POLICY AND PERFORMANCE - TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 September 2015

Present:	Councillor	J Williamson (Chair)

	Councillors	P Doughty	J Walsh
		S Foulkes	A Sykes
		R Gregson	B Berry
		B Kenny	L Fraser
		C Muspratt	T Pilgrim
		M Patrick	C Carubia
		J Salter	

Deputy:	Councillor	A Hodson (In place of T Anderson)

In attendance:	Councillors	A Jones	C Meaden

11 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor Brian Kenny declared a personal interest in agenda item 3, 'IT Services Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Update' by virtue of his employment.

Councillor Adam Sykes declared a personal interest in agenda item 4, 'Customer Relationship Management System' by virtue of his business associations.

12 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee meeting held on 15 July, 2015.

A Member referred to minute 4, 'Interim Report on Reconfiguration of Library Service' and stated that a number of good ideas had come up in the debate on this item not all of which were captured in the minute. He hoped that these ideas had not been lost.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of 15 July, 2015 be approved.

13 **IT SERVICES BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY UPDATE**

The Chief Information Officer introduced a report which provided an update on progress that needed to be completed in order to fully mitigate and ultimately remove risks associated with an underinvestment in IT infrastructure. The report as well as outlining the work undertaken since mid-2014, went on to outline the remaining major steps.

He outlined the differences between business continuity – and disaster recovery and in response to Members' comments stated that the co-location of some of the Council's equipment with a public sector partner would be ready to go ahead hopefully before the end of the financial year once legal contracts had been drawn up. IT were ready for the move but other external factors were delaying the date of migrating out.

Each directorate had been tasked with building their own disaster recovery plan; their IT requirements had been sent through to IT for analysis and inclusion in IT plans as appropriate. Business Continuity was led by Mark Camborne, Head of Corporate and Community Safety and a Plan had been formulated in IT.

The Chair stated that this report would also be going to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 28 September, 2015 and that in view of the discussion generated by this item it should be prioritised at the top of this Committee's work programme.

Responding to further comments, Mike Zammit stated that he did not know whether or not the Council had ever had a full Disaster Recovery Plan, what was important was to formulate a plan that met the Council's current needs and took account of the Council's current infrastructure. A plan needed to grow and be updated regularly. With regard to VMware virtualisation technology this had been brought in and implemented more than five years ago and when the contract was next up for renewal other options would be explored. The Council had an Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft which bundled licences for many software products, some of which might provide more cost effective solutions than the Council currently used; however, the risks of migrating complex systems from one environment to another had to be assessed carefully before making any decision to change.

The Chair informed the Committee that since the last meeting, she and the Party Spokespersons had met and agreed that the review on community libraries be deferred to early next year due to a number of ongoing pieces of work which had a direct impact on libraries. It was suggested that the Task and Finish review on the Council's Disaster Recovery arrangements be placed at the top of the list.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a Task and Finish review be initiated in a timely fashion on the Council's Disaster Recovery arrangements.

14 **CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

The Customer Services Manager introduced a report on the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM). The system had been in use since 2005 and the report gave details of the developments which had taken place to further enhance the system, including:

- Mobile working and Microsoft word integration
- Integration with Biffa's own Management Information System
- Integrated eforms and text messaging

Over the coming months the Council would begin work to replace its current CRM system. The new system would be fit for purpose and adaptable in order to respond to the ever changing advances in technology. It would place Wirral in an excellent position as a Council going forward with partners and the community, one which was responsive to customer contact in the most efficient manner. It would be developed to enable it to be the 'front door' for the Council's public, private and community sector partners if required to provide a joined up response to Wirral residents.

A Member expressed disappointment with the current system in place, which, as far as she understood prohibited contact with Council officers and used a 'bizarre' system of 'tick boxes'. There was a need to consult with Members over any future new system.

A Member suggested that the new Council website, due to go 'live' in the coming weeks, would be easily navigable in helping people find what they were looking for.

Responding to comments from Members, the Customer Services Manager stated that the current system, now ten years old, did have its glitches and had been based around Streetscene services but it was still available for

Members to use. There had been an overall reduction in staff through remodelling and she would provide these figures to the Committee. With regard to the compatibility of ipads with the website she would take this back for further investigation. For those without internet access the call centre was in operation to receive telephone calls and One Stop Shops were also available.

The Customer Services Manager stated that any new system would be developed in conjunction with Members to ensure that it was fit for their purpose and at least three Members asked to be involved but there also needed to be customer feedback too. There was good potential to save money with an effective CRM system but it was acknowledged that an initial significant spend might be required.

The Chair suggested, and it was –

Resolved – That the report be noted, and an item on the CRM system be added to the work programme.

15 **ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Acting Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced a report which set out proposed changes to the Council's Attendance Management Policy and Procedure following a review.

The Council's absence performance had been regularly reported to Policy and Performance Committee. In 2014/15, the average number of days lost per employee was 10.37 days against a target of 9.75 days.

Absence data provided by North West Employers showed that Wirral Council's performance in comparison to that of other North West authorities had improved. The average level of absence amongst 20 Authorities was 11.05 (up from 10.61 in 2013/14) with Wirral ranked seventh highest. This demonstrated that absence was an issue for other Councils and the work Wirral were doing was achieving some success in containing absence levels in the context of significant change affecting Local Authorities. Quarter 1 in 2015/16 had seen an increase in absence levels although this had adjusted slightly in July. The average absence level in the public sector was around 8 days per year and Wirral was committed to improving performance.

The report gave details of a number of measures undertaken during the past couple of years and went on to recommend a number of changes to the Council's Attendance Management policy, including:

- A policy requirement that employees are referred to Occupational Health immediately (day 1) for stress related absence (this is currently practice but not a policy requirement).

- Adoption of the following triggers in relation to short–term absence:

  o Any period of unauthorised absence OR
  o 3 separate periods of absence of up to 3 working days within any 6 calendar month period OR
  o 2 separate periods of absence of over 3 working days within any 6 calendar month period OR
  o 20 days continuous absence OR
  o Concerns over patterns of absence

The recommended changes to first stage of absence to specify a number of days rather than just occasions of absence would strengthen the operation of the policy and add clarity. It remained a fundamental principle of managing absence that an employee was made aware informally that their absence was a concern before formal action was taken and the policy retained this.

Responding to comments from Members, the Acting Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that Directors did receive a monthly report by directorate and the reporting system was sufficiently advanced to highlight any trends. He acknowledged more work was needed around working with people to identify potential areas of stress and to be able to take preventative measures. Although some changes were proposed to the triggers in relation to short-term absence, the proposed policy did retain an informal stage to the process. It was not felt appropriate to reward those with good attendance but he would look into possible initiatives that could be implemented such as a 'thank you' letter for those with exemplary attendance. Some training had taken place with line managers particularly within social work teams. Training would be across the board to the top of the Council structure although he couldn't answer as to who monitored the Chief Executive's sickness record. A Member suggested that the Committee should have sight of the training programme.

Members further commented that with regard to triggers, there should be some exemptions such as for bereavements. There was a need to look at the proposed policy in comparison with other authorities' policies. The proposals were not vastly different to what existed in the private sector but that officers did need to look at all the available tools to improve sickness absence without being too draconian. As funding cuts continued to hit Local Authorities there were less staff to run services and this did then put pressure on staff to make up for the shortfall in staff resources. The option of staff being able to work from home rather than have to take sick leave should be explored for instances such as staff suffering from colds, whereby they didn't want to spread it on to other colleagues.

Resolved - That this Committee recommends to Council, approval of the revised Attendance Management Policy and Procedure.

16   SCRUTINY OF THE COUNCIL PLAN DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered a verbal presentation from the Head of Financial Services in relation to the Wirral Plan: A 2020 Vision.

He highlighted that the Council Plan had now been agreed with partners and local agencies and was now the Wirral Plan. The priorities in taking Wirral forward covered the three areas of People, Business and Environment and he went through the timetable to progress the implementation of the Delivery Plan. The Policy and Performance Coordinating Committee was considering the initial scrutiny; future work programmes and next steps at its meeting on 30 September.

A report would be presented to Cabinet on 8 October, 2015 on phase one of the delivery plan.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

17   2015/16 QUARTER 1 DIRECTORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Head of Financial Services presented a report which outlined the quarter 1 (April to June 2015) performance against the Directorate Plan for 2015/16. He also provided an update with July / August figures on those indicators rated red, the majority of which had shown an improvement. The report also set out a series of amendments to the Transformation and Resources Directorate Plan 2015/16 in an appendix. These were as a result of the impact of the final 2014/15 year-end performance data and the development of the technical specification for the performance measures within the plan.

Whilst the Corporate Plan 2015/16 (and supporting Directorate Plans) had been superseded by the Wirral Council Plan 2020 Vision, they still formed the basis of the in-year performance management framework. A new Performance Management Framework would be developed for the Council Plan once the associated delivery plan had been finalised.

Of the 20 reportable indicators, including the Directorate revenue budget and capital programme, 9 were rated Green, 2 were rated Amber and 9 were rated Red. For indicators rated Amber and Red, the responsible officer had indicated the corrective action being put in place to get performance back on track. The nine measures rated red were:

- Percentage of Performance Appraisals completed (TRCP03)
- Sickness absence: the number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (TRCP04)
- Percentage of suppliers paid within 30 days or payment terms (TRDP06)

- Percentage of local SME suppliers paid within 10 days (TRDP07)
- Percentage of client finance recovered by end of month following billing (TRDP13)
- Percentage spend allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment (TRDP16)
- Average number of days to accurately process new benefit claims (TRDP22)
- Average number of days to accurately process change in circumstance benefit claims (TRDP23)
- Percentage grant income achieved (TRDP24)

In response to Members' comments, the Acting Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development gave a breakdown of the completed Performance Appraisals for management by department as follows:

- Department of Adult Social Services – 76.7%
- Children and Young People – 55.6%
- Families and Wellbeing – 70.6%
- Neighbourhoods and Engagement – 100%
- Public Health – 87.5%
- Regeneration – 70.3%
- Transformation and Resources – 90.8%

He acknowledged that Neighbourhoods and Engagement was a very small department and that there had been a significant restructure in the Children and Young People's department.

A Member suggested that those managers who had failed to provide a PA within the timescale should be sent a warning letter.

The Chair expressed concern at the delays in the processing of benefit claims.

The Head of Business Processes acknowledged that there was a backlog of old claims and once this was cleared the situation should start to improve.

A Member suggested that the Committee Members be circulated with a breakdown of those claims which dated back the furthest.

Resolved – That the report and concerns expressed be noted.

18 **FINANCIAL MONITORING 2014/15 END OF YEAR REPORT AND 2015/16 QUARTER 1 REPORT**

The Head of Financial Services introduced reports which set out financial monitoring information in respect of, firstly, the 2014/15 outturn and secondly, the quarter 1 (April to June 2015) budget performance for the Transformation and Resources Directorate. The reports gave details of performance against

revenue and capital budgets and the quarterly report also against in year efficiency targets, which in 2015/16 were £3.9m.

In respect of the Revenue Budget, the Transformation and Resources Directorate outturn for 2014/15 was a £2.5m underspend. With regard to 2015/16 a £1.2m under spend was projected, as at 30 June 2015.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

19   **POLICY BRIEFING PAPER**

The Head of Financial Services introduced a report on the September Policy Briefing Papers. This included an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, potential implications for the Council and emerging policies.

The September Policy Inform briefing outlined the key features of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget Statement, which was announced on 8 July 2015. The Policy Inform briefing also alluded to any potential implications for Wirral Council, and elaborated on any legislation or policy updates which had been implemented, or developed since the last policy briefing in July. It was expected that the January Briefing Paper would focus on the local government finance settlement which informed the annual determination of funding to local government.

Councillor Foulkes declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of him being a Director of Magenta Living. He suggested the need to investigate the impact of the social housing policy which would affect all Housing Associations and could lead to job losses across the borough.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

20   **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered a report from the Chair which updated Members on the current position regarding the Committee's work programme.

A work programme session had taken place at which the following suggestions were made:

Task & Finish

- Libraries (Scope undetermined at this time).
- A review of the impact of implementing Universal Credit and the removal of Housing Benefit entitlement for 18 - 25 year olds following potential changes in government legislation.
- A review of the Council's disaster recovery arrangements.
- A review of the Council's debt recovery processes.

<u>Reports Requested</u>

- An update on the Customer Relationship Management System (see minute 14 ante).
- The Council's disaster recovery arrangements (see minute 13 ante).
- Security of access to Council issued devices (scheduled for Committee on 3 December 2015).
- An update report on recommendations made in the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Review (scheduled for Committee on 1 February 2016).
- A detailed report covering the Community Safety Partnership (scheduled for Committee on 22 March 2016).

On a motion by the Chair, it was

Resolved – That with the addition of items on, the CRM system and a Task and Finish Group Disaster Recovery arrangements (with an invitation extended to Members from the other Policy and Performance Committees) the work programme for 2015/16 be approved.

21   **MALCOLM FLANAGAN**

The Chair referred to this being the last meeting of this Committee at which Malcolm Flanagan, Head of Business Processes, would be in attendance before his retirement from the Council.

She expressed, on behalf of the whole Committee, its thanks for all the work he had undertaken with the Council and for the invaluable support he had provided to the Committee.

The Committee wished him all the very best for a long, healthy and happy retirement.