



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday 11 June 2014

<u>Item</u>
5
Public

MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT 10.00AM ON WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH 2014 IN THE SHREWSBURY ROOM, SHIREHALL, SHREWSBURY

Responsible Officer: Jane Palmer
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PRESENT

Councillors:
M. Bennett [Chairman], Mrs. J. Barrow, G Dakin, S. Davenport, R. Evans, V.Hunt, M. Kenny, R Macey [Substitute for B Williams] and A. Mosley

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Lloyd and B Williams.

21. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared.

22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2014

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the amendments detailed below, the Minutes of the meeting of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee held on 12 February 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

- p.17 Minute 17 c), 4th bullet point, delete the words, 'although not quantified'
- p.21Minute 18, penultimate paragraph, amend to read as, 'Referring to a Member's reference to the former Star Chamber process.....'

23. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Question from Mr Graeme Perks

Given no formal consultation has taken place for the relocation of Development Planning now for the South West, being moved to Craven Arms from Ludlow, with only a notice appearing on the website over the weekend! Can the scrutiny process please advise me on how it can examine this decision and assure the people of

Ludlow that this is not just another "thing being done to them" with very poor consultation please?

Even your full Council papers of 27th Feb, section 8 business plan page 7 ref 6.1 referred to important conversations requiring public consultation which were held in Oswestry, Craven Arms, Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury. Can the scrutiny process assure Ludlow that it is not just being starved of influence by a gradual process, whilst the former Borough/District Council assets are being sold off?

Response:

The Council is reviewing all of its operations throughout the county and Ludlow is being given equal consideration.

From a customer perspective, part of the changing approach to service delivery has been the enhancement of the web site reducing the need for those with an interest in planning matters to visit Council premises to access information. This is very much a customer focussed approach and provides more access to the service. Consequently there is little requirement for visits to the planning office without appointment.

In addition the move to Craven Arms from Ludlow should have little impact on the majority of customers previously served by that office and for those who do need to meet with an officer the new location is more centrally placed in the South West of the County which it serves.

Mr Perks did not consider that the response made answered his question. The Chairman advised that a written response would be provided.

24. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were none.

25. DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS [DHPS]

The Committee noted that Councillor C Mellings had raised a question at the Council meeting on 19 December 2013 and the Portfolio Holder, Councillor M Price, had requested scrutiny to consider whether Discretionary Housing Payments [DHPs] were being effectively applied. Councillor Mellings was present at the meeting and gave a brief synopsis of the reasoning behind his request stressing that the authority was likely to be returning £50k to the Government in unspent DHP monies and questioned the benefit of this to the people of Shropshire.

The Chairman stated that it was for the Committee to decide whether this item should be added to its Work Programme and to decide the most effective way of undertaking the task.

Members agreed that the best way to address this task would be by setting up a Task and Finish Group with the Group completing its task by the end of May 2014 and reporting its findings to the Performance Management meeting on 11 June 2014.

The draft terms of reference were tabled [a copy is included with the formal record of the meeting]. The Chairman's suggested amendments to the Group's objectives were accepted, as follows:

1. To understand the national legislative and policy frameworks and guidance, and how they are applied in Shropshire;
2. To understand the wider context of Shropshire in terms of demand, need and the development of future approaches; and
3. To understand the underpinning principles to support financial, physical and emotional independence and how these are translated into Shropshire Council policy and how they are applied.

RESOLVED:

- i) That a Task and Finish Group be set up to look at DHPs;
- ii) That the Committee Chairman email all Members to establish who may be interested in working on this Group;
- iii) That the Group complete its work by the end of May 2014 and make its final report to the next meeting of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee on 11 June 2014.

26. QUARTER 3 2013/14 – PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Portfolio Holder and Deputy Portfolio Holder responsible for performance, Councillors T Barker and D Turner respectively, presented the Quarter 3 Performance report that had been considered by Cabinet on 19 February 2014. They drew attention to the emerging issues identified by the measures that could be considered in further detail by this, or any of the other, Scrutiny Committees.

The Portfolio Holder drew the Committee's particular attention to the performance information relating to the Council's four priorities, namely:

- Keeping children safe
- High quality education
- Looking after vulnerable people
- Economic growth

Members generally agreed that the information portrayed within the 'dashboards' was clearly presented and easy to understand and recognised that other information lay behind the dashboards. A Member commented that scrutiny should focus its attention on areas of underperformance and he highlighted concerns relating to Keeping Children Safe [specifically Table 3 and Table 10] and High Quality Education in particular the percentage of pupils in Key Stage 2 attaining level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. The Portfolio Holder stressed the key role of scrutiny was to look at the performance information presented, find out what was happening and the reasons.

The Committee Chairman commented that the performance information was an indication of performance in Shropshire in which the authority may not necessarily have any direct influence. Other members considered that the responsibility in areas such as levels of achievement in reading and writing lay with the relevant

School Governors with the Council intervening as a result of a poor Ofsted report etc. The increasing number of academies across the county was also noted.

A Member suggested that the performance information should be presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee by the relevant Director and Portfolio Holder and that each Committee could then identify any issues that may merit further scrutiny intervention. The Committee Chairman stated that the individual Scrutiny Committees should highlight areas of both good performance and any areas of concern and report back to the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee.

Referring to the recent Rapid Action Groups [RAGs], the Performance Manager explained that information gleaned from the Member and Officer RAG feedback sessions would be evaluated and if the RAGs process was to continue it would be reported to the Political Structures Monitoring Group [PSMG] and any necessary changes made to the Constitution. In the meantime, pending formalisation of the RAG process, a Task and Finish model could be used in the short term.

The Committee Chairman added that a review of the RAG process had always been intended and that no further RAG work should be undertaken until the review had been completed and any Constitutional issues resolved. He stressed that the existing RAGs should be invited to report to the appropriate Scrutiny Committees in order to maintain the enthusiasm that had been generated. The Scrutiny Chairs were supportive of this approach and agreed to put the necessary arrangements in hand.

The Portfolio Holder requested that the performance reporting should continue and it was agreed that the Quarter 4 performance information would be presented to the Committee at the appropriate time. He added that he and the Deputy Portfolio Holder would work with a Member Working Group to refine the presentation of this performance data for Quarter 4.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the new style of performance reporting be commended as providing greater insight and clarity to the information available;
- ii) That the recent RAGs be invited to attend a future meeting of the relevant Scrutiny Committee;
- iii) That, subject to the evaluation of the RAGs and any subsequent report to PSMG, the Scrutiny Committees decide whether or not to continue with the topics and the approach;
- iv) That the Portfolio Holder, his Deputy and a Member Working Group continue to refine the performance reporting mechanism to influence the forthcoming performance reporting of Quarter 4 data.

27. DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

It was noted that the Committee was scheduled to next meet at 2.30pm on Wednesday 11 June 2014.

The meeting closed at 15.30 hours