

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 28 January 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Sue Alston, Ian Auckland, Steve Ayris, Denise Fox, Terry Fox, George Lindars-Hammond, Cate McDonald, Pat Midgley, Mick Rooney, Sarah Jane Smalley and Cliff Woodcraft

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1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

1.1 RESOLVED: That, in the absence of the Chair of the Committee (Councillor Chris Weldon), Councillor Cate McDonald be appointed Chair of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from the Chair (Councillor Chris Weldon), and Councillors Gill Furniss, Alan Law and Bryan Lodge.

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th November 2014, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, it was reported that a meeting had been held between representatives of the Highfield community and local Councillors of the affected Wards, to discuss the concerns raised with regard to the Boundary Commission's proposals regarding Highfield and Sharrow.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

7. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING

7.1 The Interim Executive Director, Resources, submitted a report providing the Month 6 monitoring statement on the City Council's Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2014/15.

7.2 Dave Phillips, Assistant Director of Finance, introduced the report, referring to the overview report, which contained details on the movements in the budget since Month 3, a graph showing the monthly trend in terms of Months 3 to 6, levels of

variance, risks and the decision of the Cabinet, on the Month 6 monitoring statement, at its meeting held on 17th December, 2014.

7.3 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The Council's contract with Veolia was one of many long-term contracts with external companies. Every effort was made, as part of the formulation of the contract, to try and negotiate savings in order to ensure that there was sufficient funding available for other, Council-led services.
- It was accepted that there were a number of areas where there were underspends, such as the Inclusion and Learning Services and Lifelong Learning and Skills. Whilst there was not sufficient detail in the report to explain the reasons for such underspends, it could be due to the fact that there was less activity in a given year.
- The Council generally recovered around 99% of its Council Tax, although it sometimes took a few years to achieve this figure.
- There was very little detail in respect of the receipt of Grant Aid as the majority of Revenue Support Grants for specific services would be included in individual Portfolio budgets.
- The underspend in respect of the Stop Smoking Service contracts had been as a result of the contractors not meeting a number of Performance Indicators and targets.
- A considerable amount of work was being undertaken in an attempt to improve the commercial success of the Moor Markets. Although people visiting the market were spending more, footfall had decreased. It was hoped that this would increase when the development work on The Moor was complete.
- Electric Works had been under-occupied for some time, and the Council was still responsible for its running costs. It was hoped that, as the economy improved, occupancy levels in terms of the units within the building would increase. Considerable efforts were being made to encourage companies to take up occupancy in the building.
- The overspend in respect of the Learning Disability Service was reducing month on month, and it was hoped that the Service could break even by the end of this financial year. Whilst reducing the overspend, there was still the need to ensure that resources were distributed fairly and allocated to those who needed them most. It had taken longer than expected to reduce the overspend, but progress was now being made.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the contents of the report now submitted, together with the responses provided to the questions raised, be noted.

8. STRATEGIC PARTNER PERFORMANCE - UPDATE

8.1 James Henderson, Director of Policy, Performance and Communications, gave a presentation providing an update on progress in terms of the Council's major contracts, including Waste Management (Veolia), Streets Ahead (Amey), Housing Investment and Repairs (Kier), Building and Repairs (Kier), Revenue and Benefits, ICT and HR Transactions (Capita).

8.2 Mr Henderson highlighted specific points in terms of the different contracts, as follows:-

- Waste Management – the proportion of household waste that was recycled or composted had risen in Quarter 2 for the third year in a row, but still remained below the target of 35.19%.
- Streets Ahead – user satisfaction for Sheffield's roads had increased in the areas of highway condition, highway maintenance and street lighting. More detailed performance information would be available on the Streets Ahead contract following a year end review.
- Housing (Investment and Repairs) – customer satisfaction was performing on target for all indicators, with the exception of the District Heating and Domestic Heating functions. Quality and timeliness of repairs were also generally performing well.
- Building and Repairs – there had been generally an improving trend in terms of the time taken to complete repairs, and quality checks showed that a high proportion of the work was being carried out to the required standard. With the exception of November 2014, customer satisfaction scores were showing signs of steady improvement.
- Revenue and Benefits – work being undertaken to improve on last year's in-year Council Tax collection rate of 93.7%. Although performance in Quarter 4 was slightly behind last year, the annual in-year Business Rate collection was expected to be achieved. The average number of days to process new benefit claims remained within the target of 26 days, although it had risen slightly in the first two quarters of this year. The number of days taken to process changes in circumstances of benefits customers had also increased slightly. The percentage of customers satisfied with the service showed an increase in the most recent survey.
- ICT - majority of performance targets met in Quarter 2, with the exception of Commissioners' satisfaction and user satisfaction.

8.3 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- In terms of comparing performance with other local authorities, there were a number of benchmarking clubs, which looked at comparables with regard to contract performance. If this information were made available, it would be provided in future update reports to the Committee.

- Depending on the terms of the contract, the Council was able to impose financial penalties if performance targets were not met and had, in fact, done so in the past.
- Although the average number of days taken to process new benefit claims and process changes in circumstances relating to benefit entitlement was comparable to, if not better than, the Department for Work and Pensions, more detail on these rates would be included in future update reports.
- The figures relating to the number of dropped jobs (bins not collected), under the Waste Management contract, related to all the different types of bins and collection boxes. Officers would look into whether such figures could be broken down to include the different types of bins and collection boxes for future update reports.
- Whilst recognising the improving satisfaction levels in the housing repairs contract, Members were aware of cases where tenants had experienced problems in getting through on the telephone to Kier, when reporting issues with works already undertaken. There was no information about this in the report. Officers would look to see if this information was available, and include it on future update reports.

8.4 Members also made the following comments:-

- It would be useful if details could be provided regarding the number of complaints about holes which had been dug as part of the installation of the new street lighting under Streets Ahead, had been left excavated, often for long periods of time.
- It appears that, despite problems being experienced as part of the Streets Ahead works, including the issues relating to the replacement of the street lighting, which had been raised at the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, lessons had not been learnt on the basis that similar problems were being experienced in other areas of the City.

8.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information reported as part of the presentation now made, the responses to the questions now raised and the additional comments now made;
- (b) thanks James Henderson for the presentation now made and expresses its thanks to Mr Henderson and his colleagues for an excellent presentation;
- (c) expresses concern at the poor performance in connection with Commissioners' satisfaction and user satisfaction with regard to the ICT contract with Capita; and

(d) requests:-

- (i) the Director of Policy, Performance and Communications to look into the possibility of including information on future update reports relating to the number and nature of complaints received from customers; and
- (ii) that (A) the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee has a further look at the Performance Indicators in respect of the Streets Ahead project and (B) the issues relating to customers not being able to get through on the telephone when reporting repairs, or chasing up existing repairs, with Kier, be referred for consideration by the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee.

9. TRANSITION TO INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION - UPDATE

9.1 The Head of Elections, Equalities and Involvement, submitted a report providing an update on the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER). The report set out details of the progress on the implementation of IER following the introduction of major changes by the Government to the way in which people were registered to vote, and outlined actions and proposals to ensure that the Authority maximised registration across the City.

9.2 John Tomlinson, Electoral Services Manager, introduced the report, and stated that the rationale behind the introduction of IER was to introduce safeguards against fraudulent registration and to give individuals control over their own registration.

9.3 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- There were plans for Electoral Services to work with schools and colleges in the City in order to look at ways of increasing registration. There was also a joint campaign organised by the City's two Universities and the City College aimed at increasing registration from students at such establishments. It was also believed that the Government had provided funding to the National Union of Students to assist in this process.
- The Service would use alternative sources of data in order to identify specific housing schemes or developments where there was a higher than average turnover of occupants.
- It was not possible, at this stage, to indicate how much 'drop off' was accurate or due to people moving out, but this information could be provided at a later stage.
- It was not possible to indicate whether students, whose parents resided in the City, were voting in the City or where they were studying.
- The Service would continue to work with customer-facing services across the Council, particularly those which had contact with under-registered groups, to

incorporate registration activity as part of their everyday contact with customers and new service users. The Service would also be contacting other social housing providers.

- The approximate 35,000 electors who were not on the IER register, and were not eligible to have a postal or proxy vote, would be removed from the register unless they completed an IER application to register.
- The main purpose of the door-to-door canvas was predominantly an information-collecting exercise for the purpose of updating the electoral register. Work was undertaken, independent of the canvassing exercise, to inform community groups of the benefits of voting.
- Targeted work had been undertaken with faith communities, in order to provide advice and assistance in connection with IER.

9.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses provided to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests the Electoral Services Manager to give consideration to the issues now raised, and suggestions made by Members, in terms of how the Council could maximise voter registration.

10. SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLAN - UPDATE

- 10.1 The Head of Elections, Equalities and Involvement, submitted a report providing an update on the review of the Council's scrutiny function during 2013/14, which had been undertaken with the aim of improving the impact and effectiveness of scrutiny. The report contained, as appendices, a guidance tool to assist Scrutiny Committees to focus on topics most appropriate for their scrutiny and a scrutiny project mandate template, the Scrutiny Review Action Plan, and contained details of the scope of the review and the progress on the implementation of the Action Plan.
- 10.2 In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the Policy and Improvement Officer (Emily Standbrook-Shaw), stated that it was planned to hold further training sessions, following the success of the recent session held, as part of an annual training programme for Members. In terms of public involvement in the scrutiny process, the Chair stated that the Environmental and Economic Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee had invited members of the public to take part in the scrutiny of specific topics. Ms Standbrook-Shaw added that officers were working with Members on this issue, as well as a number of other ideas, in order to improve the impact and effectiveness of the scrutiny process.
- 10.3 RESOLVED: That the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made, be noted.

11. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

- 11.1 The Committee received and noted a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer, providing details of the Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15.

12. RECORD OF WRITTEN RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 12.1 The Committee received and noted a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer containing copies of written responses to members of the public who had raised questions at the Committee's meeting on 26th November 2014.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 11th February 2015, at 10.00 am, in the Town Hall.

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