



Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 1 October 2014

Attendance

Members of the Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)
Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Andrew Wynne

Employees

Keith Ireland	Strategic Director, Delivery
Mark Taylor	Assistant Director, Finance
Sue Handy	Head of Customer Service
Lamour Gayle	Complaints Manager
Andrew Harvey	Graduate Management Trainee
Matt Vins	Graduate Management Trainee

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Jaspal and A Photay.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 Minutes of previous meeting**
That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to;
 - The deletion of 'and that work is continuing to identify a further £1.7 million of savings' from page 3, paragraph 1.
 - The deletion of 'reduce the numbers of council foster carers' from page 3, paragraph 4 and the substitution therefor of 'increase the numbers of Council foster carers'.

- The deletion of 'and use agency foster carers' from page 3, paragraph 4, and the substitution therefor of 'as opposed to using agency staff'.

4 **Matters arising**

Cllr M Jaspal referred to where he had previously requested a report on the Audit Investigation. He noted that it was the Panel, and not himself, which had agreed to receive the report.

Keith Ireland advised that the report had already been received by Audit Committee, and had been thoroughly scrutinised. As such, he offered to present it to Cllr M Jaspal, but indicated that it would not be brought to the Panel.

Resolved:

No further action.

5 **FutureWorks Progress Report**

Mark Taylor presented the report. He referred to paragraph 2.2, and indicated the complexity of installing the largest replacement IT system at the Council in recent years. He acknowledged there had been significant challenges with regards to payroll and payment, but advised the Panel that employees of the City of Wolverhampton Academy Trust, Woden Academy and Wolverhampton Homes had been paid through Agresso. He highlighted that the system was ready to pay Council staff in October, but noted that a few further checks would be made to ensure that risks were kept to a minimum. He explained that the Council was still working through a backlog of payments, with approximately 3,000 overdue, but indicated that around 2,000 were due to suppliers submitting an invoice with no order number. He advised that the Council was working with suppliers to avoid having to send these back and noted that the system had paid out over £150 million since 1 April.

Keith Ireland explained they had also developed a business continuity solution that would run a previous Bankers' Automated Clearing Services (BACS) file, which could be used to pay people in case of any issues. He advised the Panel that the system was working well, and that a lot of the teething issues had arisen due to people needing to adapt. He indicated that a significant number of incomplete orders were sitting in managers' inboxes. He explained that extra support and training would be provided, and that Agresso would soon be providing reports with a lot more in-depth information.

Cllr M Jaspal referred to page 11, and enquired if this included all land owned by the Council.

Mark Taylor explained that the Council needed to put values on its assets, and that a module within the Agresso system would keep this information.

Cllr Bolshaw referred to points 2.5 and 7.1, and enquired if the targets to reduce the number of staff had been met.

Mark Taylor advised that they had already delivered the £1 million target for 2014/15, and explained that plans and restructures were in place to meet the £2.5 million target for 2015/16. He noted that currently they had more people tied down sorting

out teething problems, but indicated that the system was significantly cheaper to maintain in comparison to the Mainframe.

Cllr Angus referred to page 11, and enquired about the project costing and billing. He asked about the number of transactions that had been completed since the go live date, the number of complaints, and the number of payments missed within the agreed payment period. He also asked how long the 1000 outstanding payments which were not waiting for an order number would take to process.

Keith Ireland explained that a new process to manage service information had gone live on 1 October, which would provide faster and more accurate statistics. He indicated that a further report would need to be brought to the Panel to provide evidence of the number of transactions, and those which the Council had failed to process within the agreed payment period. He advised the Panel that if they were aware of a complaint made in relation to a late payment, to forward it onto himself or Mark Taylor to ensure it was completed. In response to a question about companies not providing order numbers, Keith Ireland advised that it created slightly more work for companies, and that it was a teething problem.

Cllr Collingswood enquired if the issue of late payments due to managers not processing them was due to an inadequacy of training.

Keith Ireland advised that all requisitioners and managers had been trained, and that reports would identify particular individuals who required further support.

Resolved:

1. That the report detailing the progress on the FutureWorks programme be received
2. That a report providing further statistical detail with regards to the transactions and payments made by Agresso be presented to the Panel.

6 **Terms of reference and nominations for the Specific Reserves Working Group**

Mark Taylor presented the report, and sought confirmation of nominations for the membership of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the nominations of Cllr Potter, Cllr Haynes, Cllr Bolshaw and Cllr M Bateman to the Specific Reserves Working Group be approved.

7 **Annual Complaints Report**

Sue Handy introduced the report. She referred to 6.1, and highlighted how the complaints process had changed.

Keith Ireland noted that complaints could now be tracked by ward, and encouraged the need for more detailed information on this, to provide greater insight to the corporate team.

Cllr Wynne asked about the different numbers of complaints by ward, and asked how complaints by service aligned with this.

Lamour Gayle explained that this was the first time the team had the facilities to report the number of complaints by ward, and advised the Panel that further information would be available at future meetings.

Cllr Bolshaw asked how the team learnt from mistakes, and enquired as to why some complaints were not dealt with within the allotted response time.

Sue Handy explained that some complaints were particularly complex, and required cross-departmental working. She highlighted that since January, 100% of complaints had been responded to within the 21 day period. She indicated that response rates were aligned with staff appraisals, and helped set staff objectives for her team.

Cllr Angus enquired if there was benchmarking data from other years to act as a comparison, and raised concern over the low level of response to the equalities section.

Sue Handy confirmed that benchmarking data was available from other authorities, but this was the first year that Wolverhampton had collated the information in such detail. She highlighted that they hoped to develop a register for compliments, to learn about good practice.

Cllr M Jaspal offered his support for the report, and asked if the statistics could be used to identify which service areas received the most complaints, and why. He asked for more information to be offered by ward, and asked if the team worked on assessing Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

Keith Ireland advised the Panel that FOI requests had a response rate in excess of 90%, but noted this was processed in a centrally located team. He offered to bring a further report to the Panel detailing the FOI response rates.

Cllr Sweetman suggested that improving the complaints response rate increased the Council's reputation. She asked how this could be built upon, and enquired about the future marketing strategy for Wolverhampton.

Keith Ireland explained that it was important the Council learnt from complaints. He indicated that a lot of work was being done on the branding of Wolverhampton, and that the communications team were working with the Strategic Director for Education and Enterprise to market the City. He noted that they had undertaken work with Derby City Council to develop the Council's marketing and logo.

Following a question the recording of compliments, Sue Handy advised that they needed to improve their recording, and informing the central team. She extended an invite to Panel members to visit Customer Services and see the work they did.

Resolved:

1. The Annual Complaints Report be received.
2. To agree that the Panel receive a further report providing further statistical information on a ward level.
3. To agree that the Panel receive a report detailing the Council's FOI performance.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]