

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 26 March 2013

Present: Councillor J Hale (Chair)

Councillors P Brightmore S Whittingham
A Cox J Williamson
P Doughty P Gilchrist
S Hodrien

Deputies: Councillors S Mountney
J Salter

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

Members of the Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non pecuniary interests, in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, 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.

72 FILMING/RECORDING BY THE PUBLIC OF COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Further to legal advice given to Members by the Acting Director of Law, HR and Asset Management regarding the issue of filming Committee Meetings. The Chair indicated that this issue was currently under review and sought views from Members as to whether to allow filming of the meeting.

On a motion by Councillor Hale and duly seconded it was:

RESOLVED:

That members of the public be allowed to film/record at the committee meeting.

73 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 30 January 2013 and 14 February 2013, be approved as a correct record.

74 **REVENUE MONITORING 2012/13 - MONTH 10 (JANUARY 2013)**

The Cabinet considered the report the Interim Director of Finance setting out the revenue position for 2012/13 as at Month 10 (January 2013). The report identified the latest financial projections and prioritised the risks for ongoing management actions, to ensure any year end overspend was minimised.

Mr Peter Timmins, Interim Director of Finance introduced the report and indicated that discussions had been held with Cheshire West and Chester regarding shared services in particular around procurement.

In response to Members, Mr Timmins indicated that a detailed report would be taken to the Special Cabinet meeting on 18 April 2013 in relation to the Department of Adult Social Services and the Pension Fund outlining an action plan for improvement.

A budget book was to be circulated to Members at the end April outlining the budget to date. Training was also to be undertaken by Officers on Budget Management and information made available on the Council's website to assist them.

In relation to the budget position for the Department of Adult Social Services (DASS), Mr Timmins indicated that an Officer whose expertise was in DASS budgets had been employed and had put in place proposals to ensure savings and efficiency for the Department.

RESOLVED:

That Committee notes the report and in particular the progress made in reducing the projected overspend from circa £17 million to £7.6 million pounds.

75 **GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Director of Law, HR and Asset Management informing of the action taken in relation to changes to the Council's Gifts and Hospitality and Conflict of Interest policies and procedures following a report from the District Audit in September 2012.

On 14 February 2013, the Employment and Appointments Committee approved the revised policies and procedures.

In response to Members, Mr Tony Williams, Human Resources Manager indicated that regular communication would be undertaken with all staff to reinforce compliance; information would also be built in as part of the induction process and the distribution of regular key messages was high on HR's agenda. Information was

to be shared at Departmental meetings that a register is to be kept to monitor compliance.

Mr Williams indicated that any breach of the policies may lead to disciplinary action or dismissal; the individual may also be criminally liable. The new Policy was made very clear to all staff as to what their responsibilities were in relation to adhering to the Policies and following procedures.

Members commented that it should be the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Management Committee to monitor the non-compliances.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Audit & Risk management Committee be asked to give Gifts, Hospitality and Conflicts of Interest a high priority of risk and investigate the cases detailed within the report; and**
- (2) the report and the work undertaken since the Audit Report was produced in September be noted.**

76 **ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Director of Law, HR and Asset Management updating on the current Elected Member Development Programme and responded to specific questions that had been raised.

The report outlined the Improvement Plan which outlined a number of areas relating to Elected Member Development and the activity that had been taking place to work towards the achievements of these objectives.

Melissa Holt, Organisational Development Manager gave a brief update in relation to the accreditation for which criteria had to be followed for formal assessment in September 2013. Over 75% of Personal Development Plans had been completed which was to be followed by an assessment prior to completion and a collation of a portfolio of evidence.

In relation to Member attendance at training, Ms Holt indicated that she had been pleased with the progress made to date; attendance at courses was varied depending on what the Member had specified within their personal Development Plan and it was not the intention for all Members to attend all training events. Some of the session's i.e. key transformation session had been driven from the Chief Executive's key messages, Leaders and the Improvement Plan these had been well attended on occasion. Ms Holt indicated that the Department was currently trialling a reminder service to encourage more attendances at courses.

In relation to Priority 1 'Skills for Wirral Councillors' programme, Ms Holt indicated that this was a light touch on the LGA's National Leadership Academy Programme and was devised following a suggestion from the Improvement Board who were keen for the Council to devise a programme of training which reflected the needs of the Council.

Following discussion on the item Councillor Whittingham suggested an amendment to the recommendation and moved the following motion which was duly seconded.

‘There was a recognition that the role of the councillor in Wirral, and across the country was changing. These development programmes identify and help councillors manage that change

Feedback from this report showed that there was continued appetite amongst Members for their development, something which the take up figures of the PDP’s and attendance figure also show.

This Committee recommends that Council reaffirms its commitment to the training and support of elected members’

The Chair indicated that he did not support this Motion and commented that it was not recognised that the Councillor role was changing and that he did not accept the proposals to move services out of area in the form of Constituency Committees.

The Motion was put and carried.

RESOLVED: (6:4)

That there was a recognition that the role of the councillor in Wirral, and across the country was changing. These development programmes identify and help councillors manage that change

Feedback from this report showed that there was continued appetite amongst Members for their development, something which the take up figures of the PDP’s and attendance figure also show.

This Committee recommends that Council reaffirms its commitment to the training and support of elected members.

77 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan which had been published on the Council’s intranet/website. Members had been invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider, having regard to the work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

78 **REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair referred to the Committee's Work Programme and sought the views of Members as to whether any matters should be recommended for inclusion in the Work Programme of the Committee for the 2012/2013 municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted.
