

Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 21 June 2017

Attendance

Members of the Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Andrew Wynne (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Louise Miles (Chair)
Cllr Udey Singh
Cllr Ian Brookfield
Cllr Craig Collingswood

Employees

Colin Parr	Head of Governance
Denise Pearce	Head of Human Resources
Arif Sain	Head of Equalities
Neil White	Scrutiny Officer
Philippa Salmon	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Simkins.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest submitted.
- 3 Minutes of previous meeting**
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 March 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4 Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

The Chair invited Panel members to share thoughts on the work programme for the year and invited Councillors to come forward with any proposals for agenda items. Possible items discussed included:

- The budget – the process of budget setting, identifying any trends or issues
- Monitoring of the delivery of the budget throughout the year, including receiving the regular treasury and capital reports along with budget analysis
- The consultation process, with specific regards to the budget
- Workforce plans and succession planning
- The evolving role of the Council as an enabler rather than a provider
- Commissioning and the role of the Compliance Officer

In response to a question, the Head of Governance, clarified that the advice for Scrutiny Panel agendas to consist of two items was not a restriction but was intended to allow for more policy development through in-depth scrutiny. This advice was flexible and could be adapted depending on the needs of the Panels.

Councillors raised concerns that regular monitoring reports would not fit within this recommendation. The Head of Governance reminded Councillors of the web library, which had been set up to free agendas of information only items. Councillors would be automatically notified when papers were uploaded on to the library and items relating to the Panel had recently been added. It was suggested that an information only section of the agenda could identify these papers and remind Councillors which papers had been uploaded since their last meeting.

Resolved that:

1. an update on the succession planning review group be presented at the next meeting, and
2. the link to the recent item on Equality in Employment Medical Capability dismissals uploaded to the web library be recirculated to the Panel members.

5 **Equality Framework for Local Government**

Arif Sain, Head of Equalities, updated the Panel on the Equality Peer Challenge Report for the City of Wolverhampton Council.

The Head of Equalities informed the Panel that as recently as 14 months ago, the Council had not been in the Equalities Framework for Local Government. The latest inspection in April 2017, where the Council had been awarded 'Achieving' status, illustrated the progress that had been made.

The Panel congratulated the Equalities team on the impressive progress that had been made. Councillors commented that the list of strengths was extensive and much larger than the areas for consideration, with the praise for the Customer Services team well deserved.

The Panel's expressed concerns over the number of officers who were disclosing whether or not they had a disability. The Head of Human Resources confirmed that a campaign to raise awareness and identify disabilities was underway and that a briefing note would be circulated to members on how the Council compared nationally on the disclosure rate of staff declaring their disability.

Following questions, the Head of Equalities confirmed that the team was fully resourced to aim for 'Excellent' status and that no barriers to equalities had been encountered in management structures.

Resolved that:

1. the Equalities Team be congratulated on reaching 'Achieving' status in the Equality Framework for Local Government, and
2. further information be provided to show how the Council compared nationally in disability disclosure rates.

6 **Equality in Employment Monitoring Report 2016/17**

Denise Pearce, Head of Human Resources, presented the annual Equality in Employment Monitoring report, which complied with the requirement for public bodies to publish information demonstrating compliance with the Public-Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011.

The Head of Human Resources advised that significant improvements had been made to the collection of data, which ensured that the analysis presented was as up to date as possible. The data and statistics in the report were correct as of the end of March 2017. The action plan appended to the report had also been presented to the Equalities Advisory Group who had approved the action plan with small amendments.

The Head of Human Resources advised that collection of the data was the biggest issue as some employees were reluctant to disclose the information required. Different methods were being rolled out to generate a higher level of return.

The Panel queried the graphs included in the report and the Head of Human Resources advised that the table on page 35 of the report was incorrect and that an updated version would be circulated to the Panel members.

The Panel sought clarification on the reasons why 8 out of the 10 grievances recorded in 2015/16 were from female members of staff. The Panel requested that further examination of this be undertaken to assess whether there were significant similarities or trends being identified that needed to be addressed. The Head of Human Resources undertook to provide the Panel with a briefing note on this issue.

The Head of Human Resources stated that the grievance process was under review to ensure that it protected staff. The percentage of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) staff involved in disciplinary and grievance process was disproportionately high and further analysis was being undertaken to investigate the reasons for this. The Panel suggested that opportunities to shadow or mentor colleagues for BAME members of staff may help to reduce these figures.

Resolved that:

1. an amended page 35 of the report be circulated to the Panel members, and
2. the Panel be provided with a briefing note on the 10 recorded grievances, outlining any significant similarities or trends.