

The Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee met at the Shire Hall, Warwick on the 11 November 2008.

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor David Booth (Chair of Committee)
“ John Appleton
“ George Atkinson
“ Les Caborn
“ Tom Cavanagh
“ Chris Davis
“ Brian Moss
“ Raj Randev
“ Dave Shilton
“ John Vereker

Other Councillors

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Cabinet Member for Resources,
“ Peter Fowler, Cabinet Member for Partnerships and
Localities
“ Heather Timms, Cabinet Member for Corporate
Services.

Officers:

Performance and Development Directorate

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and
Development
Pete Keeley, Member Services
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer

For part of the meeting:

Bill Basra, LAA Manager
Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources
Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Services and Access
Martin Lake, Senior Project Manager, Customer Service and
Access

Resources Directorate

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources
Steve Smith, Head of Property
Phil Evans, Facilities Manager

1. General

(1) Apologies.

were received from Councillors John Haynes and Ian Smith.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Councillor Les Caborn declared a personal interest as a member of the Warwick District Council's Cabinet.

Councillors George Atkinson and Dave Shilton declared personal interests as Members of District Councils

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 16 September 2008 and Matters Arising.

(i) Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee's 16 September meeting be approved and be signed by the Chair.

(ii) Matters Arising

(a) Minute 1(3)(c) – Post Office Closures

In response to comments from John Appleton, Kushal Birla indicated that she would arrange for the Councillor to receive a copy of the Council's representations to Post Office Ltd and a copy of their response.

(b) Minute 6 - 2007/8 Environmental/Print Savings

Members acknowledged that briefing notes relating to printing costs in the Environment and Economy Directorate and Children, Young People and Families Directorates had been circulated to Members.

(c) Minute 7 – Use of Consultants

Members also acknowledged that a briefing note relating to the use of educational specialists had been circulated.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

There were no questions from members of 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 which 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 are relevant to the work of the Committee, as taken from the Forward Planning System.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- Reports relating to the Recruitment Practice Standards and the Staff Survey and Mystery Shopper Exercise would be submitted to the 13 January meeting.
- a separate report would be submitted to the January meeting relating to the costs of advertising job vacancies.
- David Carter agreed to examine the reasons for the Job Centre Plus website showing no vacancies under the county Council.
- The report relating to Managing Sickness Absence to the April meeting would include musculo-skeletal and stress difficulties.

The Committee noted the other items.

4. Mid-year Directorate Report Cards 2008/09 (April - Sept 2008)

The Committee considered the report from the Strategic Directors of Resources and Performance and Development which provided analyses of the Resources and the Performance and Development Directorates' performances at the mid-year point for 2008/09. The reports also showed performance against the key performance indicators as set out in the Directorate Report Cards

(1) Resources Directorate

Following introductory comments from Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, Members discussed several aspects of the report.

The following points were noted:

- Audits were being undertaken into the number of days lost through sickness absence in the Directorate to reduce the figures further.
- A challenging target for increased staff training had been set to be achieved by 2015.
- The timing of the reports to the Committee on the remedial action being taken would be rescheduled having regard to the timing of the County Council Elections.

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Portfolio Holder for Resources, indicated his awareness of the mid year overspend at the current time.

(2) Performance and Development Directorate

David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development, introduced the main points of the report.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- A review of the transfer of services to the Customer Services Centre (PD1) was being undertaken to see how the transfer could be speeded up.
- There were major challenges with the implementation of a new pay structure which had been slower than expected.
- Although the performance with staff appraisals was available through the Corporate Report Card, Members requested a report about the performance with appraisals in each Directorate highlighting any areas of concern.
- The percentage variance from the budget will be reported to Cabinet and the end of year figure was likely to be on target.

The Committee endorsed the summary and detail of the performance indicators within the Directorate Report Cards at the mid-year point of 2008/09 and requested a report on the corporate performance with appraisals.

5. 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.

The purpose of the report was to appraise members of progress since the last report with regard to the development of the One Stop Shops/Kiosks and the Customer Service Centre.

Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Service and Access, introduced the main points of the report and responded to comments from Members.

The following points were noted during the discussion.

- A report would be submitted to the committee about the a telephone numbering strategy having regard to the need for a countywide number for customer access, the costs of 0845 numbers and the capacity of the Council's 410410 number.
- The Warwickshire Direct Partnership had been focusing on technical issues and would now be moving towards staffing and customer services
- A recent meeting of the Warwickshire Association of Chief Executives had endorsed a paper suggesting that action should be taken to speed up the development of customer services.
- The One Stop Shops at Elizabeth House, Stratford upon Avon and Globe House at Alcester were on target for opening in June 2009.

- With regard to Appendix 6, the “total” figures for the P&D Meeting Room and Wi-Fi would be revised.
- With regard to Warwickshire Direct at Southam:
 - The number of enquiries at Warwickshire Direct at Southam were increasing since being moved to the library premises. The operation was a joint County and District operation currently operated by District Council staff in the Warwickshire Direct uniform.
 - There were some difficulties to be resolved relating the timing of the cessation of cash payments and responsibility for litter clearing.
 - Although the police and a nearby supermarket had expressed willingness to participate in the project, there were issues relating to the availability of financial resources.
 - A progress report would be submitted in due course.
- The Rugby Borough Council had indicated that the Town Hall was no longer an option for a One Stop Shop.

At 11.00 a.m. the Committee stood in silence as a mark of respect for the Armistice.

- The level of customer satisfaction was being determined by questionnaire during the next few weeks. The results would be brought back to the committee
- Work was being undertaken to improve public awareness of the location of the Warwick Post Office at the Shire Hall.
- Meetings were to be held with the Primary Care Trust about the Trusts participation in the customer services arrangements

Councillor Heather Timms, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, that work was being undertaken with partners to identify where problems and that regard must be had to resource issues.

Members agreed that six monthly reporting continues

6. Employee Absence Management

Reuben Bergman, Deputy Head of Human Resources presented that the Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development which described the latest performance information on employee absence levels.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- There were no corporate reports on patterns of absence. Although this was not considered to be a major issue, there was an expectation on managers to know any patterns
- A staff counselling system existed in the Adult, Health and Community

Services Directorate.

- Future reports should include figures on absence through viral sickness.
- The Committee should be aware of the information reported to the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee although in a more readable form.
- The details relating to Community Protection in Appendix C reflected the impact of the fire at Atherstone.
- The frequency of manual training would be examined.
- Procedures were in place to deal with long term sickness and although action was required after a period of four weeks, managers were expected to be in contact with the staff concerned before then.

Members acknowledged the downward trend in sickness absence and agreed that the reporting of sickness absence should continue.

Information should be provided in future reports relating to absence from viral illness.

Also, Members requested a report about the level of sickness absence in the Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate although in a different format to the report presented to the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. ICT Development Programme 2008-09 Half Year Report

The Committee considered the report of the Head of ICT, Resources.

As part of the ICT Strategy 2007-12 approved at Cabinet last 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 Ciuffini, Head of ICT, members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were noted during the discussion:

- Greater collaboration was desirable with the district/borough councils to introduce one ICT protocol for twin hatted councillors.
- Instructions would be prepared for Members on how to use spam email filters in Lotus Notes.
- The project for the introduction of document management across the authority would have regard to partnership and locality working.

The Committee agreed to note:

- (1) the progress against the 2008/09 Corporate ICT Development Plan.
- (2) the reservation of funding, in principle, for the Corporate GIS and

8. ICT Risks & Business Continuity

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of ICT, presented the Report of the Strategic Director of Resources, relating to the business continuity arrangements associated with the ICT risks in the report.

- There was a need for resilience in any system the Council introduced.
- Decisions had to be balanced between costs and risks.
- The importance to the community of the successful operation ICT system at the Shire Hall.
- Discussion were being held with suppliers relating to the difficulties which had developed in the network.

The report was endorsed.

9. Development of the 2009/10 to 2011/12 Medium Term Financial Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Resources which sought the Committee's views on the content of the 2009/10 to 2011/12 Medium Term Financial Plan.

During the discussion, Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources, stressed the importance of including new sections in the plan relating to sustainability including long term cost management, strategic commissioning and financial risk management, including treasury management.

He also indicated that local authorities would have a role to play with capital developments following the recent announcements by the Government relating to the international financial situation.

Following comments about the importance of the need to ensure value for money in the use of financial resources allocated for partnership and locality working, the Committee endorsed the report and noted the timetable for approval of the Plan shown in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

10. Provision of Water Coolers - Update Report

Phil Evans, Facilities Manager, introduced the report of the Strategic Director of Resources, which updated members on the progress in providing changed arrangements in the provision of water in the County Council's non-schools stock.

During the debate the following points were noted:

- Cooled mains fed drinking water would be incorporated in the design of new schools.
- The changes were being concentrated in the Shire Hall before examining provision in other county buildings.

In response to comments from Councillor Peter Fowler, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Localities, Members were advised that alternatives to plastic drinking cups were being examined.

Members noted the current work being undertaken to the changing of water provision arrangements in Warwickshire County Council buildings.

11. Property Condition Maintenance Backlog

Steve Smith, Head of Property, introduced the report of the Strategic Director of Resources, which explained the current condition of the Council's property stock. The data was used to enable planned maintenance work to be costed, prioritised and planned. The report provided some conclusions as to the effect the level of investment had made to date on backlog maintenance.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Council were getting the best deals on the market
- A bid had been submitted to the Star Chamber for resources for building maintenance, excluding schools.
- Area property reviews have been undertaken for some time and were essential to provide details of all accommodation, including need, location and purpose.
- The latest review would be submitted to the Committee when ready.
- SDLT had agreed amount of office space allocated per member of staff.

2. School Summer Holiday 2008 - Building and Engineering Projects

Steve Smith, Head of Property, introduced the report of the Strategic Director of Resources, which informed members of the delivery of school building and engineering projects during the 2008 summer holiday.

Members noted the delivery of Building and Engineering projects completed during the school summer holiday 2008.

13. Debt Recovery – Update

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

Members noted the progress since the last report in June 2008 on debt recovery.

14. Any Other Items

There were no items.

The Committee rose at 1.00 p.m.

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Chair