
MEETING	EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	19 APRIL 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS STEWARD (CHAIR), DOUGLAS, FIRTH, FUNNELL, HODGSON, SCOTT AND WARTERS
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR MCILVEEN
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLOR GUNNELL (CABINET MEMBER)

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests that they might have had in the business on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 28 February 2012 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

43. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

44. SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW - INTERIM REPORT.

Members considered an interim report on the work of the Sickness Absence Task Group to date, which based on their findings asked the Committee to recommend to the new Corporate Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) that the

Task Group be reformed in the next municipal year to complete their work.

Members of the Task Group gave a short summary of their findings to the Committee. They highlighted that in their view, the CYC's Sickness Absence Management Policy was too lengthy, repetitive, not in plain English and difficult to find on the Council's website.

The Committee agreed that the policy needed to be written in clearer and firmer language and that it would be better to have a short succinct policy for employees with a separate guide for Managers. They also agreed there were too many formal stages within the Council procedure and that the second formal stage was unnecessary.

The Committee recognised the need for the provision of sickness management training for managers and induction training for new employees. They also questioned how sickness absence would be properly identified following the move to West Offices when more employees were likely to be working from home.

Further discussion took place as to the usefulness of the new HR method of reporting absence, through the iTrent software. It was suggested that the effectiveness of iTrent would depend on the resources provided, and the training of staff to use it. Discussion also took place on the consideration of long term sickness absence compared with short term absence.

The Committee suggested the Task Group should also meet with employees' representatives and some external organisations should CSMC agree to their continued work on the review.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the report be noted.
 - (ii) That Corporate Scrutiny Management Committee be asked to reform the Task Group in the new municipal year to allow the work on the review to be concluded.

- (iii) That if reformed, the Task Group;
 - a) Continue with their work on the review in line with the suggestions in paragraph 20 of the report.
 - b) Should also meet with a number of employee representatives and suitable external organisations once the draft proposals are available, to facilitate some informal consultation ahead of them being formally considered.

REASON: In order to conclude the Committee's review.

45. ATTENDANCE OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES - END OF YEAR UPDATE.

Members received an end of year update from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services. The Cabinet Member spoke about four priority areas:

Budget

Members were informed that a review would be taking place within the Labour group relating to processes used in the previous budget setting. They also noted that the Cabinet Member felt more work needed to be done to integrate Equality Impact Assessments in the Council's budget.

Council Procurement

It was noted that problems had been encountered with the performance of the Council's external website and that statutory processes often discouraged small businesses in the city from bidding for Council contracts. Member agreed that there was a greater need for centralised functions and control of stock, and that smaller procurement should also be examined alongside larger orders.

The Cabinet Member reported that a full team of procurement staff had been established in each Directorate.

Members discussed the Council buying out of habit from certain companies, recognising it could lead to complacency from those businesses. They also expressed their concern that local businesses were being undercut by companies from outside the city, thereby having an adverse effect on the local economy.

The Cabinet Member agreed more could be done to encourage small local businesses to apply for council contracts. However, she stated that the Council would always look at the best value for taxpayers first, rather than solely the location of the provider. In response to an additional question from a Member about accountability from those commissioned to provide Council services, the Cabinet Member assured the Committee that a business would need to have the necessary specific credentials.

Members discussed conducting a scrutiny review on an issue related to procurement such as the methods used for procuring local services and queried if there were targets established for this. Some Members felt that this topic could be expanded to include the provision of information in regards to procurement.

Property Services

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the two departments that made up Property Services, i.e. Facilities Management and Asset Management, had been transferred into different Directorates following a restructure. It was reported that Facilities Management was now found within the Adults, Children and Education (ACE) Directorate and that Asset Management was located within Customer Business Support Services (CBSS). Also that Facilities Management was currently undergoing a review, as it was felt that it was not operating successfully or to a cost effective level. Additionally, an Audit Commission report had identified major issues regarding repairs and maintenance in the Council's Asset Management department. The report identified that some of the repairs needed were getting to a critical level, and that action taken was often reactive rather than strategic.

Council Headquarters

The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that the new Council HQ was on target to be completed on time and within budget. She also spoke about how the Facilities Management team would play a major role at West Offices such as making sure that there were no security issues to contend with.

RESOLVED: That the update from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services be noted.

REASON: To keep Members informed of areas of work within the remit of the Committee.

46. DRAFT WORK PLAN FOR 2012/13.

Members discussed possible topics for the new municipal year ahead of a forthcoming Scrutiny Work Planning Event in early May 2012. Taking into account the information provided by the Cabinet Member earlier in the meeting, the Committee agreed to put forward two possible topics:

- Procurement Commissioning
- Financial & Economic Inclusion

RESOLVED: That the two topics above be put forward for consideration at the future Scrutiny Work Planning Event.

REASON: To assist in the formulation of the Committee's work plan for 2012/13.

Councillor Steward, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.40 pm].

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