

AT A MEETING of the POLICY AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle Winchester on Thursday, 26 July 2012.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Carol Leversha

Vice-Chairman
p Councillor Keith Evans

Councillors:

p Ray Bolton	p Elaine Still
a Adrian Collett	a Bruce Tennent
p Liz Fairhurst	p Chris Thomas
p Brian Gurden	p Pat West
p Robin McIntosh	p Sharyn Wheale

116. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that the following Members had given their apologies for this meeting: Cllr Adrian Collett who was on other County Council business and Cllr Bruce Tennent.

117. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

118. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Policy & Resources Select Committee Meeting held on 19 April 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

119. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that she had been consulted regarding the Executive Member for Policy and Resources taking an urgent decision. Having looked in to the matter she had given her consent.

120. **OPEN FOR BUSINESS: 2011/12 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chief Executive summarised the report (see Item 5 in the Minute Book) regarding the annual performance outcomes against the new performance management framework. It was reported that overall performance had been strong.

It was noted that three of the improvement areas related to children in care (placement stability, GCSE attainment and being in education employment or training). Members expressed concern that these measures had been improvement areas for a number of years. It was reported that close monitoring was taking place and improvement plans had been developed.

A Member commented that it was unfortunate the County Council no longer had youth services in house, as this function could have helped make a difference in supporting children in care. Members recommended consideration be given to the practice of authorities in the upper quartile nationally for those measures, to identify good practice the County Council could learn from. The Chairman of the Children & Young People Select Committee agreed to add the topic to the work programme for his committee.

It was reported that this year the performance report included the outcomes of a new self assessment process. Evidence was required to justify self assessment scores, and responses across departments had been moderated to ensure scores were being applied consistently. Members commented that it was important to take into account the views of the residents of Hampshire regarding the services the County Council provides. It was reported that resident feedback was measured in a number of service areas, although it was acknowledged that consulting the public was an area the County Council could develop.

It was indicated that the performance assessment system used this year was less resource intensive than the previous performance assessment which required reporting against a large number of indicators to central government. Members made a plea that in future effort be made to use 'plain English' in the report, to make it accessible to lay members of the public.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee notes the annual performance report.

That the improvement areas in relation to children in care be followed up by the Children & Young People Select Committee.

That the Officer be thanked for the update.

121. **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

The Chief Executive summarised the report (see Item 6 in the Minute Book) regarding the refreshed framework for employee engagement which had been launched in April 2012. The four elements of the framework were explained.

Employee Voice was an email based communications channel, whereby members of staff could make suggestions which would be considered by senior staff from their department. It was reported that a ten day turnaround was due to be instigated within which staff could expect a response. Suggestions and responses were published on the intranet, and a link to the relevant page was available on the members portal.

A handout was provided at the meeting summarising the feedback received through this mechanism in the first two months of its operation. Consideration was currently being given to how reporting against the feedback received could regularly be fed back to departments, and analysis be undertaken, for example comparing the type and frequency of suggestions by department, where this could be informative.

The Chairman reported that she had viewed a number of the suggestions made to date, and had been impressed by the ideas put forward. It was indicated that Human Resources were investigating the possibility of a reward mechanism for suggestions that generated significant savings. Members asked how any follow up action taken as a result of the ideas suggested would be reported to Members. It was noted that this would be covered in the quarterly performance updates provided to the Cabinet. Members requested that these updates also be provided to the Policy & Resources Select Committee. It was noted that informal interim updates could also be produced and emailed to members, similar to the handout provided. Members welcomed this offer.

Another strand was strengthening the use of line management, including the Individual Performance Plan process, to facilitate the sharing of improvement ideas. It was also planned to undertake targeted staff surveys on particular themes, and instigate an annual employee

attitude survey.

Regarding the annual employee survey, it was noted the last time such a survey had been undertaken was 2006 through an external company. This would now be supported internally, and it was anticipated the outcomes would be fed in to the annual performance report in future years. Following questions Members heard that the outcomes of the survey would be fed back to staff through staff briefings, and used to inform improvement plans. Members suggested that they would like to see employees involved in coming up with actions in response to the findings. Members queried whether contractual or agency staff would be able to take part in the survey. The officer offered to look into this.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee welcomes the new employee engagement framework.

That the quarterly performance reports including reporting on employee suggestions be forwarded to the Members of the Policy & Resources Select Committee.

That the Officer be thanked for the update.

122. **2011/12 END OF YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the report (see Item 7 in the Minute Book) providing a summary of the 2011/12 final accounts. It was reported that the County Council had ended the year with a £13.7 million under spend, which equated to 0.72% of the overall budget. It was explained that part of this under spend arose from early implementation of savings targets, and interest on balances being higher than anticipated.

A handout was provided giving further detail regarding reserves, as the details had been finalised subsequent to the writing of the report. It was noted that this was the result of the review by the Director of Corporate Resources which had been approved by Cabinet, referred to in paragraph 3.2 in the report.

It was highlighted that the grant equalization reserve had been increased, as it was anticipated that the next Comprehensive Spending Review would continue the trend of reduced grant funding from central government, therefore this funding was designed to be used to ease the transition where grants were significantly reduced. It was also indicated that a new reserve had been created

Arrangements be made for the update reports to be forwarded to the Members of the Select Committee

in relation to the funding risk posed by the local government resource review.

Members asked whether the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would mean it would be more difficult for the County Council to access funding from developers to contribute to infrastructure capital schemes such as schools and roads. It was indicated that the CIL was designed for small developments, and the County Council would still be able to use Section 106 powers to claim infrastructure contributions in relation to large developments.

It was noted if infrastructure costs were being recouped through Section 106 they could not also be included in CIL levies. It was highlighted that developer contributions could only be applied based on assessed need. To this end, the Director of Economy Transport and Environment had recently taken an infrastructure plan to Cabinet which assessed future needs, and the school places plan had been refreshed.

RESOLVED:

That the Officer be thanked for the update.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Select Committee Chairmen attend the relevant Cabinet Members budget setting meetings, to feed in to scrutiny of the budget.

Chairman to write to the Executive Member for Policy & Resources to communicate the recommendation

123. **WORK PROGRAMME AND ONGOING WORK
ACROSS ALL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The Chairman went through the committee's future work programme and invited Members views regarding the items listed.

The Chairman proposed the following:

- the committee receive an update on economic development in April 2013
- the committee receive an update on the new business rates retention scheme in July 2013
- that in addition to the general IT update due in October 2012, an update be requested in early 2013 on how IT suggestions from employee voice were being responded to
- the annual performance report remain on the work programme for an update in July 2013
- that in relation to the Hampshire Association of Local Councils item, the Chief Executive of HALC be invited to attend the October 2012 meeting

- that an update on progress in relation to temporary agency staff be invited early in 2013
- that the topic of consultation remain on the work programme for further scrutiny
- that the committee pre-scrutinise an item on the forward plan for the Executive Member for Policy & Resources regarding the creation of new schools, in particular in relation to parking provision for parents.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Work Programme be approved subject to the amendments made at this meeting.

That the work programme be updated

Chairman, 25 October 2012