

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE - TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 15 July 2015

Present:

Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

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

1 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.

2 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee meeting held on 30 March, 2015.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of 30 March, 2015 be approved.

3 LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE SCHEME SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Chair introduced a report on the findings and recommendations of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Scrutiny Review, which she had chaired and which had been undertaken by six members of the Committee, Councillors Tom Anderson, Paul Doughty, Phil Gilchrist, Matthew Patrick, Joe Walsh and Janette Williamson.

As part of the Committee's work programme, Members agreed to undertake a Task and Finish Scrutiny Review of the Council's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme following news that there would be no direct funding from central government from 1 April 2015. As the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme provided awards to people who were in severe need, this contributed to meeting the corporate priority of protecting the vulnerable in Wirral.

On 10 February 2015, Cabinet agreed as part of its budget resolutions that £900,000 would be held in a reserve to determine how this should be allocated after the current Scheme expired at the end of July 2015. A scoping meeting for the review was convened on 25 February with an evidence day held on 9 April, 2015 to inform recommendations to Cabinet.

To avoid an additional meeting of this Committee being scheduled for the purpose of approving the final report, this Committee had agreed a recommendation at the meeting held on 30 March 2015 (minute 31 refers) to give delegated authority to the Scrutiny Review Panel to refer the final agreed report to Cabinet.

The final report contained six recommendations which the Cabinet considered and supported at its meeting on 29 June, 2015 (minute 14 refers) and a copy of the minute was circulated at the meeting.

The Chair stated that this review had been an excellent piece of cross-party working with one full day workshop gathering evidence from a variety of organisations, which had received a positive response from Cabinet. The review panel would meet again in six months to review progress and how the recommendations were taking shape.

Members suggested the need for the Scheme to dovetail into the recently approved Wirral Council Plan and to keep reviewing what the Council could offer bearing in mind the budgetary constraints of the Council. Future budget options should take account of any piece of work which could be done in time for that.

Resolved – That the contents of report be noted.

4 INTERIM REPORT ON RECONFIGURATION OF LIBRARY SERVICE

The Head of Business Processes provided an update on the library service available from the 15 community library sites following the Cabinet budget proposal of 15 December 2014 (reducing opening hours to 18 per week at these sites) which had been implemented from 16 March, 2015.

The report gave details of the impact of the changes over the months of April/May 2015 compared to the same period in 2014 with regards to customer usage at both community libraries and central and merged libraries.

Customer and staff feedback on the changes was also provided within the report.

Although there had been an impact of implementing the revised opening hours at community libraries this had largely been mitigated by actions taken by the service, flexibility of the staffing resource or acceptance by the majority of customers of the new opening pattern.

The approximate 33% reduction in overall average usage at these sites should be taken in the context of a wider declining site usage (experienced to a lesser extent at other libraries not affected by these changes) as other channels were becoming popular such as online self-service and e-books.

The commitment given to continuing current activities / auxiliary services provided by partner agencies had been largely met with 89% of these regular events continuing in the same or updated format. These changes had also acted as a catalyst for securing community/volunteer support at certain sites, ensuring the on-going provision of services and proving this was a model that could be adopted more widely in the future. The feedback from a minority of active library users showed that whilst these regular borrowers felt the new hours had reduced the number of times they used their local library there was a significant proportion (43%) who confirmed no impact or indeed a positive outcome of the changes.

Responding to comments from Members the Head of Business Processes made a number of comments, including:

- Several options as to reduced hours had been looked at but ultimately 18 hours was the decision taken by the Council to reflect the budget available.
- The possibility of extending opening hours for the 15 Community libraries could happen as was already the case at one of the sites with volunteer help. There was also a need to balance some demographic issues, where some libraries would not have as much support from volunteers as to those which did.
- With reference to the statistics in the report on average total and hourly usage he acknowledged there were differences between individual libraries and he would be able to provide a breakdown of the figures for each individual library.
- There was a need to make sure the libraries were being used as much as possible within those hours which they were open. All libraries were now advertising their revised opening times.
- There was no detail available as to the approximate 6% decrease in the usage of the central libraries, as this was only a three month snapshot and trends might be more easily identifiable with the six month review.
- This interim report was to cover the impact on usage following changes to opening hours as officers were working to an existing library strategy.

More time was needed to understand the impacts and a report would be brought to Cabinet and this Committee with a six month review.

- As regards the future of the library service officers would continue to engage with friends groups.
- He acknowledged the need for IT support to be available at libraries with more services now being offered online.
- There were a number of trained professional librarians as well as a reference specialist. The number of children's story times had been reduced because of the reduced opening times.
- He clarified the current situation in respect of DBS checks and the work undertaken with HR colleagues on this.

The Head of Legal and Member Services confirmed that the guidance on DBS checking referred to regular contact but there was a need to ensure safeguarding issues were properly addressed.

Members made some suggestions as to issues which could form part of the work programme and a Task and Finish Group to look at lunchtime and late afternoon opening times and how the Council can make best use of its libraries. In doing this it would be helpful to look at the comparisons with neighbouring authorities.

Resolved – That the report be noted pending a full review of the impact of the revised community library opening hours.

5 ASSET MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Head of Universal and Infrastructure Services submitted a report which updated the Committee on the current position of Asset Management in Wirral with particular focus on the strategic asset management policy and office accommodation.

The report gave details of the situation of major sites for disposal and on office rationalisation and he updated the Committee on the current situation in respect of these sites.

Responding to comments from Members the Head of Universal and Infrastructure Services made a number of comments, including:

- With the redevelopment of certain sites and the rationalisation of others there would still be the need for further office moves but these were now made simpler with the standardisation of desks, IT and communications.
- He was aware of the community interest which had been shown in The Grange, Wallasey and would hope this interest could still be accommodated.
- He acknowledged the difficulties and frustrations which could sometimes occur for groups or individuals putting expressions of interest in on

buildings or sites and the need to inform people sooner when these bids failed.

- Options as to the future of the Bebington Complex would be considered by the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, with it being at the commercial heart of Bebington.

Resolved – That the contents of the report and the comments of the Head of Universal and Infrastructure Services, be noted.

6 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced a report on Performance Appraisals and the need to improve on performance in this area from the final outturn figure of 49% in 2014/15, the target having been 80%.

Details were given of the support offered by Human Resources and Organisational Development to improve Performance through:

- Additional support to Managers to assist them to undertake the Performance Appraisal more effectively such as Departmental Management Team (DMT) briefings and e-learning training;
- A targeted communication strategy to ensure staff and managers were fully aware of their responsibility to undertake Performance Appraisals;
- Monthly monitoring and report of progress towards targets at DMTs;
- On Line Management Development Training Needs Analysis for Managers to self-assess their knowledge and skills against the management expectations framework.

A timetable for completion of Appraisals in 2015/16 was included within the report with the target to be achieved by 30 September, 2015. The latest figures available were that 12% had been completed for all staff levels but the target date for completion by Senior Managers had not been achieved.

Responding to Members the Head of HR and OD and the Head of Financial Services commented:

- The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and Senior Managers had agreed to the approach which required a change in culture.
- As to why the targets had been missed there could be a whole variety of reasons including restructures within the Council and capacity issues.
- Approximately 300 staff had been lost through remodelling a number of whom had been redeployed but of these a number may not have had a PA. Those staff being redeployed would have had a lot of support through the change support programme.
- Discussions had been held with the SLT as to whether the target should be lower. The 80% was set to cover all staff but allowing leeway for

absence. Whilst this was challenging it was regarded as deliverable. In response to a further question from a Member as to whether the target should be set for different levels within the organisation this would be reflected upon as part of the six month review.

- Performance was reported by HR on delivery within Directorates. A lot was being done through communications to try and improve performance and discussions were being held with managers to keep up momentum. The recently approved Wirral Council Plan provided a further incentive for Managers to undertake PAs.

Members expressed a high level of concern at the poor performance in meeting this indicator's target and asked that their concerns be raised at Cabinet level.

Resolved – That the report be noted and the Chair write to the Cabinet Portfolio holder, Councillor Adrian Jones to pass on this Committee's concerns to Senior Managers at this target being missed.

7 HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development reported upon proposed changes to the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure following a review and also outlined details of new legislation in relation to shared parental leave which had been incorporated into Council policies.

The Council had to operate a fair and legally compliant Disciplinary Process. The policy and procedure had been reviewed to ensure the Council's processes continued to comply with ACAS Codes of Practice and were consistent with policies in place in other Local Authorities and large organisations (best practice). A range of changes had been proposed to the policy and procedures on this basis and the report gave details of the key changes.

A copy of the proposed revised Disciplinary Policy and Procedure was appended to the report. Trade Unions had been formally consulted on the proposed revisions and they retained their objection to the decision taken by Council in January 2013 to delegate employment appeals (including Disciplinary Appeals) to the Chief Executive.

With regard to Parental Leave, in April 2015, new legislation had come into place which introduced Shared Parental Leave. This enabled eligible mothers, fathers, partners and adopters to choose how to share time off work after their child was born or placed for adoption. The Council had implemented shared parental leave as part of the existing policy framework. Guidance and FAQs had been developed and would be available on the Council's intranet.

A Member suggested that the non-completion of Performance Appraisals by managers could be termed a matter of misconduct.

Members referred to a letter circulated at the meeting from UNISON, which referred to a quarterly report from the Chief Executive on the operation of the arrangements for conducting employment appeals and the lack of such reports being produced following the removal of this function from the Appeals Sub-Committee of the Employment and Appointments Committee in January, 2013.

The Head of Legal and Member Services commented that he would look into the matter raised and ascertain what exactly Council did resolve in January 2013, although the remit and scope of the Employment and Appointments Committee had changed following revisions to the Council Constitution in 2013. He would circulate an advice note once the issue had been looked into.

A Member suggested that with the change in remit of the Employment and Appointments Committee a report should have been produced and circulated to a Policy and Performance Committee as Members should have oversight of disciplinary issues. Members reiterated their concerns if no reports on the outcomes / operation of the appeals process had been produced.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development commented that the right to an employment appeal against dismissal, a disciplinary warning or for a grievance was a fundamental right and that all such appeals below Chief Officer level were delegated through the Chief Executive to Strategic Directors with two Heads of Service. She stated that she had only received a copy of the letter from UNISON just before the meeting and that the unions' principal objection to the delegation of employment appeals was noted in the report. She met with the Trades Unions every three weeks and at no stage recently had they raised concerns regarding the operation of the appeals process or on the reporting of these issues.

Resolved –

(1) That this Committee recommends to Council:

(a) Approval of the revised Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and;

(b) Approval that the legislative changes outlined in the report in relation to Shared Parental Leave are incorporated into Council existing policies.

(2) That this Committee notes the concerns expressed as to whether reports have been written in respect of the operation of the arrangements for conducting employment appeals and requests that

the Head of Legal and Member Services inform Committee Members of the situation.

8 POLICY BRIEFING PAPER

The Head of Financial Services introduced a report on the July Policy Briefing Papers. This included an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament and emerging policies.

The Policy Briefing papers were intended to provide Members with the latest position on emerging policy and legislative developments to support the Committee's work programme and future scrutiny work. During the course of the 2015-16 municipal year, the Council's Policy and Strategy Team would prepare four policy briefing papers which would be reported to the Policy and Performance Committees for consideration.

The July Policy Briefing papers focussed predominantly on the policies and legislation that had emerged from the newly formed Conservative Government. The papers provided a high level summary based on the available information released by Central Government at this time. Future papers would follow key Government announcements including the Budget Statement, the Autumn Statement, Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement and consider the implications for Wirral.

Resolved – That the contents of the Policy Briefing Papers be noted.

9 DIRECTORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Head of Financial Services presented a report which outlined the year end performance against the Directorate Plan for 2014/15. The report also included appendices with exception reports on those seven items which had been 'red' rated for non-compliance against the specified target. The seven measures rated red were:

- Percentage of local SME suppliers paid within 10 days (TRDP07)
- Reduction in the issuing of general exception notices under the Access to Information rules (TRDP09)
- Reduction in the total number of published supplementary agendas for Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings (TRDP10)
- Percentage of Performance Appraisals completed (TRCP03)
- Sickness absence: the number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (TRCP04)
- Percentage of Leadership Development Programmes completed (TRDP11)
- Percentage of Management Development Programme modules completed (TRDP12)

In response to Members' comments, the Head of Financial Services stated that the targets were reported by an individual officer but delivered by all managers. As with Performance Appraisals (see minute 6 above) it was within the role of managers and whilst challenging and aspirational they were targets which the Authority should be striving to achieve.

The Head of Legal and Member Services explained how the target for the issuing of General Exception Notices fluctuated and agreed that both the Chair of this Committee and of the Policy and Performance Coordinating Committee could look at the best approach as to where these performance targets should be reported to.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

10 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

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

Arrangements for setting the work programme for the 2015/16 municipal year had been discussed at the agenda setting meeting for this Committee. It was proposed that a workshop session be held with the Chair, Vice Chair, Group Spokespersons and any other Member of the Committee who would like to participate. Members would be notified of the arrangements for the workshop session once they had been formalised.

An update was also provided on previous and current scrutiny reviews.

Resolved – That the contents of the report be noted, including the arrangements for setting the Committee's work programme for the 2015/16 municipal year.