

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 1 May 2014 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Peter Owen, Dewi Owens, Arwel Roberts (Vice-Chair), Gareth Sandilands and David Simmons (Chair)

Lead Member, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill attended at the Committee's request.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Corporate Health & Safety Manager (GL), Audit Manager (BS), Head of Housing and Community Development (PMcH), Corporate Improvement Officer (NK), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (SLW).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colin Hughes and Geraint Lloyd-Williams and Councillor Hugh Irving (Lead Member for Customers and Communities)

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters were raised.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 20 March, 2014, were submitted.

***RESOLVED** that the minutes be received and approved as a correct record.*

5 CORPORATE HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, presented an annual report (previously circulated) to provide an update on Health and Safety management within Denbighshire County Council (DCC) as seen from the perspective of the Corporate Health & Safety Team (CH&S).

During the past 12 months, significant progress had been made and there had been some positive changes in the safety culture within DCC. The CH&S Team structure had also changed and were now more streamlined headed by Gerry Lapington.

In-depth discussions took place around the importance of health and safety particularly in schools, and in the Social Services and Highways departments. In addition the following main points were raised:

- Whilst the Committee acknowledged the CH&S Team's proactive approach to undertaking its work, and services increased willingness to work with the Team to improve safety and reduce risks, there were concerns regarding the IT software's inability / inadequacy to produce accurate injury categorisation reports. This had been a long-standing problem which had resulted in the majority of injuries being categorised as "not applicable" or "other". Despite considerable efforts on behalf of the Council's IT Department and the software provider, the problem was yet to be resolved.
- Prior to 2013, a significant amount of training had been bought in. Although the professional training came with a nationally recognised accreditation, it was costly and tended to be generic. The CH&S Team members were at the same professional level to external providers, so on that basis, the CH&S Team now provided the majority of the Health & Safety training from their own resources. This change had enabled the CH&S Team to provide the majority of training for DCC staff, as well as offering a substantial cost saving of £950 per day.

The Committee:

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Subject to the above observations to receive the Corporate Health and Safety Team's Annual Report on its activities; and*
- (b) An invitation be sent out to the Head of ICT, the Corporate Health and Safety Manager and representatives from Civica to attend a future meeting with a view to examining the problems encountered with the recording/ reporting software for Health and Safety statistics, and possible solutions and timescales for their resolution.*

6 HOUSING SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Head of Housing and Community Development presented the report (previously circulated) for Members to review the service improvements made to the Housing Service as a result of the "mock inspection" carried out by the Housing Quality Network in 2011 and outlined the performance management framework which had been established to support the service aim of continuous improvement.

The Head of Housing had been appointed in April 2011 and in July 2011 commissioned a "mock inspection" from the Housing Quality Network to assess performance of the service against established Audit Commission ratings which ranged from 3 star excellent service (top 25% of performers across the UK) to 0 star performers (bottom 10% of performers).

The findings from the mock inspection concluded that the service had been predominantly a "traditional landlord service". It had been reactive not proactive,

weaknesses outweighed strengths and common problems were experienced across all teams.

The Housing Services Improvement Plan and its Quality and Performance Management Framework emanated from the mock inspection undertaken in August 2011. As a result of the review, during the last three years, a number of teams / departments within the Housing Service had been restructured. This had resulted in a culture change amongst staff which had led to an improvement in performance and a greater satisfaction rate amongst tenants.

Detailed discussion took place during which reference was made to the anticipated benefits of the new IT system, the proposed new tenancy agreement which would be consulted upon, and the need to draw up a housing stock management plan. Following the discussion the Head of Housing undertook to:

- Emphasise to Housing Service Estates Officers the importance of feeding back to local members any points raised during site visits/inspections as well as progress achieved in resolving matters
- Provide Councillors with information on the number of Registered Social Landlord properties in each Council electoral division
- Circulate to Councillors an information report on how the Council could approach the new “self-financing housing” provision in the county
- Involve Members early on in the development of the new Tenancy Agreement for the Council’s housing stock, preferably one Member from each Member Area Group (MAG) as they would be aware of local issues and possible resistance.

The Committee:

RESOLVED :

- (a) Notwithstanding the further work required to achieve the Service’s ambition to be an excellent service, to note the considerable progress made to date in relation to service improvement*
- (b) That officers feedback to local members the outcomes of their housing estate visits and the progress made in addressing issues raised*
- (c) That the additional information requested by members be provided, and*
- (d) That elected members be involved with the development of the new tenancy agreement from an early stage.*

At this juncture (11.15 a.m.) there was a 10 minute break.

The meeting re-convened at 11.25 a.m.

7 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Corporate Improvement Officer presented the report (previously circulated) to present the Performance Scrutiny Committee with the latest version of the Corporate Risk Register, as agreed at Cabinet Briefing.

The Corporate Risk Register enabled the Council to manage the likelihood and impact of risks that it faced by evaluating the effect of any current mitigating actions, and recording deadlines and responsibilities for further action that should enable tighter control.

The Corporate Risk Register had been developed by, and was owned by, the Corporate Executive Team (CET) and Cabinet.

The Corporate Risk Register was formally reviewed twice yearly by Cabinet and CET.

Following each formal review of the Corporate Risk Register, the revised document would be presented to the Performance Scrutiny Committee.

The Council's Internal Audit function provided independent assurances on the effectiveness of the internal control procedures and mechanisms in place to mitigate risks across the council. It also offered independent challenge to ensure the principles and requirements of managing risk were consistently adopted throughout the council. Internal Audit also used information from service and corporate risk registers to inform its forward work programme.

The revised Corporate Risk Register had been examined by the Committee with particular consideration to the main changes to the Register following the recent review.

Significant discussion took place regarding risks relating to the HR Framework, Arms-Length Organisations and partnerships and interfaces between the Council and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB).

The Chief Executive explained investment decisions, regarding IT systems, would need to be taken in the near future, once the Welsh Government's response to the Williams Commission Report on Public Service Governance and Delivery was known.

Members agreed not to pursue the risk regarding Arms-Length Companies at present, but to await the conclusion of the Head of Internal Audit's work on an assessment framework for the Council's Arms-Length Organisations before considering risk DCC013 further.

It had been suggested that it would be advisable to invite the new Chief Executive of the Health Board and its Chair to a future Council Briefing session to discuss future plans and health/social care related matters with all Councillors. This had been suggested with a view to maintaining and building upon present working arrangements with BCUHB.

The Committee expressed concerns regarding the risk identified in respect of the HR Framework and as it may not support the Council's aims. It had been agreed by Members to call the matter in to a future meeting, for detailed scrutiny.

RESOLVED that :

- (a) Subject to the above observations to note the deletions, additions and amendments to the Corporate Risk Register, and*
- (b) On the basis of members' concerns on the risks posed to the Authority if the HR Framework did not meet its aims, to request that relevant officers to attend a future meeting to detail progress made and future plans to mitigate and reduce this risk.*

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinator, which requested the Committee to review and agree its Forward Work Programme and which provided an update on relevant issues had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. Cabinets Forward Work Programme had been included as Appendix 2 and a table summarising recent Committee resolutions, and advising on progress with their implementation, had been attached at Appendix 3 to the report.

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme for future meetings as detailed in Appendix 1, and the following amendments and additions were agreed for the following meetings:

- (a) 17 July 2014 – invitation to IT and Civica to discuss progress in resolving problems encountered with the Corporate Health & Safety software system.
- (b) 17 July 2014 – HR Framework.

All Lead Members be requested to attend 17 July meeting

12 June meeting – Lead Members, Councillors Julian Thompson-Hill and Bobby Feeley be requested to attend.

Members were requested to notify the Scrutiny Co-ordinator of any Scrutiny training needs from which they would benefit. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator would also ascertain if any North Wales Scrutiny training would be available.

Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies raised the issue of street naming. The issue had previously been presented at the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group who had concluded that the issue not did merit consideration by a Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Lloyd Davies questioned the decision.

The Chief Executive clarified that the Street Naming Policy would be presented to Cabinet on the 27 May, thereafter, the Policy could be presented to Scrutiny Committee at a later date to examine the progress made with its implementation.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator had previously requested volunteers to be members of the Local Authority Provided Adult Social Care Task & Finish Group. Four Members had shown interest to date and Councillor Richard Davies volunteered to be Performance Scrutiny Committee's second representative on the Group.

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendments and agreements, the Forward Work Programme, be approved.

9 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

None.

The meeting concluded at 12.40 p.m.