TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 30 July 2013

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Whittingham (Chair)	
	Councillors	RL Abbey	S Hodrien
		A Hodson	M Johnston
		P Gilchrist	C Muspratt
		P Glasman	J Salter
		R Gregson	A Sykes
		J Hale	J Williamson
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	S Mountney (In place of L Rowlands)	
		P Kearney (In place of C Blakeley	

1   INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.

2   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.

No such declarations were made.

3   MINUTES

The Head of Legal and Member Services presented the minutes of the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee, whose terms of reference now fell largely within the remit of this Committee.

Councillor Hale stated that he was content with what was recorded in the minutes but that some comments made at the Committee had not been recorded.

The Chair referred to minute 76, 'Elected Member Development' and part three of the resolution which recommended, 'that Council reaffirms its commitment to the training and support of elected members'; he had expected this to have appeared on the Council agenda.

The Head of Legal and Member Services apologised for the oversight and assured the Chair that it would be referred to the next ordinary Council meeting.

Resolved – That the minutes of the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 26 March, 2013 be approved.

4   **TERMS OF REFERENCE AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Public Health / Head of Policy and Performance presenting the Terms of Reference of the Policy and Performance Committees, as set out in Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, which had recently been revised and updated in response to the need to improve the Council's corporate governance and decision making. The report also highlighted the specific Service Areas which fell within the remit of the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee as follows:

1. Resources & Financial Services

- Financial Advice
- Financial Management (including Treasury Management)
- Audit
- Procurement
- Information Technology Services

2. Legal & Member Services

- Legal Services
- Registration
- Freedom of Information
- Records Management & Archives
- Complaints

3. Human Resources & Organisational Development

- HR / Payroll
- Organisational Development

4. Business Processes

- Revenue / Benefits

- Libraries / One Stop Shops
- Customer Services

5. Pensions

Resolved – That the Committee's Terms of Reference and specific Areas of Responsibility, be noted.

5   **MEETING PROCEDURE RULES**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Public Health / Head of Policy and Performance which presented the Policy and Performance Committee Meeting Procedure Rules, under which the formal meetings of the Committee should be undertaken. The rules had been agreed by the Coordinating Committee, which was responsible for determining the overview and scrutiny rules and operational protocols, at its meeting on 3 July 2013 (minute 11 refers), subject to a couple of minor amendments in relation to clarifying the approach in respect of written evidence considered by the committee at call-in.

A Member expressed the view that contrary to the Policy and Performance Committee Meeting Procedure Rules there were many members who only sat on one of these committees and would therefore find it very difficult to 'participate in the development of the Council's policies…' In respect of the 'call-in' procedure he expressed concern at the powers of the Chair over confirming which witnesses would or would not be invited to attend a 'call-in' meeting and that the, 'Chair of the Coordinating Committee may, from time to time, amend the process and guidelines as appropriate.'

Another Member suggested that these concerns should be referred to the LGA / Wirral Improvement Board. He drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 14 of the procedure rules and suggested that Cabinet members could come along to Policy and Performance Committees, given enough notice, when particular issues were on the agenda.

Resolved – That the report and the Procedure Rules be noted.

6   **BRIEFING PACK**

For ease of reference, the Director of Public Health / Head of Policy and Performance presented the comprehensive Scrutiny Briefing Pack, which had been prepared for the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee and had previously been circulated to Members. It provided a summary of the purpose of overview and scrutiny and contained detail in relation to the relevant service areas.

The document also provided an outline of the outstanding items from previous scrutiny committees and indicated the key plans and strategies and key policy drivers of relevance to the work of the Committee.

With regard to pre-decision scrutiny, a Member referred to an item on the Forward Plan, 'Local Asset Backed Vehicle'. In response, the Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources, stated that this was about a major project of building work and he would refer this back to the Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee.

Resolved – That the Briefing Pack be noted.

7   **TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES DIRECTORATE PLAN**

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources, Joe Blott, presented the Directorate Plan for 2013/2014, which set out the Directorate's areas of responsibility and demonstrated the crucial role that the Transformation and Resources Directorate played in ensuring the Council's corporate centre both supported and drove transformational change across the organisation. In essence the department was responsible for the corporate health of the organisation.

The Directorate Plan also outlined the contribution to the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities in place for the coming year; which were underpinned by consultation and engagement with the Council's residents, partners and staff. The Directorate Plan highlighted those key objectives to be delivered in 2013/14, gave an analysis of the Directorate's budget, risk management and of workforce monitoring.

Joe Blott introduced his Directorate Management Team which would be working closely with him in delivering the corporate plan priorities, and they then gave a presentation to the Committee highlighting the key objectives, projects and challenges in their particular areas.

The Chair then invited comments from the Committee. Responding to a comment on employee relations and 'live' cases, the Head of HR and Organisational Development stated that these referred to issues such as disciplinary, grievances, absence management and capability and she would be happy to provide a breakdown of the 239 cases to the Committee in writing. In respect of IT support, although the European Computer Driving Licence was still in existence, this level of training was not now offered to employees as most did not need that level of training for their roles. Discussions were ongoing as to what IT support would be offered to Members once the current Members' IT Support officer had left his post.

The Strategic Director referring to the transformation projects, of which there were eight currently, would be a real opportunity for pre-scrutiny, as

suggested by a Member. A Transformation Board was due to be established, to be chaired by Councillor Ann McLachlan with each project being led by a particular Cabinet Member and they could be invited to the Committee in respect of those projects relevant to this Committee.

The Head of Internal Audit, in response to comments, elaborated on the delivery of a Strategic Internal Audit Plan designed to conduct audits across all of the Council's key risk areas. An online Audit Intranet client communication facility would improve processes and the replacement of the Audit Planning and Management System, at an approximate cost of £20,000 would also improve risk management. The Audit and Risk Management Committee did also receive a monthly risk management report. The Head of Financial Services stated that he would circulate the Risk Register scoring table to the Committee.

The Head of Business Processes stated that the Council had been allocated £917,000 for discretionary housing payments and that by the end of June, £300,000 had been paid out. A number of applications had been made in respect of under occupancy and it was anticipated that all the allocation would be spent. He was unaware of the extra £35m which the Government had announced that afternoon would be distributed to local authorities but a report on discretionary housing payments would be going to Cabinet. He also explained the term, 'channel migration activity' which involved moving people to online applications rather than face to face or by telephone.

The Strategic Director reported that the replacement of the SWIFT, social care case management system was currently out to tender and a report would be going to Cabinet in September. He also referred to the progress made with Freedom of Information requests, in that in 2012/13, 64% were completed within the 20 day timescale, the May, 2013 return was up to 81.12% and in the last month 86.8% of requests had been processed within time which now exceeded the national target.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Director and all the officers for their informative presentation and comments.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That Committee notes the improvement in the Freedom of Information requests being processed.

8   **TRANSFORMATION   AND   RESOURCES   DIRECTORATE   -
     PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources presented the Directorate Plan Draft Performance Management Report (Performance Dashboard) to support the delivery of the Directorate Improvement Plan for 2013/2014. It translated the priorities set out in the Plan into a coherent set of performance outcome measures and targets that would be used to evaluate the achievement of the priorities outlined in the Plan over the next year.

With regard to those indicators referring to financial matters the Head of Business Processes undertook to provide information in future reports which would show the sums involved.

The Strategic Director elaborated upon the sickness absence indicator in the report which was in respect of the department, although the department was responsible for managing and addressing sickness absence across the Council.

Resolved - That the Performance Dashboard be noted and the information contained within it be used to inform the Committee's future work programme

9   **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Public Health / Head of Policy and Performance, which stated that four Policy and Performance Committees had been established to undertake the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function. Each Committee was invited to select items within their remit to be included within their work programme and it was suggested that more effective scrutiny would focus on a small number of the most relevant high priority topics. The Coordinating Committee had an additional role to ensure that there was no duplication between the work of the other Committees and to make sure that resources were available, from both Members and officers, for the work items to be completed in a timely manner.

The report outlined various methods of undertaking detailed scrutiny work and envisaged that the work programme would be monitored and updated at Committee meetings throughout the municipal year.

The report listed one item from the former Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee on IT Strategy, which the Chair had requested should be on the work programme of the new Policy and Performance Committee.

Members raised a number of topics for discussion that they believed should also be included in the work programme as follows:

- Sickness absence
- Shared services
- Response to Freedom of Information requests

On a motion by the Chair, duly seconded, it was -

Resolved – That,

(1) The initial items for the work programme, include, IT Strategy, sickness absence, shared services and response to Freedom of Information requests.

(2) That the Chair, Vice-Chair, Spokespersons and Independent member meet to agree the completion and prioritisation of the work programme and the commencement of any specific parts of the work programme.

10   **FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Chair informed the Committee that the Coordinating Committee had suggested that Policy and Performance Committees should in future meet in a cross party fashion rather than sit in groups.