

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE - TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 22 March 2016

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Williamson (Chair)	
	Councillors	P Doughty C Muspratt M Patrick J Salter J Walsh	A Sykes T Anderson B Berry T Pilgrim
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	A Leech (In place of B Kenny) D Realey (In place of S Foulkes) G Ellis (In place of L Fraser)	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillor	R Gregson	

36 MINUTE'S SILENCE

The Chair referred to the terrorist attacks in Brussels earlier that day and the Committee stood for a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of those who had lost their lives.

37 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.

Councillor Anita Leech declared a personal interest in agenda item 3, 'Community Safety Partnership', by virtue of her being Chair and fundraiser for the Freedom Programme, a domestic violence programme for women.

38 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee meeting held on 1 February, 2016.

Resolved –That the minutes of the meeting of 1 February, 2016 be approved.

39 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS - NOTICE OF MOTION - SEEKING FAIRNESS IN PURCHASING**

The Chair had agreed to this item as a matter of urgent business to enable its consideration prior to the new municipal year. It was also agreed that the item be considered first in view of the presence of Councillor Brighthouse for this motion.

The Head of Legal and Member Services reported that at the meeting of the Council held on 14 March 2016 (minute 119 refers), the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Pat Williams and seconded by Councillor Alan Brighthouse was referred by the Mayor to this Committee for consideration –

SEEKING FAIRNESS IN PURCHASING

Council notes that Wirral's Procurement Strategy was last refreshed in April 2011. At that time, this ensured environmental and sustainability considerations were included, along with a partnership approach. Council believes it is time for this Strategy to be reviewed to formally recognise the changes in legislation and practices since then with a view to enshrining ethical and social issues.

Council notes that:

- corporate tax evasion and tax avoidance are now matters of public interest and concern, not only at national level but also internationally.
- corporate tax evasion and avoidance are having a damaging impact, not just on public services in well-established economies but also on the world's poorest countries. The loss to the latter has been assessed as being higher than they receive in aid.

Council further notes:

- that the UK Government has taken steps to tackle the issue of tax avoidance and evasion by issuing Procurement Policy Note 03/14, applying to all central government contracts worth more than £5m.
- the availability of independent means of verifying tax compliance, such as the Fair Tax Mark.

Council understands that, in early 2015, new regulations required public bodies, including Councils, to ask procurement qualification questions of all companies for tenders over £173,000 for service contracts and £4m for works contracts. However, these questions are not as detailed as the Procurement

Policy Note 'Measures to Promote Tax Compliance' (PPN 03/14) issued in February 2014.

Council believes that it is now reasonable to require bidders for Council contracts to self-certify that they are fully tax-compliant in line with central government practice using the standards in PPN 03/14 rather than lower standards.

Council asks officers to report to the Transformation & Resources Policy and Performance Committee and Cabinet to investigate whether and how this policy could be effectively included in the Council's Procurement Procedures, taking into account the need not to unfairly prejudice small businesses.

In accordance with Standing Order 7 (6), Councillor Brighthouse had been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to be given an opportunity to explain the Motion.

Councillor Brighthouse elaborated on the motion and stated that the policy being suggested would be fairly easy for the Council to adopt.

The Head of Financial Services informed the meeting that the Contract Procedure Rules had been updated at the Audit and Risk Management Committee in November, 2015 and would become effective on 1 April, 2016. He also advised that the tender process included procurement qualification questions relating to tax compliance. The Procurement Strategy, which had not been updated since 2011, would be reviewed this year and the suggestions made in the Notice of Motion would be reflected in the updated Strategy.

The Chair asked that the Committee be updated once the Strategy had been revised.

Resolved – That this Committee receive an update once the Procurement Strategy has been updated later in the year.

40 **CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE REPORT**

The Change Programme Manager presented a report on the work being undertaken to review the council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and identify future requirements that would align with Wirral's 2020 Vision.

A 'soft market testing' exercise had been undertaken and 10 shortlisted suppliers had presented their solutions to 100 plus stakeholders.

Core stakeholders were currently reviewing the information supplied during the presentations; feedback would be provided by wider stakeholders and

engagement with other local authorities who had recently implemented a similar approach. This process was expected to be complete by the end of March 2016. This would then inform a revised and comprehensive specification that would be shared again with wider stakeholders for feedback before approval by senior leadership team and members.

The expectation was that, in order to fulfil this specification and meet future business needs, a procurement process would invite prospective suppliers (not limited to previously shortlisted SMT suppliers) to submit tenders stating how their solutions would meet these clearly defined requirements. The invitation to tender document was expected to be ready for publishing on the NW procurement portal by April 2016.

The core panel would then be responsible for reviewing / shortlisting and selecting a successful bidder who would engage with the council to confirm an agreed implementation schedule, within the terms laid out in the specification.

Responding to comments from Members, the Change Programme Manager made a number of points, including:

- There would be flexibility in the user interface which would be easy to use with drop down boxes and tick boxes. There would also be an option to add text as the form could not cover all eventualities.
- Users would not have to repeat all their details each time.
- The review of the system did recognise that the current self-serve channels were not fit for purpose.
- Self-serve facilities were available in One Stop Shops and libraries for those who didn't have their own computers or connected devices.
- The growth in the use of smartphones / tablets was continuing to rise, which further enabled the targeting of more expensive mediation services at One Stop Shops towards those customers who did not have access to the internet.
- The issues of data protection were covered in the specification.
- The project would go out to tender in April and the specification was currently being refined, some input had been received from Members.

Whilst the report focussed on the IT system and the technology, a number of the questions from Members related to customer engagement and services provided to people contacting the Council. It was suggested that the project should be put on the work programme as a priority and that the Transaction Centre Senior Manager attend the next meeting of the Committee and provide an update on customer contact / customer engagement.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the CRM development be placed on the Work Programme.

(3) That an update report be provided to the next meeting on customer contact / engagement with the Transaction Centre Senior Manager in attendance.

41 **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

The Head of Corporate and Community Safety presented a report which outlined Wirral's statutory requirement for a Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and provided the committee with an update on the arrangements and the priorities set by Wirral Community Safety Partnership for 2016/17.

The report also highlighted the progress made to date in the delivery of 2 of the 20 pledges within Wirral's 2020 Vision, these being:

- Ensuring Wirral's neighbourhoods are safe.
- Zero tolerance to Domestic Abuse

The current public sector austerity measures had meant that a number of partner organisations had undertaken restructuring of their services and this had resulted in the CSP needing to collaborate even further than it had done so already. It would be a priority to identify and implement new delivery models where the Police had clear operational control for all the community safety resources across Wirral. This would result in the police having the authority to commit and deploy other agencies' resources to areas of need.

To achieve and deliver the new priorities a new structure model for the CSP would be presented.

Responding to comments from Members, the Head of Corporate and Community Safety made a number of points, including:

- The Council was legally obliged to produce an Annual Statement on what had been achieved on the CSP priorities and this was published on the Council website.
- He would provide a definition in writing of two of the targets set for 2015/16, Primary Fires and Secondary Fires.
- The targets were owned by Merseyside Police and were therefore Merseyside wide but there would be performance management indicators attached to the Council's own 2020 pledges.
- With regard to comparative data, the Wirral Basic Command Unit did compare favourably to other areas, although some statistics might show higher figures for certain crimes such as domestic abuse, because of more effective systems of reporting and support arrangements in Wirral.
- He agreed that there was a need for greater co-operation between partner agencies to deliver and achieve the CSPs priorities.

Resolved –

- (1) That the content of the report and the progress made in the delivery of the two 2020 pledges, be noted**
- (2) That this Committee recommends to Cabinet the 2016/17 priorities set by the Community Safety Partnership.**

42 **2015/16 QUARTER 3 DIRECTORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Head of Financial Services presented a report which outlined the quarter 3 (October to December 2015) performance against the Directorate Plan for 2015/16.

Whilst the Corporate Plan 2015/16 (and supporting Directorate Plans) had been superseded by the Wirral Plan 2020 Vision, they still formed the basis of the in-year performance management framework. A new Performance Management Framework would be developed for the Wirral Plan once the associated delivery plan had been finalised.

Of the 19 reportable indicators, 12 were rated Green, 2 were rated Amber and 5 were rated Red. For indicators rated Amber and Red, the responsible officer had indicated the corrective action being put in place to get performance back on track. The five measures rated red were:

- Percentage of Performance Appraisals (PAs) completed by September 2015 (TRCP03)
- Sickness absence: the number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness absence (TRCP04)
- Percentage of client finance recovered by end of month following billing (TRDP13)
- Percentage spend allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment (TRDP16)
- Percentage grant income achieved (TRDP24)

He gave details of the current status of the red indicators and how the issues were being addressed.

Responding to Members' comments, the Head of Financial Services made a number of points, including:

- The decision whether a target was amber or red was purely based on the percentage variance and the commentary identified the actions and how the indicator had performed previously.
- He would pursue with the Transaction Centre how the flaws in the data collection in respect of the 'Local SME suppliers paid within 10 days' could be addressed. He was not aware of any complaints with regard to local

SME suppliers being paid within 10 days and would ask the Transaction Centre to clarify this.

- With regard to TRDP24 and the grant for Housing Benefit spend which was in the order of £140 million he outlined the critical thresholds and how these affected the rates of subsidy from the Government.
- With the 'projected delivery of Council budget savings' indicator it was not feasible to set interim targets as some savings could be delivered immediately whereas some occurred throughout the year. There were approximately 70 different saving headings monitored on a monthly basis.
- With regard to the 'identification of fraud and error' indicator this was requested by the Department for Work and Pensions but not analysed further. He would ask that a breakdown distinguishing between the two be provided by the Transaction Centre.
- In respect of the changes to Business Rates by 2020 a series of consultations would be undertaken by the Government during 2016. The Government had advised that local authorities would be compensated for the loss of income through recent Government announcements up to 2020. In respect of earlier compensation through Section 31 Grants the precise details were awaited.
- By 2020 all Councils would only have income from Council Tax and the 100% Retention of Business Rates. The Liverpool City Region had been selected as one of the pilot areas for the Retention scheme and this would be a chance to influence the Government as to what would happen after 2020.
- In respect of Performance Appraisals, all staff did complete a 'self-assessment' form prior to their one-to-one with their line manager.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

43 **FINANCIAL MONITORING 2015/16 QUARTER 3**

The Head of Financial Services introduced a report which set out financial monitoring information in respect of the quarter 3 (October to December 2015) budget performance for the Transformation and Resources Directorate.

In respect of the Revenue Budget, the Transformation and Resources Directorate was projecting an underspend of £3.45m, as at 31 December 2015. The Directorate 2015/16 Capital Programme budget was £7.3 million with £3.6 million expended at the end of quarter 3.

Responding to comments from Members, the Head of Financial Services commented that the disposal and change of use of the former Rock Ferry High School was with the Secretary of State for Education as her permission was needed for any change of use of former school playing fields.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

44 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

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

She reported that the Freedom of Information Task and Finish Scrutiny Review had been delayed mainly due to Members' availability but would resume at the beginning of the next municipal year.

Although the budget option around the Library service had been put on hold pending a review of Library service delivery options it was suggested that the item remain on the work programme and that there was a need for a library strategy.

Resolved –That with the addition of an item on the Customer Relationship Management System, the work programme be approved.

45 **VOTE OF THANKS**

The Chair thanked all the Members of the Committee for their work over the past municipal year and the officers who had supported the Committee in its work. She also particularly thanked Councillor John Salter who would not be standing for re-election and wished him well in his retirement from the Council.