

TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 September 2014

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Williamson (Chair)	
	Councillors	P Doughty R Gregson M Patrick C Muspratt L Reecejones J Walsh	I Williams A Sykes T Anderson Tracey Smith P Gilchrist
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	A Leech (in place of M Daniel) C Povall (in place of K Hodson)	
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	A Jones C Meaden	A McLachlan
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillor	B Berry	

7 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.

8 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee meeting held on 15 July, 2014.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of 15 July, 2014 be approved.

FUTURE COUNCIL

Mike Callon, Project Coordinator, circulated a briefing note which provided a summary of a discussion and agreement at a meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee Chairs and Spokespersons on 3 September, 2014. The meeting was convened to agree a common approach across all Policy and Performance Committees to scrutinising proposals that came forward from the recently published Future Council Programme.

The Members present at the meeting were Councillors Moira McLaughlin, Jerry Williams, Denise Roberts, Wendy Clements, Janette Williamson, Paul Doughty, Anita Leech, Steve Williams, Dave Mitchell, and Alan Brighthouse.

Councillor McLaughlin had referred to a scrutiny review undertaken in October 2013 by the Regeneration and Environment P & P Committee that had been circulated to the Chairs and Spokespersons. The Scrutiny Review reflected on the impact of 2013/14 budget options and proposed options for 2014/15. There was broad agreement that this had been a successful approach and that this should form the blueprint for scrutinising budget options this year.

Councillor McLaughlin had proposed an approach based on the October 2013 Review and consistent with the standard template for scrutiny review task and finish work. This approach would ensure that each committee operated independently but also delivered a consistent outcome from its scrutiny of the budget options based on the following principles:

- A task and finish approach was adopted with the three Policy and Performance Committees setting up a scrutiny panel to review the options that fell under their remit.
- Each committee to determine the number of Members on its panel and the number of sessions required.
- The panel should have an initial scoping meeting once the budget options were published to agree which options they wished to scrutinise and who they wanted to speak to i.e. Council Officers / external advisors.
- The panel should determine the preferred days / times for their Q and A sessions i.e. full evidence day, or a number of workshop sessions.
- Cabinet leads should be invited to observe sessions.
- In line with all task and finish scrutiny work, notes would be taken and a report with recommendations would be taken back to full committee for discussion and approval.

The Committee then discussed this proposed approach and it was suggested that with only two options falling within the Committee's remit, Council Tax Over 70s Discount and Community Libraries, two Task and Finish Groups could be established which could meet during the evenings.

Resolved –

(1) That the approach suggested be agreed and two Task and Finish groups be established with the following Members:

(a) Council Tax Over 70s Discount – Councillor J Williamson (Chair) and Councillors A Sykes, P Gilchrist, T Anderson, C Muspratt, M Patrick and L Reecejones.

(b) Community Libraries – Councillor J Williamson (Chair) and Councillors P Gilchrist, T Anderson, P Doughty, R Gregson and T Smith.

(2) That the Chair, Vice-Chair and spokespersons agree to meet up to discuss the arrangements for these Panel meetings.

10 WORK PROGRAMME

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

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources gave an outline of the savings to be made within his department and the work of the key areas within the department's structure. He agreed to circulate a presentation contained on three slides.

In respect of the previously agreed Local Welfare Assistance Scheme proposed scrutiny review (see minute 6 (15/7/14)) a meeting of the Task and Finish panel was convened on 6 August 2014 to determine the scope of this review. However, it transpired that there was uncertainty with regards to the unspent grant funding from previous years. It was agreed with the Chair of this Committee and the Members of the review panel that the review should be suspended until any Cabinet decision on the unspent grant funding was clear as it would not be possible to establish an appropriate scope for the review at this time.

Responding to comments from Members, the Strategic Director confirmed that the proposed Local Welfare Assistance Scheme scrutiny review had been put on hold whilst officers looked at any alternative arrangements that could be put in place and reflected on the whole budget. It was intended to ring fence, as far as possible, this money and take a proposal to Cabinet.

It was then moved by Councillor Anderson and seconded by Councillor Sykes, that –

“(1) This Committee recommends to Cabinet that the two year underspend on the Welfare Assistance scheme be ringfenced to be only spent on welfare schemes.

- (2) Furthermore no decision on this scheme be made until a Task and Finish group has concluded considering the options available.”

At this point (6.25pm) the Chair, with the agreement of the Committee, adjourned the meeting.

The meeting resumed at 6.35pm

The Chair referred to paragraph 4.1 of the report and that it had been agreed to suspend the review until any Cabinet decision had been taken. The Strategic Director stated that a report was due to be presented to Cabinet in November.

It was then moved as an amendment by Councillor Patrick, seconded by Councillor Walsh, that –

“This Committee recognises that given Central Government has cut the money for the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme it is necessary to review how it can continue, and Committee recommends that Cabinet ensures that this money is spent to deliver for those people that the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was initially established. A suggestion of how this might be achieved is a Task and Finish group.”

The amendment was put and carried (9:1) (3 abstentions).

In respect of the budget consultation process the Strategic Director, responding to Members’ comments, stated that the results of the budget consultation would be presented to Cabinet in November. The task and finish groups could be provided with feedback which was current at the time they were reviewing options, though it would not be complete. He also outlined the process of consultation which included roadshows, community events and direct mailshots and agreed to circulate details of the process to the Committee.

A Member suggested that it was important to get the timetabling right of future consultations and this should be looked at by a Policy and Performance Committee.

The Chair suggested a number of items for the work programme including:

- a report on Council Tax debts and sundry debtors.
- a report to the February 2015 meeting on the ICT Strategy.
- the Council’s approach to filming and how the Council is implementing policies already in place.

- a report to the February 2015 meeting on the evolving process of Future Council.

The Head of Business Processes, responding to comments from Members, agreed to circulate figures on Council Tax debts overall and sundry debtors.

The Strategic Director suggested that any review on the approach to filming could look at a whole range of accessibility options and what was needed to facilitate support to the public. A Member suggested that other Councils' approach to this issue could be looked at, such as Cheshire West and Chester Council. Some Members suggested that as the matter had already been to Council twice this should be of lower priority on the work programme.

A further addition to the work programme was suggested of a Task and Finish group to look at delivery models such as One Stop Shops which were now taking appointments.

The Chair referred to 'Spotlight Sessions', which the Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee had introduced into its scrutiny and review processes. These sessions enabled a topic to be explored with relevant officers or organisations in greater detail than time would allow during a formal Committee meeting. It was proposed that this Committee consider introducing sessions for Members to meet in an informal setting if a need had been identified. A short summary of the session would be provided to the next available Policy and Performance Committee meeting allowing any formal discussion and resolutions to be agreed.

Resolved –

(1) (9:1) (3 abstentions)

That this Committee recognises that given Central Government has cut the money for the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme it is necessary to review how it can continue, and Committee recommends that Cabinet ensures that this money is spent to deliver for those people that the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was initially established. A suggestion of how this might be achieved is a Task and Finish group.

(2) That the items for the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee work programme for 2014/15 as shown in Appendix 1 to the report, together with those suggestions made by the Chair and Members be agreed.

(3) That Committee approves the proposal for Spotlight Sessions to be provided as the need is identified by Members.

DIRECTORATE PLAN / PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced a report from the Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources which outlined the current performance of the Department (as at 31 July, 2014) against its Directorate Plan for 2014/15.

The report also included appendices with exception reports on those three items which had been 'red' rated for non-compliance against the specified target. The three measures rated red were:

- Percentage of Performance Appraisals completed (TRCP03)
- Percentage of suppliers paid (or payment terms) within 30 days (TRDP06)
- Reduction in the issuing of general exception notices under the Access to Information rules (TRDP09)

In response to comments from Members the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that the performance for TRDP06 had improved for September and that changes to a purchase order system were being made. She would ensure that information was circulated on the expected roll out of machines with Windows 7 and Office 2010 (TRCP01) following the initial roll out of 50 machines.

In respect of TRCP03 she acknowledged that this was a low performance and not what was expected from the Council's managers. There had been a clear direction from the Chief Executive of how important it was for these to be completed. Although it had been a difficult time period in terms of capacity and the first time Performance Appraisals had been rolled out across the authority, she reassured the Committee that the matter was being treated with the utmost importance. At the request of the Committee an update would be circulated to Committee Members in mid-October. Formal six monthly reviews would also be undertaken for all staff, and all the Performance Appraisals were logged on the self serve system. Regular monthly "one to one" meetings should also be held for all staff.

A Member suggested that those staff potentially at risk of redundancy who had not had a Performance Appraisal were still at a disadvantage over those staff who had had one.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development responded to the question on the issue of staff potentially in a redundancy situation entering into a ring fenced interview position with potential redundancy. The assessment was made on the redundancy selection criteria; knowledge skills; sickness disciplinary warning record, not the outcome of the Performance Appraisal.

With regard to TRCP01 the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development agreed that Members would be provided with a breakdown of the £4m capital programme expenditure on information technology, £1m of which had so far been spent.

Resolved – That the performance management report be noted.

12 **FINANCIAL MONITORING 2014/15**

The Head of Financial Services introduced a report from the Director of Resources which set out the financial monitoring information for Months 3 and 4 (June / July 2014) in respect of the budget performance for the Transformation and Resources Directorate.

The report gave details of performance against revenue and capital budgets and in year efficiency savings for 2014/15. The Director drew the Committee's attention to the currently forecast underspend of £51,000 in respect of the revenue budget.

He gave details of the three savings which were red rated:

- Libraries and One Stop Shops - savings were initially predicated on revising opening hours, introducing lone working with support from volunteers and / or agile workers. These measures had yet to be introduced, but compensatory savings, primarily from vacant posts had been found.
- Discretionary Relief - savings were expected to be delayed by 3 months resulting in a deficit of 25% (£80,000). Compensatory savings would need to be identified.
- Credit Card Charges – Implementation of this charge on credit card transactions had been delayed and bank charges were currently projected to overspend by £14,000.

Resolved – That the report be noted.