



Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Minutes – 10 October 2013

Attendance

Members of the Panel

Cllr Rita Potter (chair)
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Jasbinder Kaur Dehar
Cllr Paul Singh
Cllr Mrs Wendy Thompson
Cllr Martin Waite

Cabinet Member

Cllr Paul Sweet

Employees

Keith Ireland	Strategic Director, Delivery
Alistair Merrick	Assistant Director, Central Services
Sam Axtell	Consultation and Community Involvement Officer
Anthony Concannon	Resilience Manager
Sue Davies	Chief Human Resources Officer
Peter Oakeshott	Head of Procurement
Deb Breedon	Scrutiny Officer

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Jasbir Jaspal, Milkinder Jaspal, Sweetman and Cllr Zahid Hussain Shah.

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 2. Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest received
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting (5 September 2013)**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2013/14**

Deb Breedon provided the panel with an update of the 2013-14 work programme.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. **Resilience Project – End of Project Report**

Anthony Concannon provided an update on the outcomes from the resilience project and the new resilience team structure. He indicated that a great deal had been achieved in the period between June 2012 to August 2013 to enhance resilience to incidents and emergencies. In response to questions he said that there was still work to be done to deliver the following plans:

- Council incident Room Plan (approx. 60% complete expected to be complete by the year end)
- Temporary Mortuary Plan (approx. 50% complete there is a need to identify temporary mortuary sites, this work has started)
- Recovery Plan (approx. 80% complete their plan involves key members from around the Council)

Panel were advised that the recent Mosque incident in Wolverhampton had been the first to test the major response plan. Whilst some areas were considered to have room for improvement the overall response was well coordinated and a structured debrief was held afterwards to capture lessons learnt.

Alistair Merrick advised that the costs of the project had overrun slightly but reassured the Panel that in order to rewrite the plans the work had been necessary.

Cllr Rita Potter congratulated Anthony Concannon for the work he had undertaken and delivered in relation to the review and development of the Resilience Team and echoed Panel comments that this is really positive progress and a great improvement on previous arrangements.

Resolved:

1. That Panel welcomes the outcomes of the Resilience Project, particularly the development of the Resilience Team and the governance structure for resilience in the future
2. The Panel agree to have oversight of the governance process for the Resilience Work Programme

7. **Leadership – Health and Safety Duties and Responsibilities**

Alistair Merrick provided a report to clarify senior management responsibilities for health and wellbeing under current legislation and to seek endorsement for the development of a health and wellbeing strategy. He referred to appendix 2 of the report: Health and Safety Compliance Audits, highlighting where health and safety audits have been carried out in the last three years and the need to revisit roles and responsibilities of managers and employees. Panel members voiced concerns that several key business units have not conducted compliance audits in recent years and that there was confusion about roles in relation to health and safety.

The Chair welcomed the development of the health and wellbeing strategy as an important step forward to focus on the roles and responsibilities. Cllr Paul Singh requested progress reports to future meetings and Alistair Merrick advised that the Health and Well Being Strategy will be submitted for pre-decision scrutiny at the relevant time.

Resolved:

1. That Scrutiny Panel endorse the proposed development and implementation of a health and wellbeing strategy to establish a clear vision for the future development of health and wellbeing policies, procedures and measures in the Council to ensure the full discharge of senior management responsibilities.
2. That further reports are included in the Scrutiny Panel Work Programme to monitor development of the health and wellbeing strategy and to carry out pre-decision scrutiny at the relevant time.

8. **Employee Volunteering Scheme**

Sam Axtell provided a report which presented a proposal on an employee volunteering scheme. The scheme originated from the Office of the Chief Executive to support community activities, as part of the City Strategy priority on developing self-reliant communities. She highlighted that employee volunteering was not compulsory, authorisation of time off was at the discretion of management and that it should be considered in its widest context, in particular that this is beneficial to employee development and is a great way to demonstrate leadership in communities.

Cllr Thompson voiced concerns that consideration of the scheme seemed untimely with a thousand job losses recently being announced giving two days off to remaining employees to volunteer seemed unfair, may incur cost to the Council and could put additional pressure on employees backfilling posts. She indicated that many employees already gave their time voluntarily out of working hours. She felt that the scheme was the wrong way around

and that a volunteering initiative should be resident driven. Cllr Paul Singh commented on the value of community engagement but felt that it would have been timelier a few years ago; he urged that taking the scheme forward is handled sensitively.

The Cabinet Member, Cllr Paul Sweet, welcomed the scheme coming to the table for scrutiny at this time, he indicated that the Council has to seek to assure and invest in employees particularly at a time when a thousand jobs are being lost. He affirmed that the employee volunteering scheme is about the wider benefits of the scheme such as intelligence gathering, employee development and reassurance of employees and communities and he clarified that employees would not be compelled to participate but that the organisation anticipate mutual benefits of enabling volunteering in communities. He suggested that schools should also be encouraged to take part in the scheme.

Other councillors also welcomed the scheme; Cllr Martin Waite gave an example of his experience of a similar scheme and relayed how the volunteers carrying out neighbourhood renovation, such as tidying gardens in conjunction with Marie Curie Cancer Charity had demonstrated the positive affect on morale for the employees, the organisation and the community and how employee engagement had increased and voluntary work carried on even after employees were made redundant. Cllr Alan Bolshaw recognised the links to corporate priorities and felt this was a very worthy scheme. He urged the panel not to deny communities access to volunteers skills, the volunteers opportunity to develop their skills and to consider the wider benefits for the community.

Resolved:

1. That Panel agree in principal the proposed employee volunteering scheme for Wolverhampton City Council and that comments made by the Panel are taken into account.
2. That a report is presented to a future meeting to consider progress of the Employee Volunteering Scheme.

9. **HR Improvement plan and policy framework phases 4 and 5**

Sue Davies presented an update on the general progress made on the work streams within the HR improvement plan with specific focus on the next phase of work on the HR policy framework in order to accommodate policy revisions required for the successful implementation of the HR service as part of the FutureWorks programme. During the presentation she advised Panel that there was some tweaking and a slight adjustment to be made to the timetable.

Resolved:

That Panel welcome the progress being made on delivering the work streams with HR improvement plan and endorse the revised policy framework work programme.

10. **FutureWorks – Training Strategy**

Keith Ireland provided an update report about the approach being taken when preparing to train users in the new systems and processes that are to be implemented in April 2014 through the FutureWorks programme.

Panel welcomed the progress being made and the approach to effective user training being developed in conjunction with Agilisys. Cllr Waite asked if Agresso users have an online user forum for businesses and Local Authorities to access, he felt that this would be of use to councillors and employees, especially in the early stages of transition to Agresso. Peter Oakeshott confirmed that the interface was available and that this was possible.

Resolved:

That the FutureWorks Training Strategy be endorsed and comments from the panel are feedback to the programme team.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

11. **Exclusion of press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act set out below:

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Applicable paragraph</i>
12	Introduction of the Corporate Landlord Model for the Future Strategic and Operational Management of the Council's Land and Property Assets	3
13	Bailiff Services	3

Part 2 – exempt items, closed to the press and public

12. **Introduction of the Corporate Landlord Model for the Future Strategic and Operational Management of the Council's Land and Property Assets**

Alistair Merrick provided a comprehensive report to seek endorsement for the introduction of the Corporate Landlord Model (CLM) as the organisational model for the future strategic and operational management of all of the Council's land and property assets.

Panel welcomed the work done to develop the Corporate Landlord Model (CLM) and acknowledged there is still work to be done to refine the CLM before its introduction.

Resolved:

1. That the Corporate Landlord Model be endorsed by the Scrutiny Panel
2. The Panel endorse the proposed strategic asset review of the Council's land and property holdings to ensure a better alignment to Council strategic priorities as determined but the Corporate Plan to drive out any further efficiencies.

13. **Bailiff Services**

Peter Oakeshott delivered a report setting out the Council's current position with regard to contractual provision for bailiff services to collect unpaid Council Tax and Non-Domestic rates.

Panel considered the report with emphasis on the implications outlined in the report. The debate focussed on the emphasis on quality in the tender process, the impact of bailiff services on individuals and families when collecting unpaid Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates and the need to balance the impact of delaying any contract on this Council and other Black Country Local Authorities who have participated in the tender process.

Panel felt that there was a wider piece of work to be done by scrutiny relating to 'Debt in the City'.

Resolved:

1. That the panel endorse the contractual provisions for the bailiff services to collect unpaid Council Tax and Non-Domestic rates.
2. That panel note the item has been considered as pre-decision scrutiny and will therefore not be available to call-in once a decision is made by the Executive.

Meeting terminated 19:20pm