



Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Minutes – 6 March 2014

Attendance

Members of the Panel

Cllr Rita Potter (chair)
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Zahid Hussain Shah
Cllr Paul Singh
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Mrs Wendy Thompson
Cllr Martin Waite

Cabinet Member

Cllr Paul Sweet

Employees

Keith Ireland	Strategic Director, Delivery
Sue Davies	Head of Human Resources
Mark Taylor	Assistant Director, Finance
Alistair Merrick	Assistant Director, Corporate
Deb Breedon	Scrutiny Officer

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jasbinder Kaur Dehar, Cllr Jasbir Jaspal and Cllr Milkinder Jaspal

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

Chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Members and Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting (23 January 2014)**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair as a true record.

4. **Matters arising**

With regard to item 6- Equalities work programme update councillors asked if the take up of training on-line had picked up and were advised that recent figures were not available at the meeting but could be circulated.

Resolved:

That an update on equalities training numbers be circulated to panel members.

5. **Work Programme 2013-14**

Deb Breedon provided a report which enabled review and development of the work programme for Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel.

Concerns were voiced about the delays to the options report about the future use of the Parkfields site and panel were advised that the options were currently being worked through and that it is expected Cabinet will receive a report in April.

The knock on effect of the delays to the work programme are that the Civic Centre work group will not meet until the new municipal year

Resolved:

1. That the work programme is noted.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. **Human Resource (HR) Policy Phase 4**

Sue Davies presented the update report on the HR policies, with focus on the phase 4 policies:

- Probation
- Capability (revised)

In response to questions she advised that that there has not previously been a Probation Policy. Managers had previously defaulted to the 'green book' for guidance which has resulted in an inconsistent approach to probationary period across the Council and that this policy is about regularising it and integrating with aggro. She further advised that if the performance of an employee outside of the probation period is considered below standard the capability policy will be followed.

There followed a further period of questioning where the following responses were shared:

- Work load is not expected to double with reducing numbers of staff.
- There will be training and support to ensure people have the right skills.
- Probationary periods relate to new employees of the Council only.
- Probationers will be assessed as part of their appraisal.
- The policies will help identify abilities and talent.
- These policies support the recruitment process ensuring the right people are in the organisation.
- The right development is important with a smaller number of core staff.

The scrutiny panel considered succession planning and how talent will be managed in the organisation. Officers advised that employee appraisal will inform career choices.

Resolved:

1. To endorse in principle the new probation policy and revised capability policy, subject to the outcomes of ongoing consultation.
2. To keep the scrutiny panel informed about HR policy development.
3. To note that this item is being considered as pre-decision scrutiny and will therefore not be available to call-in once a decision is made by the Executive.

7. **Implementation of Customer Services Strategy**

Sue Handy provided an update on the progress made on the implementation of the Customer Services Strategy. There was some discussion about managing use of computers available to the public on the ground floor however the scrutiny panel was satisfied with the update.

Resolved:

1. To note the progresses made in relation to the implementation of the Customer Services Strategy.

8. **Budget and financial matters update**

Mark Taylor provided a report that informed the panel about the Council's finances that had recently been reported to the Cabinet and Cabinet (Resources) Panel.

It was considered that councillors may need more information about recent changes to business rates and the implications for the Council. Cllr Wendy Thompson suggested that some training be arranged for councillors and Mark Taylor indicated that he would be happy to facilitate the training.

Resolved:

1. Panel note the arrangements for ensuring adequate identification and management of budget risks Budget planning and forecasting for future years.
2. Panel recommend a training session for councillors is included in the Member Development programme relating to 'Business Rate Changes'

9. **Local Audit and Accountability Bill**

Peter Farrow provided a report which advised Panel of the implications arising from the Local Audit and Accountability Act. He advised that the Act intends to bring public sector in line with private sector organisations and that the Council will be responsible for the appointment of its own external auditors.

Cllr Wendy Thompson indicated that Wolverhampton Homes appoint its own auditors and that it would be logical to have a conversation how this is working and to consider options for the Council.

Resolved:

1. Panel agreed to note the implications of the Local Audit and Accountability Act and to give further consideration of the options for the procurement of external audit services once further detail is made available.

10. **Six month update on Resilience work programme**

Neil Rogerson provided a summary of the report highlighting the need to move forward meeting targets. Councillors welcomed the report.

Resolved:

- a) The panel agreed to review the actions on the Resilience Board's work plan.

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	Changes to Leave policy	4

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

12. **Changes to Leave Policy**

Keith Ireland advised the scrutiny panel that whilst at a meeting with trade unions earlier this week he had taken the unusual step of inviting representatives to attend this meeting due to the contentious nature of the report under consideration. He indicated that the Council is moving towards including trade union implications in all reports considered by councillors. Cllr Wendy Thompson recognised this as a good way forward. The Chair acknowledged the comments and invited the TU representatives to remain in the meeting and at the appropriate time she would invite them to address the scrutiny panel. She emphasised that this would not be part of the

consultation process.

Sue Davies outlined the proposals in the report relating to current leave arrangements:

- a) Removal of statutory leave day – Easter Tuesday to incorporate in baseline annual leave entitlement;
- b) Removal of additional days leave for full attendance;
- c) Removal of current facility for employees to take one full flexi leave day per four week period.

Sue Davis clarified the difference between what leave is part of the employee contract and what leave is a Council policy. There was a discussion about the consultation process so far and the need to have some more meaningful consultation about the changes to leave policies.

The discussion that followed gave recognition of the goodwill of staff and raised several suggested amendments and improvements to the proposals for further discussion during the consultation process.

Resolved:

1. Panel agreed to endorse in principle the proposed changes to leave policies with a proposed implementation date of 1 April 2014:
 - a) To remove the extra statutory days leave allocated to ‘Easter Tuesday’ and incorporate it into the employees’ baseline annual leave entitlement
 - b) To remove the current arrangement whereby employees with 100% attendance in a financial year are granted an additional day’s annual leave in the following financial year, whilst honouring one day for this current leave, year subject to further meaningful consultation
2. Panel agreed to endorse in principle the proposal to remove the current facility for employees on flexi-time to take up to one day’s flexi leave per four week period with effect from 1 September 2014 subject to meaningful consultation

The meeting ended at 19:45