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Minutes of the meeting of the SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held on
WEDNESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Jenkins (Chair)
Councillors Baume, M Bradburn, Brown, Crooks, Ferrans, D Hopkins,
Lancaster, McLean, Priestley, Walker and Wallis.

Apologies: Councillor Hussain (substituted by Councillor Wallis) and P Geary
(substituted by Councillor Lancaster)

Officers: S Gonsalves (Director Customer & Community Services), L Beckett
(Head of Customer Data and Insight) and R Tidman (Committee
Services Manager).

Also Present: One member of the public

SM12 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor Crooks advised for transparency, that one of the residents
who had submitted written evidence for Item 6 was a constituent of
his and was known to him.

SM13 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management
Committee held on the 8 June 2021 be approved and signed by the
Chair as a correct record, subject to the addition of the following
sentence at the end of SM07:

‘It was also noted that the Performance Reports did not include data
from a number of unadopted estates where developers were
responsible for activities undertaken by the Council elsewhere.’

SM14 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

None

SM15**PERFORMANCE REPORTS – QUARTER 1 2021/22**

The Head of Customer Data and Insight introduced the Quarter 1 Performance reports and noted that Quarter 1 tended to be a lighter report with less data available. There had been some changes to the service indicators to determine which ones usefully measured outcomes which had resulted in a number of indicators initially being removed from the quarterly performance pack. The Chair of the Committee had asked that these be reinstated. Currently 45% of indicators that were reported were green and 55% were either red or amber.

The Committee heard from one member of the public who identified that certain areas of operation were not reported to the Committee, for example staff turnover. It was commented that the impact of staff turnover was becoming noticeable to residents particularly with regard to housing and planning due to a lack of continuity and the learning curve for new employees. It was also noted the change in performance information provided between Quarter 4 and Quarter 1, for example in housing, six indicators remained, twenty indicators had been dropped and nine indicators had been added. The member of the public also suggested that the Council should look at investigating the benefits and costs of applying external standards such as ISO 9001 and Quality Standard 18091.

The Director of Customer and Community Services indicated that staff turnover was monitored by the Corporate Leadership Team who regularly reviewed the performance of the organisation alongside the performance of services. The quarterly performance packs for Scrutiny Management Committee were meant to review how well the services the Council provided were performing rather than how the Council performed as an employee. With regard to implementation of external quality standards it was indicated that to ensure the data was robust the processes and methods to extract the information were regularly reviewed by the Audit team and the quality standards suggested were not the type of accreditation the Council would be seeking to implement.

The Committee then made note of the following points.

There were very few planning KPI's included in the performance papers. The Council had a Planning Improvement Board in place but the department still continued to have issues. Officers advised that the Council was moving away from an annual review of performance indicators to an ongoing, regular review with Heads of Service to identify where indicators could be developed and made more robust. There were only two indicators included for Planning and

more data would be brought back to the Committee for Quarter two.

It was questioned as to why the target for Fly tipping had been increased from 5,000 to 5,800. Officers indicated that they had reviewed the fly tipping indicator and the target had been re-profiled against the outcome of last year.

Concern was expressed that the collection of Business Rates was currently at 25% against a target for the year of 98%. Officers advised that the service was not unduly concerned at this stage and that it was a slight dip against the quarterly target which they did not expect would be an ongoing trend.

With regard to Corporate performance generally, there was a lot of amber and red indicators and the question was raised as to what the general feeling of the Corporate Leadership Team was with regard to performance. Officers advised that the information provided in the quarterly reports was a snapshot which was reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team alongside a range of other information. The general feeling was that 'things were going pretty well' and that the Council is doing well financially compared to other Councils.

It was also discussed whether the Committee wanted to take a more proactive stance to the scrutiny of performance indicators whether that might mean calling a Cabinet member or service director to attend to provide more context to any performance issues. It was noted that the Chief Executive should be asked to attend to assist with the granularity behind some of the figures.

It was noted that some Service Directors provided very detailed responses to the performance indicators whereas others did not which then made it difficult for committee members to be able to understand the context behind the figures.

It was identified that if there were specific issues raised in the performance pack than these could be directed to the relevant themed committees to pick up in their work programmes.

It was noted that the performance pack did not cover part of the Council's work with regard to unadopted estates. The challenge was how does the Council measure activity that it was not responsible for. It was suggested the Committee should consider data on growth, the number of new electors, the rate of adoption against the original target, in year primary school admissions that are not being educated on their estate and where the Council has felt it necessary to make a direct intervention with a developer. If the Council agreed to look at developing new indicators than it would be

important to consider their relationship with existing ones. This may be an issue that Strategic Placemaking could consider as part of their work programme.

It was noted that there was a focus on the services we deliver but residents perception was also an important element that needed to be considered.

It was further suggested that the Terms of Reference for the Committee should be reviewed to ensure that the Committee was not losing its focus when it came to the review of performance.

It was requested that the the 'missing' indicators in the quarterly report were included in future reports. There were a large number of indicators 'off-target' and the planning KPIs were noticeable by their absence and more needed to be introduced. There was a lack of clarity in the written responses particularly from within the transport and planning service areas and it was right that the Service Directors were invited to a meeting of the committee so they were able to give an explanation to committee members.

A number of Councillors identified specific queries with indicators which officers agreed to circulate a written response on those matters.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Planning Group review what corporate performance information is available, including staff turnover, and to agree which of these indicators should be included in the quarterly performance pack for Scrutiny Management Committee;
2. That the Director of Environment & Property and the Director of Planning & Placemaking be invited to attend the next committee meeting to report on performance within their services;
3. That the Chief Executive be invited to attend the next committee meeting to report on corporate performance, including staff turnover;
4. That trend data for indicators be included as part of the performance report going forward;
5. That the Planning Group consider if performance indicators related to growth can be incorporated into the performance report; and

6. That the Planning Group consider if performance indicators related to adoption of estates and the impact on residents of unadopted estates could be incorporated into the performance report.

SM16

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

The Head of Customer Data and Insight introduced the item with a brief presentation which introduced the key points from the briefing paper.

One member of the public had asked the Chair to read their question about the ability or not for deleted items to be recovered from the IT back up system. Officers advised that when someone leaves the organisation their inbox is retained for thirty days. A Manager can retain access to their Inbox and it can be retained indefinitely if required. The process was also the same if the officer leaving had signed a non-disclosure agreement.

The Committee discussed how does the Council measure or monitor how its is improving the performance of information governance. Officers advised that there were a set of indicators and information on the wider information governance suite. The Improvement Board reviewed this information on a quarterly basis.

It was noted that the Procedure looked fine, once you had decided who was worth asking. Officers advised that there were liaison officers in each service and a triage system was in place with five days for a service to identify if any others should be involved. There was a need to demonstrate that the Council had done as much as possible to prove that they had undertaken a 'reasonable search'.

Complaints were a separate process to the Freedom of Information process and was managed separately.

Culture change is an important element and there was a lot of work being undertaken around culture and not just managing documents when the Council moved to Office 365.

It was suggested that after the extensive internal review had been completed, was now the time to ask for a peer review of information governance to ensure that it was fit for purpose. Officers indicated that they were working with a number of other Councils that were on a similar journey who were reviewing the work but they were also open to look at the challenge of an independent review.

Some comments were made about the version control on the Email Policy and who had approved it. It was also noted that it applied to

Councillors but they did not seem to have been party to any approval.

There was also concern about the deadline for returning responses on Freedom of Information requests and whether time should be built into this to allow the information returned to be checked before it was submitted and that both parties within a communication chain need to ensure they are retaining records appropriately.

It was asked as to whether there should be any specific reference to Councillors in the documentation. Officers advised that the provision of training and guidance on information handling would be followed up with officers.

The Chair drew the Committees attention to the number of detailed submissions that had been submitted by residents. The first public submission highlights a frustrating and lengthy process. As a follow up it was asked as to how it was determined that 94% of FOI requests were carried out to the satisfaction of the requestor. Officers advised that this was the percentage of those that did not escalate further.

The papers from the Blakelands Residents Association and the Willen Residents Group identified specific issues raised around record keeping and data protection. All the issues raised related to planning enforcement and there were detailed issues raised that could possibly be scrutinised via a Task and Finish Group.

The system relies on human interpretation and therefore there needs to be a way to minimise risk and ensure robustness. For example was twelve months retention enough when for example planning matters could go on for five to eight years. Holding a workshop could be a way to assist Councillors to formulate their issues that have arisen with regard to email retention and Freedom of Information requests and that Planning Enforcement should be a matter that was looked at separately.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council be asked to commission a Peer Review on Information Governance;
2. That the Planning Group be asked to make arrangements and to determine the scope of a workshop for members on Information Governance; and

3. That guidance for Councillors is issued with regard to information handling

SM17 REPORTS FROM CHAIRS / UPDATES TO WORK PROGRAMMES

The Reports from Chairs and the updates to the Work Programme were received and noted.

RESOLVED –

That the Reports from Chairs and the updates to the work programmes be noted.

SM18 SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – PLANNING GROUP: 19 JULY 2021

The Committee received and noted the outcomes of the last Planning Group meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the outcomes from the Planning Group be noted.

SM19 HOUSING NEED TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Committee Services Manager provided an update on the membership and the arrangements going forward for the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED –

That the update on membership and arrangements for the task and finish group be noted.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.24 PM

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