

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 3 September 2014

Present: Councillor M McLaughlin (Chair)

Councillors	P Doughty	KJ Williams
	P Brightmore	J Williamson
	A Leech	T Anderson
	C Muspratt	W Clements
	W Smith	M Hornby
	M Sullivan	S Williams

12 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Blakeley and P Gilchrist.

13 **COUNCILLOR WALTER SMITH**

The Chair wished Councillor Smith Happy Birthday for the previous day.

14 **CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS) REGULATIONS 2012, INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS**

Councillor S Williams declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda Item 8 – Financial Monitoring Update as there was a reference to the scheme to rebuild Foxfield Special School and he was a governor at that school.

15 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 July 2014 and the Minutes of the Special meeting of the Committee held on 7 August 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

16 **FUTURE COUNCIL UPDATE**

The Chair informed that there had been a meeting held immediately before this meeting of the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Group Spokespersons of the four Policy and Performance Committees to discuss the Future Council initiative

and to consider options on how it could be scrutinised by the Committees. It had been proposed that the Committees adopt an approach of Task and Finish Groups to look in detail at the Budget Proposals and savings priorities etc. in the same way as the Policy and Performance Regeneration and Environment Committee had done during the previous year. Proposals had also been made on help needed and when and how often these Task and Finish Groups would meet. These proposals had been broadly agreed by the Members who had attended the meeting.

It was proposed that the suggestions to scrutinise the Future Council initiative would be considered by each of the Policy and Performance Committees during the next cycle of meetings that began next week.

A Member queried the secretarial support and backup that would be required for this important piece of work and was informed that it was the intention that the Scrutiny Support Officers would provide it.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) this Committee supports the proposals, set out above, as the approach to be adopted to scrutinise the Future Council initiative and the 2015/16 budget proposals etc.; and**
- (2) the notes of the meeting of 3 September 2014 held between the four Policy and Performance Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Group Spokespersons be circulated to all Members of these four Committees for information.**

17 **INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION PROGRESS REPORT**

The Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources introduced a report by the Head of Legal and Member Services which set out the progress made and tasks undertaken in implementing the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER) which had begun in June 2014. The Strategic Director drew out the key points as follows:

- The shift to IER involved transferring the registration process from the current property-based system to a new process whereby individuals were responsible for registering themselves. This process was being directed by the Cabinet Office with local authorities having to ensure compliance with a national implementation timetable. The work to transfer to the IER register was now formally underway towards a publication date of 1 December 2014.
- A scrutiny review had been completed in the autumn of 2013 which had considered the potential impact of IER on Wirral and the Council's preparedness for this transition. The outcome of this review was reported to the Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2014. (Minute

No. 30 refers.) It had been noted that the Council's test run in August 2013 for the transfer had been above the national average. One of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review was that this report be presented to the Committee so that it could monitor the IRR implementation process.

Members then asked a number of questions which were answered as appropriate by the Strategic Director. It was noted that:

- The onus was on the individual voter to register, it was not a household responsibility. Members could direct people to the Electoral Registration Section and One Stop Shops.
- People who were not on the Electoral Register would find it harder to obtain credit, so this could be seen as a motivator to register.
- There was some confusion over the question of opting out. Some Merseyside Local Authorities had slightly amended their documentation in the light of this but this was against the guidance provided by the Electoral Commission. The Council's present stance was that it did not intend to distribute any further clarification regarding this, in an attempt to avoid confusion.
- Considerable work had been carried out within the wards to identify those most at risk. In general terms they were in the most deprived wards. As a consequence, targeted actions had been agreed for these wards.
- Voters may have to make a positive decision to opt out of data being seen on the Register. The Strategic Director would check this out and inform all Committee Members of the outcome.
- Members of the Committee would receive a ward by ward progress update produced in chart format.
- Members of the Committee would each receive a copy of the Scrutiny Review Report which the Committee had produced in the previous year.
- Each of the Council's four Constituency Committees had received a report and asked questions on IER.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

18 **DECISION MAKING BY CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEES - A REPORT ON PROGRESS**

The Corporate Equality and Cohesion Manager introduced a report of the Head of Neighbourhoods and Engagement which detailed the progress made so far in respect of the decision-making process of the Council's four Constituency Committees that had been established in October 2013 and included Article 10 of the Council's Constitution – Constituency Committees.

The Committee noted that every Member of the Council was a member of one of the Constituency Committees, each Committee had co-opted a community representative(s) as a member(s) without voting rights and each one was evolving in a different way and had produced a detailed handbook on how it operated. The Committees met on a quarterly basis, in the presence of the press and public. The purpose of these new Committees was to further empower Members, as leaders of their communities, to maximise public resources in their local areas and increase community resilience within neighbourhoods to encourage greater independence.

It was expected that the implementation of the Council's Future Council programme would result in the devolution of more decision-making to Constituency Committees wherever it made sense to do so. Members would further inspire communities to come together to uncover the right solutions to address local need and improve residents' quality of life. They would deliver this role through leading on the development and delivery of Constituency Plans and by identifying the main priorities for improvement in the Constituency area. The aim was for the Committees to eventually be able to commission services and activities with devolved Constituency Budgets in accordance with the Council's new Commissioning Strategy which was in the process of being developed. It was considered that this approach would not just deliver more cost effective services. It would also deliver better outcomes for local residents.

The Committee was informed that Priority Task and Finish Groups (consisting of both Elected Members and Co-optees) had been established by the Constituency Committees to prioritise budget expenditure and in accordance with any set criteria.

Members noted that it was intended that each Constituency Committee would present an annual report capturing its key achievements etc. to the Council.

Members then asked a number of issues which were responded to as appropriate by the Corporate Equality and Cohesion Manager. It was noted that:

- The report did not address decisions and delegated decisions.
- The Public Service Board had been established to look at how services could work together to deliver the best outcomes for residents. Its membership included Chief Officers from across the public service areas who were the strategic drivers. There were also Local Public Service Boards attended by Neighbourhood Officers, Constituency Managers and representatives from Police, Fire, Magenta Living etc. They discussed their priorities, how to share resources and looked at collaborative working to resolve resident's issues. These were not public meetings but it was considered that it would be helpful for Members to know what was being discussed.

- The Constituency Committees were looking at Neighbourhood Plans and needed to “join up work with the Planning Team”.
- Initially the Council’s Constitution states that the Constituency Committees may refer recommendations back to the Executive.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress of the decision-making process of Constituency Committees be noted; and**
- (2) the Committee will now undertake a short piece of work in relation to decision-making including delegated decisions.**

19 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources introduced a report by the Director of Public Health and Head of Policy and Performance which updated the Committee in relation to the current performance of the Council against the delivery of the Corporate Plan as at 31 July 2014. The report translated the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan into a coherent and measurable set of performance outcome measures and targets. Members were invited to consider the detail and highlight any issues. Appendix 1 to the report contained the Corporate Plan Performance Report (31 July 2014/15).

The Committee was aware that Corporate Plan performance was monitored on a monthly basis against the parameters agreed as part of the business planning process (e.g. RAG tolerance levels). Some indicators were only available on a quarterly basis, in line with the availability of data. Heads of Service responsible for the delivery of targets must complete an exception report and delivery plan for all indicators which were under performing (e.g. red RAG rated indicators).

Members noted Appendix 2 to the report which contained the Exception Report/Action Plan for NHS Health Checks – Take up and Appendix 3 which contained the Exceptions Report/Action Plan for Performance Appraisals completed.

As the Head of Public Health was not in attendance at the meeting the Strategic Director offered to obtain full responses to any issues raised and relay them back to Members.

Members then asked a number of issues which were answered as appropriate by the Strategic Director. It was noted that:

- The Council had failed to meet its target in respect of Performance Appraisal but there had been an improvement in recent months. The Chief Executive had sent out a note that day to remind Senior Officers

of their obligations to meet the target set and provide staff with the correct level of support. Allowances needed to be made for seasonal workers but overall there was room for considerable improvement.

- Performance Appraisals were not being used as any kind of indicator that people should be either in or out of work.
- The staff were not avoiding Performance Appraisals not meeting the target was because of other work pressures
- Officers would provide a response to questions about Health Checks including how these were funded, why performance information from GPs was not comprehensive and why checks were not available from other health providers.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the contents of the report be noted; and

(2) the Strategic Director – Transformation and Resources be requested to circulate a response to the questions about the Public Health Exception Report on Health Checks.

20 **FINANCIAL MONITORING UPDATE**

The Chief Accountant introduced a report which had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 7 July 2014. The report detailed the Monitoring position for Month 2 (ending 31 May 2014) and attached to it were two separate Appendices for Revenue and Capital.

The Chair informed the Committee that, as part of the report was now subject to a call-in and there would be a meeting of this Committee on 18 September 2014 to consider the called in key decision, she would not be allowing any Members' questions on Public Health Spend.

The Committee then considered Appendix A to the report on Revenue and the Chief Accountant answered Members' questions as appropriate. Issues raised included:

- The legislation change in respect of carbon reduction.
- Ongoing work had continued to improve debt collection and resolve outstanding debts and currently the balance outstanding was £22,054,513 compared to last year which at the end of May 2013 was £26,461,856. This reduction was very pleasing.
- There was £11m of old debt.
- The suggested growth reductions were pretty good.

The Committee then considered Appendix B to the report on Capital and a Member asked who paid GPs to carry out health checks? The Chief Accountant undertook to find out and inform all Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report and its Appendices be noted.

21 **WORK PROGRAMME REPORT**

A report by the Chair of the Committee updated Members on progress made in delivering its Work Programme and the wider Scrutiny Work Programme including the activities of the other three Policy and Performance Committees.

Members were reminded that at its meeting held on 2 July 2014 the Committee had agreed that the Chair, Vice- Chair and Group Spokespersons would meet to discuss potential items for its Work Programme. (Minute No. 4 refers.) This approach had also been adopted by the other three Policy and Performance Committees. It had also been acknowledged that, in the short term, Member and officer capacity should be retained for the scrutiny of the Council's budget options arising from the Future Council Programme. Following this Members should consider reviews around Constituency Committee Decision Making (elsewhere on the agenda) and Cumulative Impact Policy.

The Committee was informed that this meeting had taken place on 17 July 2014 and as well as discussing potential items for its Work Programme had reviewed items that were proposed/outstanding from the previous Municipal Year. A summary of the main points arising from the discussion was set out in the report.

Subsequently, it had been proposed that the following items outstanding from last year could be covered either at Committee meetings or through a single 'workshop' session later in the Municipal Year:

- Review the content of the wider Scrutiny Work Programme;
- Quality Assurance of previous Scrutiny Reviews to promote good practice; and
- Review the consistency of developing recommendations arising from Reviews.

It had also been proposed that a further outstanding item from last year, to review the implementation and impact of Universal Credit should be deferred in line with the implementation timetable. It had been suggested that any review under this heading might better come under the remit of the Transformation and Resources Committee.

Further Work Programme meetings had been scheduled with the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Group Spokespersons of the other three Policy and Performance Committees and it was intended that the feedback from these meetings would be reported to each Committee in the next cycle of meetings

in order that Work Programmes could be approved. As these meetings were after this Committee's meeting it was not possible to take a collective overview of the wider Work Programme now. It was, therefore, proposed that this review be undertaken by the Chair, Vice-Chair and Group Spokespersons of this Committee at their next meeting.

To ensure that the Committee was able to reflect on any emerging topics or activity proposed by the other Policy and Performance Committees, it was further proposed that the remaining two Committee meetings of the Municipal Year (in January and April) be re-scheduled to come last in those two cycles of Policy and Performance meetings. It was anticipated that this would allow the Committee to take a more reflective overview in co-ordinating the wider scrutiny programme.

The Committee noted that outstanding recommendations from its previous scrutiny reviews were limited to those from the review into the Council's preparation for Individual Electoral Registration (IER) reported to it in January. The transfer to IER had been included on the agendas of the recent cycle of Constituency Committee meetings to ensure borough wide promotion of this change to arrangements for electoral registration. Also, in line with a further recommendation of that Scrutiny Review, a report on progress implementing IER was included as an item elsewhere on this agenda. (Minute No. 17 refers.)

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposals set out above in respect of the Committee's Work Programme be agreed;**
- (2) the proposal to re-schedule the Committee's meetings later in the Municipal Year to follow the meetings of the other three Policy and Performance Committee meetings be agreed; and**
- (3) the Committee notes the progress made to date on the development of the Council's Constituency Committees but would like to examine the issue of decision-making and future planning in more detail and will, therefore, add it to its Work Programme for consideration by a Task and Finish Group.**