



Scrutiny Board

Minutes - 27 January 2015

Attendance

Members of the Board

Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)
Cllr Barry Findlay (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Claire Darke
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Lorna McGregor
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Wendy Thompson

Employees

Sarah Campbell	Complaints Assistant
Peter Farrow	Head of Audit
Ian Fegan	Head of Communications
Adam Hadley	Scrutiny and Transparency Manager
Sue Handy	Head of Customer Service
Keith Ireland	Managing Director
Sue Martin	Head of Revenue and Benefits
Narinder Phagura	Strategic Risk Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Photay.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting (9 December 2014)**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4 Matters arising**

In relation to the quarter two performance report received at the last meeting, Sue Martin - Head of Revenue and Benefits - outlined an error made in the figures relating to the total debt collected in year.

- Incorrectly raised credit notes are of a small number and have not increased the money owed to the Council.
- There is £500,000 to £600,000 collected via direct debit per month; this amount has been consistent.
- There is a suite of reports available about debt collection.
- Of the £29 million of income received via Agresso to date, 0.45% (£130,000) requires allocating to the correct cost centre.
- As part of the external high level review of debt management short term focussed project is providing additional resource to the corporate debt management team.
- The Agresso team have received 1.5 days of face-to-face training on the programme.

Councillors questioned whether the audit company TDX had produced a report into the matter of debt recovery. An action plan is being developed based on their recommendations. Peter Farrow, Head of Audit, confirmed that a report into credit notes raised incorrectly will be presented to the next audit committee.

5 **Update on the Council's Risk Register**

The Head of Audit provided an update on the Council's Risk Register.

Councillor O' Neill identified several areas where scrutiny had taken place on risks in the register, these were:

- Looked after children - considered by the Board and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel.
- Skills 4 work - considered at the Employability and Skills Review, and the Skills Commission.
- Information Governance - scrutinised on quarterly basis by the Board.
- Medium term financial strategy - scrutinised by the Board and C3 Panel.
- Safeguarding - considered by Children and Young People Panel.
- Economic inclusion – improvements have been made due to credit union involvement.
- The Care Act – Councillors have received some training with future sessions planned. This has also been considered by the Board.
- School improvement - considered by Children and Young People Panel and scrutiny reviews.
- Futureworks - considered by Confident Capable Council Panel

Councillor O' Neill noted that business continuity hadn't been scrutinised by the Board. It was agreed for an update of this item to be brought to the Board at a later date.

Councillors also inquired about the specifics of a risk relating to equal pay claims, by questioning how the 'Abdullah type claim' could affect the authority. Kevin O'Keefe, Director of Governance, explained that equal pay claims, which would have been

prevented from proceeding in the Employment Tribunal because they were lodged too late, can proceed in the civil courts instead. For claimants, this means that they have up to six years to lodge a claim, from the date when they last received unequal pay to a comparator of the other sex carrying out equal work. Otherwise, they would have up to six months from termination of employment to lodge a claim in the Employment Tribunal. The Council is rarely affected by such claims.

Keith Ireland, Managing Director, updated the Board on the Agresso system by explaining that the old mainframe was being switched off in February 2015, and dismantled in March. The Managing Director explained that the Agresso system is now operational and for this reason is likely to be removed from the Risk Register within the next three months.

Councillor Simkins made a request for the Risk Register to be used to shape the work programme. The Board agreed for the Risk Register to be used at the work planning event in order to avoid duplication of work for the Panels. This was welcomed by Councillor Findlay and Brookfield.

Resolved:

- 1) To use the Risk Register to feed into the annual scrutiny planning report.
- 2) To receive an update on the Business Continuity risk.

6 **Welfare Reform Communications Progress Report**

Councillor Potter, who had chaired the scrutiny review, confirmed that the review aims had been achieved and praised those who had been involved. The report will be closed down.

Resolved:

- 1) That the tracking and monitoring of the recommendations made in the Welfare Reform Scrutiny Review be concluded.

7 **Complaints Report Quarter Two**

Sue Handy, Head of Customer Services, introduced the Complaints Report for quarter two and noted that since the last Confidential Capable Council Panel complaints by ward are now presented when reporting. The complaints report will be brought to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Councillor O'Neill questioned why the Community directorate managed its own complaint system. The Head of Customer Services explained that this is statutory function which is used to baseline the service area. Following questions, the Head of Customer Services stressed that complaints of a sensitive nature are managed properly to ensure confidentiality. The Board also queried how compliments are tracked. The Head of Customer Services explained that these are fed back to each area and also managed in a central hub.

Councillor Bolshaw queried how lessons are learnt from previous complaints. The Head of Customer Services informed the Board that if a complaint goes past stage two an evaluation report is created and sent to the service where it is reviewed with a view to improvement. Heads of service then decide how best to address the issues identified.

Councillor Findlay welcomed the report and sympathised with the difficulties of front line staff that don't have an immediate influence over policy. The Head of Customer Services reassured the Board that her team is able to tell when someone is making repeat complaints. She also added that further training developments for staff could be identified based on complaints made to the Council.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the updates.

8 **Update on Reviews and Inquiries 2014-15**

Adam Hadley, Scrutiny and Transparency Manager, provided a verbal update to the Board on the three scrutiny reviews for 2014-15:

- Infant Mortality
- Employability and Skills
- Chanel Shift

Cllr Darke, who is leading the Infant Mortality Review, informed the Board that the review group is going to a neo-natal unit on Friday 30 January. Further visits will follow in order to collect witness statements to inform recommendations, which will be made in March. Manipulation of statistical information was highlighted as an issue that needs further monitoring.

Councillor Angus updated the Board on the Employability and Skills Review and noted that the review group had met five times to date. The group will meet again on Thursday 29 January to sign off its recommendations after which it will be concluded. Keith Ireland, Managing Director, noted the positive feedback from officers working on the scrutiny review.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the updates.

9 **Work Programme**

Adam Hadley, Scrutiny and Transparency Manager, introduced the Work Programme and outlined the forthcoming agenda items for the Board and its Panels.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the work programme.