

**The Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee
met at the Shire Hall, Warwick on the 29 April 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

“ Brian Moss

“ Raj Randev

“ Dave Shilton

” Ian Smith

“ John Vereker

Officers:

Performance and Development Directorate

Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources,

Pete Keeley, Member Services,

Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer,

Adrienne Bellingeri, Customer Contact Manager,

Janet Chapman, Sustainable Procurement Officer.

Resources Directorate

Oliver Winters, Head of Finance,

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of ICT,

Steve Smith, Head of Property,

Virginia Rennie, Group Accountant, Budget and Technical,

David Soanes, Estates Manager.

Environment and Economy

Kevin McGovern, Transport Operations Manager.

1. General

(1) Apologies

were received from Councillors Alan Cockburn (Cabinet Member for Resources) and Peter Fowler (Cabinet Member for Performance and Development).

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 4 March 2008 (copy attached) and Matters Arising.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

There were no questions from the public.

3. 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.

The report detailed 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.

A report relating to the Supplementary Business Rate would be submitted at the appropriate time.

The Committee noted the items.

4. Efficiency Planning

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

The report sought the Committee's comments on the proposed mechanisms by which efficiency savings will be identified, measured and monitored to ensure both the budgeted savings are delivered and the Government's efficiency targets met.

Oliver Winters, Head of Finance introduced the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Efficiency savings had been considered as part of the budget process. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to consider the actual process
- The Government's 3% savings were to be aligned over three year period not annually.
- The Committee would monitor progress.

Resolved:

- (1) The Committee endorsed :
 - i. The proposed changes to the authority's efficiency planning process detailed in Paragraph 4.2 and in Appendix A.
 - ii. The model of efficiency planning outlined in Section 5 and shown in Diagram 1.
 - iii. The process for developing a Corporate Efficiency Plan as outlined in Section 6.
 - iv. The protocol for sharing/incentivising efficiency savings outlined in Paragraph 7.2.
- (2) That a further report be submitted to the Committee in nine months time showing the progress being made with the proposed improvements outlined in Appendix A.

5. Review of Procurement and Commissioning of Two Rural Outreach Vehicles for the Youth Service

The Committee considered a report by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The County Youth Service operated two specialist vehicles for the provision of rural outreach work. From the date of recognition that these vehicles were required to their commissioning took over two years. The report, which was commissioned by the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, considered the process followed and recommended changes to help expedite the procurement of similar vehicles in the future.

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

- The specification for the new vehicle meant that the vehicle had to be made to order outside the ESPO arrangements.
- The project commenced with officers not being fully aware of the process
- Importance of complying with European Regulations otherwise the council could incur other expenses.
- Suppliers were included in the ESPO framework agreement for periods of three to five years and there would have been further delay in seeking the inclusion of the manufacturer of the new vehicle on the list.
- If an item can not be provided under the ESPO arrangements it was permissible to go direct to the market and, depending on costs, purchase would be necessary through a tendering process.

- A County Procurement Strategy was being prepared for Cabinet and this would include a reporting process.
- There were no continuing problems with the vehicles
- Key officers were no longer with the council
- 100 vehicles were purchased by the Council each year, of which about 10% were bespoke. The majority of vehicles 75 - 80 were purchased through ESPO.
- Members were reminded of the benefits to the Council in being members of the ESPO organisation including the significant savings made in purchasing goods and the profit sharing arrangements for constituent organisations.
- There was a need for the various aspects of purchasing arrangements to be agreed by County Fleet Management.

Resolved:

That the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the recommendations contained within this report with recommendation (1) being amended as set out below, and conveys them to the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

(1) Recommendation 1.

That on being commissioned by a client to procure a vehicle or vehicles, County Fleet Management undertakes to meet with the client to discuss in detail their requirements and to agree a project brief that sets out the process to be followed. Issues such as lines of communication, responsibility for establishing the specification, suppliers and timescales should be agreed and documented by County Fleet Management.

(2) Recommendation 2.

All parties (clients and agents) engaged in the procurement of vehicles for the county council should undertake to do this expeditiously whilst not compromising the quality of the resulting product. Where avoidable delays do occur officers of the council and suppliers be prepared to explain these to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that they can be avoided in the future.

(3) Recommendation 3

As part of the project design County Fleet Management should agree with clients a cut off date or stage of construction after which no further changes will be made to the specification unless in exceptional circumstances.

(4) Recommendation 4

County Fleet Management be requested to liaise with relevant officers of the council and ESPO to establish whether penalties can be imposed on suppliers for late delivery or poor quality construction of vehicles.

6. Recruitment Practice Standards

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

Following an internal audit of recruitment practice standards, the results of which were reported to the Committee in February 2007, the report sought to provide an update on the current position, and recommended that a further report be requested for the Committee's meeting in November 2008.

Following introductory comments from Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources, it was **Resolved:**

That the Committee note the latest position on recruitment practice standards and request a further report for its meeting in November 2008

7. Employee Absence Management

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

Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources (Employee Relations) introduced the report.

The following points were noted during the debate:

- With regard to a comparison between the CBI absence figures for the private and public sectors, the figures were prepared every two years and it was understood that public organisations had a higher response rate than the private sector organisations.
- Work was being undertaken to reduce the 13% figure for Adult Health and Community Services.
- The Council had a comprehensive programme of training staff for lifting and a programme for work station assessment.
- The absence figure for the Adult Health and Community Service Directorate had fallen significantly.

- Time off/ unpaid leave for family circumstances was covered by statute.

Resolved:

That the Committee note¹ the latest available performance information on absence levels and the continued progress being made in relation to absence management.

8. Corporate ICT Development Plan 2007-08 - Year End Report

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

The ICT Strategy, 2007-12, laid out a more formal process for managing the Corporate ICT Development Plan which included half-yearly reports to Resources Performance & Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report provided a Year End report on the Corporate ICT Development Plan 2007/08, and provided an update on the latest proposed areas for the plan for 2008/09.

Following introductory comments from Tonino Ciuffini, Head of ICT, members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were noted during the discussion:

- All public sector partners are able to exchange documents securely through the intranet.
- Opportunities were being explored with district and borough councils for the greater sharing of ICT and increased online facilities for the public such as the payment of council tax. There were some difficulties to be overcome as a result of the different systems in use by in the various councils.
- Under the Strategy the Council would be moving from Lotus Notes to the Microsoft Platform over the next 12 to 24 months.
- Where possible arrangements should be made for the public requests, complaints etc that have been submitted online to be tracked and for the person concerned to be kept up to date with progress.

The Resources Performance & Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the progress against the Corporate ICT Development Plan 2007/08.

Members welcomed the services provided by the ICT Division, in particular in resolving Members ICT problems. Councillor George Atkinson moved, Councillor Brian Moss seconded and it was **Resolved:**

That the Committee place on record its appreciation for the ICT services provided to Members.

9. Corporate Property Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which related to a new 10 year Corporate Property Strategy which had been developed to inform and direct the management of the Council's land and property assets

Following introductory comments from David Soanes, Estates Manager, it was **Resolved:**

That Members recommend to Cabinet that the new Corporate Property Strategy is adopted.

10. Provision of Water Coolers

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which updated the Committee on the Council's approach to the provision of Water Coolers within the Authority's non schools buildings.

Following introductory comments from Phil Evans, Facilities Manager, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following comments were noted during the discussion:

- Some managers were purchasing bottled water direct from suppliers rather than through the ESPO arrangements.
- The Committee should received a progress report on the action being taken with regard to the transfer to filtered tap water.
- There had been no complaints about the use of cool filtered tap water at the Council's offices at Kings House, Bedworth.

Resolved:

That an interim progress report be submitted to the Committee in six months and a fuller progress report be submitted in twelve months.

11. Report on the Development of Customer Service & Access for Warwickshire County Council

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which appraised Members of progress during 2007/08 with regard to the development of the One Stop Shops/Kiosks and the Customer Service Centre.

Following introductory comments from Adrienne Bellingeri, Customer Contact Manager, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were noted:

- Not all of services in the various directorates, that had been identified to transfer to the Call Centre, had yet been transferred.
- If possible future reports should include progress being made with customer access in the north of the county.
- Considerable progress had been made in Customer Service and Access and the frequency of progress reports to the committee should now be reduced.

Resolved:

The Committee agreed that the frequency of progress reports should be reduced to six monthly and that the Strategic Directors Leadership Team should be requested to submit a programme to the Committee indicating when the identified services were to transfer to the Call Centre.

12. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

13. Increases in Capital Project Costs

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

The report highlighted the extent, and reasons for, larger increases in the cost of capital projects since 2003. It concentrated on projects costing over £250,000 and summarised comments from directorates on the reasons for the larger increases in project costs. It also looked at the existing requirements for reporting increases in the cost of capital projects to Cabinet.

Oliver Winters, Head of Finance, introduced the main points of the report.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

The report did not contain sufficient information about the reasons for individual projects overrunning, to enable the Committee to identify which projects needed further examination.

Some projects were in progress and the figures would be latest estimates until such time as fixed prices had been agreed.

There did not appear to be a rational explanation of design and development costs.

Resolved:

That a further more detailed report be submitted to the Committee relating to the increase in costs of the public access works to the Shire Hall.

14. Any Other Items

None.

The Committee rose at 12.45 p.m.

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Chair