Committee noted the latest available performance information on absence levels and continued progress in relation to absence management.

8. Debt Recovery - Update

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

In his introduction of the report, Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, drew attention to the level of new PCT debt which had now become substantial. Members endorsed his intention that, at the appropriate time, the PCT should be strongly advised that the debts should be paid or they should come to the Committee to explain why the debt has not been repaid.

The following additional points were noted during the discussion:

- Individual contract arrangements had resulted in a mixture of debts.
- The reasons for many of the debts related to liability issues
- The debt with the Warwick District Council related to the work undertaken by the County Council concerning the highways aspects of local search enquiries.
- Often the agreement/contract to which the debt related had been unclear in the which organisation was responsible for which detailed service.

Members then noted the progress since March 2007 on debt recovery being reported and the detailed analysis contained in Appendix A for 2006/07.

9. 2007/08 Efficiency Savings

The Committee considered reports relating to the progress made by the Performance & Development and Resources Directorates in delivering the efficiency savings in 2007/08 required as part of the 2007/08 budget.

(1) Performance & Development Directorate

Following introductory comments from David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development, the following points were noted during the discussion:

- The Home Office's initial response to the Council's request for additional financial resources in relation to the recent fire at Atherstone on Stour, had been favourable.
- With regard to efficiency savings in connection with grants, savings were not taken from grants to voluntary organisations. The issues had been discussed by SDLT where it had been agreed that the required savings should be transferred to the Other Services budget.

- The Council for Voluntary Services was being amalgamated into one countywide organisation which could have implications for funding.

(2) Resources Directorate

During his introduction of the item Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, drew attention to errors in the reported level of savings made in his Directorate which had resulted from double counting.

He outlined the difficulties that had further delayed the development of land at South West Warwick as referred to in the report.

Members noted that there would be budget choices for the County Council relating to potential savings from the better use of accommodation

10. School Summer Holiday 2007 - Building and Engineering Projects

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which related to the delivery of school building and engineering projects during the 2007 summer holiday.

Following introductory comments from Steve Smith, Head of Property, Members noted the need for a range of contractors to respond to needs.

The report relating to the delivery of Building and Engineering projects completed during the school summer holiday 2007 was noted.

11. Any Other Items

Following comments from the Chair, Members agreed that responsibilities for the school meals service would more appropriately be overseen by the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the Chair should discuss the issues with the Chair of that Committee.

The Committee rose at 12.35 p.m.