

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7th April 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor G J Bull – Chairman.
Councillors T D Alban, R S Farrer, D Harty, B Hyland and J M Palmer.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P L E Bucknell, E R Butler, Mrs A D Curtis, L George, M F Shellens and J E White.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd March 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

30. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st July 2016.

31. SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS PLANS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE JOINT GROUP

The Panel received a report on the 2016/17 Business Plans for Building Control, Legal and ICT Shared Services and the Terms of Reference for the Joint Group, a Member board established to provide strategic direction and leadership to the shared services. The Executive Member for Commercial Activities explained that shared services are one of the main activity streams intended to deliver the savings planned in the Council's budget. The business plans are live documents so will be updated throughout the year.

The three new shared services commenced in October and the business plans set out details of the services they will deliver, expected savings and planned efficiency measures. The plans are live documents so will be updated throughout the year. They each include an overview of staffing, an operational plan and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Performance against these indicators will be reported to the Panel on a quarterly basis.

The Panel was informed that the building control services at Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire both had the same ISO

9001:2008 accreditation but that they were currently registered separately with a different organisation. It was confirmed that the intention was to secure a single ISO accreditation to cover the whole Building Control service. A business process re-engineering resource has already been allocated to help improve processes and achieve the accreditation with a target validation date of March 2017.

A Member was concerned that local authorities will stop providing Building Control services and asked if there was a plan for dealing with increased competition from the private sector. The Panel was told that options such as setting up a trading company had been considered initially but it was decided to proceed with a shared service instead. Local authorities are required to provide certain statutory services that wouldn't be provided by private sector. The Building Control Shared Service should be more resilient than three separate services and the business plan takes the market into account. A risk register is being maintained to identify and manage risks.

Members were informed that the business plan for the ICT Shared Service includes standardisation and adoption of common systems. For example, a new financial management system is being procured to underpin everything that all three councils do. There has already been a lot of progress made in improving systems to allow staff to work more flexibly and remotely.

(At 7.21pm, during the discussion of this item, Councillor T Alban joined the meeting).

A Member asked whether the plans considered the demand for information by people unable or unwilling to use computers. In response, the Panel was informed that the ICT Shared Service's main focus is on supporting Council services to be more efficient and effective and this includes supporting a move to greater self-service and digital service delivery. It was also pointed out that increasingly the public are accessing services not from computers but from their smartphones. The Council's Customer Service Strategy recognises the need to understand customer needs and provide information and services in accessible ways and the shared service will aim to support various service delivery channels including telephony and face to face service delivery.

A Member commended the three councils for being bold in trialling shared services as a way of saving money through an increasingly business-like approach.

In discussing the business plan for the Legal Shared Service, a Member asked if legal services provided by LGSS were being used by the Council. It was confirmed that a call off contract for legal support and advice available to the shared service does include LGSS, but that LGSS were not a partner in the shared service.

The Terms of Reference for the Joint Group are part of the governance structure setting out the delivery aims for the three shared services. Scrutiny responsibilities are explained and individual Members will have the opportunity to ask questions. When asked if their questions will be answered, the Corporate Director (Services)

explained that the Terms of Reference set out a standard protocol for asking questions and that performance against the clearly defined KPIs for each service will be reported to Scrutiny and Cabinet so the services can be properly held to account. The Business plans and budget proposals for shared services will also be reported to Scrutiny and Cabinet annually. There are significant savings to be delivered and these will also be reported to Members.

32. CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MEASURE UPDATE

The Corporate Team Manager circulated a template showing how the key actions and performance measures in the Corporate Plan will be reported against in 2016/17. A single page summary would present pie charts summarising results alongside highlighted achievements from the last quarter. Appendix B will follow the format of the last 18 months, with progress on key actions reported using a RAG (red, amber, green) status by strategic priority. Officers will provide more specific target dates to monitor actions against and the names of responsible Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service will be listed. Progress will be updated quarterly at the Panel's meetings.

Some of the performance indicators included in the new Corporate Plan are the same as last year but others are new or revised. It was noted that 2015/16 data may not be available for all new measures but targets for existing measures will be based on past performance and trends. Not all targets were listed in the template as outturn performance for 2015/16 is still to be confirmed. Performance against targets will be reported quarterly with commentary and RAG status. Some measures will be annual where results are only available at year end but comments will be updated quarterly. The numbers of actions contributing to each strategic priority are more balanced than in the previous Corporate Plan.

The Panel was informed that data quality templates will be produced for every measure to ensure consistency and accuracy of the data reported. They will state the source, details of any calculations and the collection method for every indicator.

A Member suggested that there should be a measure relating to enforcement of planning conditions. While it is too late for this to be included in the Corporate Plan, it may be measured and reported at service level so the Corporate Team Manager agreed to discuss this with the Director, Head of Service and Executive Councillor with responsibility for planning services.

The outturn results for key actions and measures in the 2015/16 Corporate Plan will be reported to the Panel in June.

33. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel received and noted a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of studies being undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Communities and Customers and Economy and Growth.

It was noted that some of the information listed was repeated from the

previous version. It was explained that the report covered all current studies, including those where no progress had been made since the last month, and that timing had limited the opportunity to update some statuses.

Chairman