

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 22 August 2013 at 18:30

PRESENT:

Councillor Stone (in the Chair); Councillors Castle, M Coleman, Collins, Hacon, Hanton, Marsden, Shrimplin and Wright.

Councillor Holmes attended as a substitute for Councillor Fairhead and Councillor Sutton attended as substitute for Councillor J Smith.

Councillor T Wainwright also attended.

Mrs J Ratcliffe (Chief Executive Officer), Mr S Duncan (Director of Resources, Governance and Growth), Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mr C Rowland (Corporate Policy and Performance Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fairhead, Field and J Smith.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fairhead, Field and J Smith.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2013 were confirmed.

3 Annual Performance Report 2012-2013

The Committee was reminded that at its meeting on 18 July 2013, Members considered the Council's Annual Performance Report for 2012/13. Members had raised a number of questions relating to the report and accordingly the Committee now considered the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer's report which clarified questions with regard to the following issues:-

- Planning applications
- New claims for housing and council tax benefit
- Council tax collection
- Sickness absence.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer's report be noted

4 Quarterly Performance Report

The Committee considered the Quarterly Performance Report relating to Performance Measures for 2013/14 across all Council services. The report summarised performance in the first three months of 2013/14, 1 April – 30 June 2013 inclusive.

RESOLVED:

(i) That the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer be requested to provide further information on the number of properties involved in relation to Performance Measure PM007A relating to the average time to re-let local authority housing and also details on comparison with other authorities.

(ii) That the Quarterly Performance Report be noted.

5 Management Structure

The Committee was reminded that at its meeting on 18 July 2013 Members had considered the reports on the Management Restructure which had previously been presented and considered by Cabinet and Council.

The Committee had identified a number of questions to be answered in respect of the management structure and accordingly Members now considered the report of the Chief Executive Officer in relation to the answers to the following questions:-

(i) Sickness Records – Have these changed since the restructure?

The current sickness position in the year to date to June 2013 is 2.74% absence rate, an improvement on the previous year to date of 3.65%. The sickness rates have therefore improved since the restructure took place.

(ii) Under the Risk Analysis has anything shown up yet and has the Peer Review had any effect on this?

No issues have shown up which were identified in the Risk Analysis. The Peer Review has not had any effect on this.

(iii) What will the daily/weekly financial implications be of using Senior Officers from other Local Authorities to cover leave and sickness absence of our own Officers/Managers?

There are no proposals to cover leave and sickness absence by using Senior Officers from other Local Authorities. The Executive Management Team is talking to other authorities in relation to mutual support and to ensure access to a wider set of skills and experience but there is no proposal for remuneration.

(iv) What is the policy for recruitment and appointment of the post of Chief Executive Officer with an explanation of the procedure?

There is no specific policy for the recruitment and appointment of the post of Chief Executive Officer and this recruitment would therefore be covered under the Council's normal recruitment procedures. However, the Council's Constitution contains additional requirements in relation to the recruitment of the Head of Paid Service (the

Chief Executive Officer) and Chief Officers (Directors and Group Managers).

In discussing the above responses to the questions, the Chairman asked which other local authorities is the Borough Council in discussion with and the Leader confirmed that the Borough Council was talking to all local authorities in Norfolk. With regard to the issue of resilience, the Leader confirmed that there was no guarantee but was confident that the structure now agreed would cover any resilience matters.

The Chief Executive Officer reported that talks were continuing with Norwich City Council and also talks were taking place with North Norfolk District Council. The Chief Executive Officer also pointed out that Suffolk County Council had provided advisory and practical assistance on certain areas of the Council's work.

With regard to the recruitment and appointment of the post of Chief Executive Officer, the Chairman referred to the Local Authority (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001 and queried whether the details of these regulations had been applied in the recent appointment process. The Director of Resources, Governance and Growth reported that a new recruitment and employment policy was currently being drawn up. The Cabinet Secretary reported that the Council's current Constitution provided explicit procedure rules for officer employment relating to the recruitment of the Head of Paid Service, the appointment of the Head of Paid Service, appointment of Directors, other appointments, disciplinary action and on dismissal. The provisions of the Local Authority (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001 had been taken into account when these procedure rules had been formulated.

RESOLVED:

That the Chief Executive Officer's report detailing the responses to a number of questions raised by the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the management structure be noted, and that the answers to the remaining outstanding questions identified by the Scrutiny Committee be considered at the next meeting.

6 Budget Monitoring

The Committee noted the Director of Resources, Governance and Growth's Budget Monitoring report.

7 Senior Management Performance

The Chief Executive Officer reported on the work currently being undertaken with regard to the Corporate Plan together with the Efficiency Support Grant Plan and the recommendations from the recent Peer Review to amalgamate issues into one single document. The Chief Executive Officer had, in conjunction with the Cabinet, identified some key performance indicators and projects to be included in this project. Members were advised that the Chief Executive Officer will be reporting on the development of this document regularly with effect from October 2013.

The Chief Executive Officer also confirmed that she held meetings on a weekly basis with both the Leader and Shadow Leader of the Council to update the Leaders on strategic and management issues.

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that it was the Borough Council's intention to deliver on key performance indicators and projects and that there would be a very open scrutiny process on these issues.

RESOLVED:

That the Chief Executive Officer's report on Senior Management Performance be noted.

8 Scrutiny Sub Committee Review

The Cabinet Secretary updated Members on the progress currently being made with regard to the proposals at the Bus Station. Members were advised that a 30 metre mural had been provided by Seachange Arts. The project was part of the ongoing drive by the Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the County Council to improve the Bus Station and the "You are here" signs and flag signs had also been installed within the bus shelters.

RESOLVED:

That the position be noted.

9 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14

The Cabinet Secretary updated Members on the possible following items to be considered at the next meeting:-

- Management Structure
- Efficiency Support Grant
- St Georges Chapel and Pavilion
- Role of Ward Councillors
- Vauxhall Bridge

10 Any other business

Future dates of Scrutiny Committee Meetings.

The Chairman reported on revisions to the dates for the next two Scrutiny Committee meetings as follows:-

- 26 September 2013 will now take place on 3 October 2013.
- 24 October 2013 will now take place on 31 October 2013.

The meeting ended at: 19:50