

SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2014

10.00 - 11.15 am in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Jane Palmer
Email: jane.palmer@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 252748

Present

Councillor Martin Bennett (Chairman)
Councillors Joyce Barrow, Steve Davenport, Roger Evans, Vince Hunt, Miles Kenny, Alan Mosley and Dave Tremellen

13 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G Dakin [Sub: Councillor B Williams] and Councillor D Lloyd [Sub: Councillor R Macey].

14 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

No interests were declared.

15 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2014

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee held on 11 June 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

- i) Minute 1 - Support for the election of Chairman was not unanimous and an alternative Chair had been proposed during consideration of this item
- ii) Minute 9 – Discretionary Housing Payments [DHP] Task and Finish Group findings – a minority report to exclude DLA from the DHP calculation and to include this aspect as a key part of the recommended six month review was proposed and seconded.

16 Public Question Time

There were no questions received from members of the public.

17 Member Question Time

Councillor R Evans asked two questions and the following response was read out by the Chairman:

i) Why did the report on Discretionary Housing Payments take four months to be presented to Cabinet?

Answer: With regard to your first point I understand there was a crossover of staff within the service area which caused delay, however, it is also recognised by Committee Services that they should have chased the matter more and apologise for that.

Councillor Evans asked a supplementary question to the Chairman querying why he had not personally pursued the matter. The Chairman responded that he generally relied on Officers to carry forward issues forward as necessary.

Referring to Minute 11 [from the 11 June 2014 meeting], Councillor Evans drew further attention to the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee's request for the production and circulation of a briefing paper on the Local Support and Prevention Fund. The Chairman responded that this matter would receive his attention.

ii) Why is the proposal (which was proposed and seconded) asking for a minority report to be included not in the minutes nor in the report that was eventually presented to Cabinet?

Answer: The Committee Officer has no record of this in her notes. This is not to say it didn't happen, that is a discussion, but her notes do not record this. All I can suggest is your point about this being discussed is recorded in the minutes of the next meeting, it will then form part of the formal record.

This matter was dealt with at Cabinet and the Leader made it very clear that your point about a minority report would be recorded in the Cabinet minutes.

18 Final report of the Public Service Network [PSN] Task and Finish Group

The Chairman of the PSN Task and Finish Group, Councillor D Carroll, presented the findings of the Group and, in doing so thanked all those who had been involved in this work. He explained that the outcome of the Group's work as detailed in the report was to help improve understanding of how PSN accreditation and connectivity will maximise the potential and impact of the Council's future IT Strategy and implementation Plan and inform shaping PSN locally for the commissioning Council.

In answer to a Member's query, he explained that he was unable to quantify the operational and financial risk to the Council from any unilateral changes to the PSN connection requirements and commented that the requirements were open to change year on year.

Finally, he drew attention to the additional recommendation that the provision of Council funded Broadband lines for Members should be reviewed; although outside the remit of the Group the need for this review had become evident during the course of its work.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations from the PSN Task and Finish Group be fully supported and be referred to Cabinet for consideration:

- i) That the need to maintain PSN compliance is appropriately recognised e.g. considered for inclusion on the Corporate Risk Register, within the Customer Involvement Strategy and as part of the Council's Commissioning Strategy;
- ii) That Consideration and action is taken to ensure that appropriate resources are set aside – including within contingencies - to ensure that PSN compliance is maintained and that sufficient budgetary controls are put in place to allow ICT and Information Governance to deliver a coordinated approach to accreditation, including the recommendation that a council wide hardware and ICT equipment replacement programme should be adopted to ensure PSN compliance is maintained;
- iii) Performance Management Scrutiny Committee (PMSC) should hold a single focus meeting of the Committee to receive a presentation / series of presentations on how the Council is preparing for and enabling mobile and flexible working for Officers and Members, taking account of the findings of the PSN Task and Finish Group;
- iv) That the PMSC revisits the additional benefits of PSN accreditation in the future, as this develops and in the light of the Council's response to the 2015 PSN accreditation submission; and
- v) That the provision of Council funded broadband lines for Members is reviewed. [The security requirement for Members to have dedicated Council lines is no longer in place and many Members already have their own provision in place].

19 Scrutiny of the progress in delivering the Council's Financial Strategy

The Performance Manager explained that the documentation before the Committee provided Members with the opportunity to have a high level view and be able to take detail on board, to identify issues and to look at areas within the Business Plan. The Committee

would meet again at the end of the month in order to collate the comments from the other Scrutiny Committees in order to provide a composite scrutiny comment to Cabinet on 10 December 2014.

The Chief Executive set the context and explained that the Council was working in a time of unprecedented cuts and had £80M savings yet to make in addition to the cuts of £40M already made in this year alone. Referring to the Business Plan, he explained that this had been approved by Council in February 2014; there were savings that had been made, savings yet to be made and some that would be impossible to make through a mix of timing and some that were just not possible to make.

He suggested that scrutiny should focus its attentions on 'Red' areas of savings e.g. there are less people in the system re adult social care but currently the costs do not reflect this reduction as there are existing people in the system, also issues within finance and care systems as the two systems do not work in synch to reflect the true costs.

The Committee Chairman agreed that scrutiny should focus its attention on the Red areas and should liaise closely with Cabinet and Directors to offer help and assistance. He suggested that rationalisation of assets was a key area for Performance Management Scrutiny to assist. The Chief Executive cautioned that scrutiny should not seek to revisit the work being undertaken by the Assets Board but could seek an update from the Board to understand the dilemmas faced and determine whether scrutiny assistance could be beneficial in this work area.

Implications of the Social Care Act were not yet known and guidance was still awaited but there was a fear that it would have a detrimental impact on the Council's future plans; the Chief Executive added that a big change was imminent and the Council had been assured that funding to implement the Act would be available.

The Committee considered the 4 technical dashboards, as follows:

- Progress on delivering 'Your money' outcome
- Progress on delivering 'Your environment' outcome
- Progress on delivering 'Your life' outcome
- Progress on delivering 'Your health' outcome

Youth Services - Referring to the 'Your environment' dashboard, a member questioned whether the 3% increase in reported offences in Shropshire could be attributed to the abolition of youth services in the county. The Leader commented that the money had been redistributed and targeted to demographics; less money was spent but with better outcomes, less money spent on staff and more on the actual projects. Information on a Dragons' Den style event run under the auspices of Oswestry Community Alcohol Project was noted as an excellent event that had provided a wealth of information on activities and projects that young people wanted.

Some Members were concerned that the reduction in youth service funding would have a detrimental impact and believed that diversionary activities for young people had kept crime low. However, the majority agreed that doing things differently with targeted and measurable outcomes represented the way forward and that money did not always equate to quality; the Council was seeking to 'do things differently'. The majority agreed that allocation of funding in this area should be based on need.

Several issues were highlighted by members of the Committee as needing further information, for example:

- ASC personalisation – are people receiving appropriate information?
- The dip in Looked After Children [LAC] not having a second Child Protection Plan – this dip was noted as a positive trend as the Council’s Strategy was to ensure that children needed to be brought into care; aim to reduce the need for a child to be in care for a long time
- Education standards appear to be in decline and needed to be addressed,
- The dashboard information did not give any indication of staff satisfaction in the various service areas. The Chief Executive commented that dashboards were a new way of presenting information and added that statistics could present a skewed view that needed to be investigated in more depth in order to ascertain the full facts.
- Reduction in adults being admitted to permanent care [relates to over 65s] – a good news story. The Council is promoting an aspirational expectation that people can live independently and in their own homes for as long as possible. It was noted that a detailed review was ongoing and would be reported to next month’s meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.
- Reduction in the personal budget – It was noted that the Council was no.1 in the region to offer a personalised service and give people control of the money to address their needs in a way that suited them best. The Council had become more creative in how this support could be met and the statistics currently did not keep up with the innovative work undertaken by the Council’s staff; it would be interesting to note any change in this statistic in future reports.

It was noted that the next meeting of this Committee on 26 November 2014 would provide an opportunity to consider feedback from all of the Council’s Scrutiny Committees from their debates on the progress made in delivering the Council’s Financial Strategy and to form an overarching scrutiny view report to Cabinet at its meeting on 10 December 2014.

20 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee

It was noted that the Committee would next meet at 10.00am on Wednesday 26 November 2014.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: