

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 03 December 2015 at 17:30

PRESENT :

Councillor B Williamson(In the Chair), Councillors Collins, M Coleman, Grey, Jones, Mavroudis, Thirtle, T Wainwright and Walker

Councillor Myers attended as a substitute for Councillor Fox.

Mrs S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Mrs J Beck (Director of Customer Services), Mrs K Watts (Transformation Programme Manager), Mrs K Sly (Section 151 Officer) Mr C Rowland (Corporate Policy and Performance Officer), Mr G Jones (Information Manager), Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mrs S Wintle (Member Services Officer)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no Declarations of Interest declared at this meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lawn, Grant, Sutton and Fox.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd October were confirmed subject to an amendment to those present, that Councillor Grey was in attendance.

5 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had asked the Chief Executive Officer for an overview of how shared services would affect the Transformation Programme, and asked the following questions :-

(i) What is your perspective on the current Transformation Programmes and streams of work? Is its delivery being effective in delivering the budget as outlined in the current MTFS?

The Chief Executive Officer responded as follows :-

- The areas that were being focussed on as a Council were exactly the areas that needed the most attention.

- That there seemed to be no clear link between Transformation and the Mid Term Financial Strategy.
- No clear picture of savings.
- Base budget - area needed more focus.
- MTFS is delivering savings in terms of the Transformation Programme, although could not comment on next years savings.
- Progress has been made and continues to be made.
- A clearer picture should be delivered at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting.

(ii) Do you agree that it is imperative to keep to the completion of these cost reductions without changes or interference to deliver the financial savings as laid out in the Mid Term Financial Strategy?

The Chief Executive Officer responded as follows :-

- Completion was imperative
- More savings and income will need to be sought for the Transformation Programme.
- That the Council needs to continue to drive forward.
- Other pieces of work needed to be identified to deliver savings.

(iii) What are the aspects/elements of the Transformation Programme you have taken over from the former Chief Executive Officer Gordon Mitchell? Are these achievable in a shared Chief Executive role?

The Chief Executive Officer responded as follows :-

- Asset Management and a review of Assets and how we can use these more effectively.
- Asset commercialisation, links directly to staff. Appraisals/Competency framework stand to set the tone for what you expect of your staff.
- Organisation Development - No savings have been identified but confident there will be.
- Sickness - Councils biggest area of spend to be addressed.
- Growth Agenda.
- Different System of Finance announced by Chancellor, that the Government Grant will be no longer from 2020 and that the main income for Councils will be through Council Tax and Business Rates.
- The need to look at "How we grow our Businesses"
- That our aim is to retrieve the best value out of all services provided.

(iv) From 16/17 there is a 2.7m saving in the MTFS?

The Chief Executive Officer responded:-

- That at this time until an up to date MTFS had been produced, it would be difficult to clarify exactly what savings there would be.

The Chairman agreed that it was imperative to stick to the plan, although questioned where possible future changes could be made to FTE posts. The Chief Executive Officer advised the Chairman that having only been in the post for three weeks she would be unable to give a definite answer, although stated that everything that was being proposed had a purpose and that savings could be made through being a Shared Service. The Chairman asked that if savings were not delivered, would cuts

within the Council be imminent, and was informed by the Chief Executive Officer that from an initial impression the need to drive out further savings that were already banked needed to remain the focus.

A Member asked what provisions were to be put in place to achieve maximum income from Council Tax and Business Rates. The Chief Executive Officer reported that there was a need to build more houses to maintain a continuing Housing Stream and that Business Rates required attention, although noted that Business Rate Relief is protected and that analysis of businesses together with an understanding of them was important.

Concern was raised by a Member over the Business Rates Collection and the proposed plans for devolution.

The Section 151 Officer reported that work was being undertaken to ascertain figures for an up to date MTFS, although stated that the main focus was at present to deliver a Budget for 2016/17. The Chief Executive Officer pointed out that additional support was required within the Finance Team to enable a detailed breakdown of Budget for 2016/17 based on current areas and the need for further investigation.

A member asked the Chief Executive Officer what was seen as future funding and investments opportunities, it was reported that the Beacon Park Project was a major investment together with further potential investors interested in the Town Centre, and that interventions would be required from the Council to build confidence in Great Yarmouth and potential investors.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive Officer and the Officers for their delivery of the Programme.

The Transformation Programme Manager informed Members that there was to be a Members Briefing Session in January.

6 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received the Quarter 2 Performance Report.

A Member expressed concern regarding CM18 : No. of empty homes brought back into use, and asked for clarification on what is deemed as an empty home, and was advised that the figures were based on long term empty properties, and that the Council are working with the home owners to bring those homes back into use.

A Member asked the influences that GYBC have over Housing Authorities and Private Sector Housing, and was advised that enforcing Council Legislation on Private Sector Housing would be a costly process and that at present Voids properties were being focussed upon to reduce the period.

Members were concerned regarding CM23 : Collection Rates Council Tax and how it appeared there was a continual decrease, however members were informed that due to customers opting to pay over 12 months and not 10 has increased and a more stable profile would be available once the increase trend settled down. The Chairman noted that this could not be an automatic change. It was reported by the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer that this was also the same for CM22: Collection rates NNDR.

The Director of Customer Services advised members regarding CM34: Contact Centre telephone calls, that having two members of staff focussing mainly on general enquiry line had kept call levels more controlled and that they were continually looking at ways to work more effectively.

The Transformation Programme Manager pointed out to Members the Improved Performance of CM19: Tonnage of Waste Recycled.

RESOLVED :

That the Quarter 1 Performance Update Report, and the Quarter 2 Performance Report be received.

7 TRANSPARENCY CODE/PUBLICATION SCHEME

The Committee considered the Information Manager's report on the Publication Scheme.

The Information Manager reported that the Councils Publication Scheme now contained the mandatory items as prescribed by the DCLG. The Chairman confirmed that this document was on the Councils Website.

RESOLVED :

That the Information Manager's report be received.

8 GREAT YARMOUTH SPORTS AND LEISURE TRUST

The Chairman informed Members that the Leader was unable to attend due to prior commitments but would report at the next meeting of Scrutiny on the 14th January 2016 on the above matter.

9 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16

The Cabinet Secretary updated Members on the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2015/16.

The Cabinet Secretary reported that a Budget Monitoring Report should have been presented at the meeting and this would now be reported at the next meeting.

Councillor Grey suggested that The Wintergardens and the proposals for this, should be added to the Work Programme.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that there was no other business as might be determined by the Chairman of the meeting as being of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

The meeting ended at: 18:50