

AT A MEETING of the POLICY AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle Winchester on Thursday, 25 October 2012.

**PRESENT**

Chairman:  
p Councillor Carol Leversha

Vice-Chairman  
p Councillor Keith Evans

Councillors:

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

In attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:

Cllr Charlotte Bailey, County Councillor for Winchester Downlands  
Cllr Adam Carew, County Councillor for Bordon, Whitehill and Lindford  
Cllr Tim Knight, County Councillor for Fareham Crofton

124. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received because all Members were present.

125. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the recent changes to the County Council's code of conduct, following the County Council meeting on 19 July 2012.

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Non-Pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 2 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

126. **MINUTES**

Councillor Adrian Collett requested that his absence at the Policy & Resources Select Committee Meeting held on 26 July 2012 be amended to reflect him being on other County Council business.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the Select Committee meeting held on the 26 July were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

127. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that following a query raised at the last meeting regarding potential for the County Council to claim compensation as a result of the LIBOR rate fixing, the Head of Finance had provided a response to the Member who had asked, as agreed.

The Chairman also reported that the budget scrutiny recommendation from the last meeting had been accepted and Select Committee Chairmen had been invited to attend the relevant Cabinet Members budget setting meetings. The Chairman invited Members to feed in views on budget issues through the Chairmen, in order to take advantage of this earlier opportunity to influence the budget setting process.

128. **REFERRAL FROM COUNTY COUNCIL: NOTICE OF MOTION**

At the meeting of County Council held on 20 September 2012, a Notice of Motion was received. Under Standing Order 18.4 County Council resolved to refer consideration of the Motion to the Policy & Resources Select Committee.

Councillor Tim Knight, proposer of the Motion, was invited to present his Motion to the committee. The Motion was worded as follows:

“ That to make provision for Executive Members to be held to account for their decisions and to support the spirit of democracy the Constitution is altered to ensure that all non urgent decisions taken by the Executive are not implemented for seven calendar days which would then allow them to be ‘Called In’ by the relevant Select Committee.”

Councillor Knight indicated that the intention of the Motion was to ensure non urgent decisions were open to Call In, as he had recently had experience of a Call In request being turned down as the decision had been implemented prior to the close of the Call In period.

All Members of the County Council had been offered the opportunity to attend the meeting to give their views on the Motion. Councillor Charlotte Bailey and Councillor Adam Carew were in attendance and spoke in support of the Motion. Councillor Jenny Radley had provided a written statement in support of the Motion as she was unable to attend the meeting. This was provided to the Members in attendance.

It was noted that the decision that Councillor Knight had wished to Call In was the appointment of a Member to an Outside Body. The three Members who made representation to the Committee indicated that they supported increased transparency in relation to appointments to outside bodies, and therefore supported the Motion in order that these decisions be open to scrutiny through the Call In process.

Members of the Policy & Resources Select Committee discussed appointments to outside bodies as part of their debate. Councillor Bailey requested that such appointments be supported by a brief explanation of why the proposed Member was considered to be best suited to the role. However, it was noted that the County Council currently appointed to nearly two hundred outside bodies, and any supporting process should be proportionate.

The debate then focused on the wording of the Notice of Motion, which related to the provisions in the Constitution supporting the Call In procedure. Members had available to them a report by the Monitoring Officer setting out the legal position (see Item 5 in the Minute Book), and the Monitoring Officer was in attendance to provide advice on the law and the Constitution during the debate.

Members supported the spirit of the Motion. However, the Committee was not prepared to support the Motion as worded, as Members were advised that this would not meet Statutory Guidance regarding Call In of Executive decisions. Statutory Guidance to which Local Authorities must have regard was published to underpin the provisions of Part II of the Local Government Act 2000. The Monitoring Officer advised that the provisions in the County Council's Constitution make a distinction between Executive Decisions in line with the Budget and Policy Framework, and other Executive Decisions. Whilst it is possible to Call in a decision in line with the Budget and Policy Framework, Call in does not prevent such decision from being implemented. This provision was in line with advice contained in the Statutory Guidance.

An alternative wording was proposed to accommodate this point, however Members were mindful that under the

current arrangements this would result in a lengthy window within which decisions could not be implemented, which in some cases may hamper the transaction of the business of the Council. Currently decisions are notified to all Members within 5 working days, the decision can then be called in within a further 7 calendar days from the date of notification, so potentially it may be that a decision could not be implemented for two weeks. Members acknowledged that such a delay could be an issue for some decisions such as procurement exercises, where particular timescales applied. Members did not wish to instigate a procedure that would hold up implementation of decisions where there was a clear business reason to action the decision promptly.

The Committee discussed possible options to respond to the issues raised, however Members did not wish to commit to recommending changes to the Constitution without further work being undertaken to ensure they would be legal and workable. It was therefore proposed that the Member Working Group Reviewing Governance Models take this piece of work forwards, with the following suggestion as a starting point that could be further explored:

- a) The Constitution is amended to require that all non urgent decisions taken by the Executive are not implemented until the Call In period has elapsed (unless the decision derives from the Policy Framework and agreed budget).

Additional wording may be required, to allow for exceptions where a decision needs to be implemented within the Call In period e.g. a procurement exercise. The Monitoring Officer be invited to investigate this.

In support of efficient decision making and in accordance with good practice, the length of time that a decision could not be implemented be limited by the following additional amendments:

- i) Following a decision day, all Members be notified by email confirming the executive decisions taken. That this take place within 2 clear working days of the date of the decision meeting. e.g. for a decision day at 2pm on a Monday, notification of the decisions be circulated by close of business on the Wednesday.
- ii) From the day the decisions are so notified, for Members to have 3 clear working days to submit a request for Call In.

e.g. for a decision made at a decision day held at 2pm on Monday, notified to Members on Wednesday, the Call In window would be open until 11:59pm on the following Monday. (Note this is an example of what would be the maximum length of time between a decision being taken and the Call In window elapsing, in a week without bank holidays.

Following the debate it was resolved to recommend the following to County Council in relation to the Motion:

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the proposal contained within the Motion regarding amendment of the call-in procedure be considered by the Members Working Group – Review of Governance Models as part of their overall work
- 2) That in the meantime and pending the outcome of the review of existing call-in procedures the Executive be requested to transact their business in the spirit of openness and accountability and seek to avoid implementing non-urgent decisions during the call-in period unless there is a clear business need to do so.

Recommendations of the committee to be reported to the next meeting of County Council

129. **IT UPDATE**

The Director of Corporate Resources presented a report (see Item 6 in the Minute Book) which provided the Committee with an annual update on IT developments and performance over the last year and also summarised future priorities. It was highlighted that IT had made valuable contributions to the many changes facing the organisation recently. These included; efficiency programmes, partnership working, developing new business models for services, and corporate change programmes such as the Integrated Business Centre and Hampshire Workstyle.

It was reported that IT was maintaining a high level of service in a context of reduced budgets, IT changes and centralisation, whilst specific pressures were highlighted. It was noted that a recent external review showed a good level of user satisfaction with IT services and these figures had increased slightly since the last survey of 2009/10.

The launch of Employee Voice had provided an open communication channel for staff to suggest improvements, some of which were IT related. So far, suggestions that were feasible were largely already being considered within existing work streams. The ability for the relevant Department Management Team to respond also enabled IT services to communicate an explanation for why other

suggestions were not able to be progressed.

Members heard that a number of successful IT partnerships had been recently formed which included the completion of IT roll-out in the Havant Public Service Plaza, and an IT service agreement with East Hampshire District Council. It was highlighted that this model of shared services could be considered in relation to other organisations in future.

It was reported that a Member IT event earlier in the year had proven to be very successful. A range of topics were covered which included:

- Transparency Agenda and Open Data
- Highway Fault Reporting Website
- On-line Crime Reports
- Demonstrations of Member IT Services

Members noted that marketplace opportunities were being considered to provide Children's Services with an improved Social Care case management IT system. Members were concerned regarding how a different system would link to the adult social care system, when service users transferred from Children's to Adults services. It was indicated this aspect was being carefully examined.

Members asked about the project to deliver a rural village broadband service using HPSN. It was reported that in the pilot project, the broadband infrastructure to the local school was used as a hub to facilitate access to broadband for the surrounding community. It was noted that ability to replicate this approach would depend on local circumstances.

Members noted that the retention and recruitment of IT staff was a growing issue as IT skills were in high demand in the current market. Members heard that measures were in place to compensate for this.

RESOLVED:

That the Officer be thanked for the update.

130. **HR UPDATE**

The Director of Corporate Resources provided a presentation to Members on Absence Management (item 7 in the Minute Book). This provided an update on current absence levels and issues, developments since the last update and proposals for moving forward. It was reported that a stretching target of 8.48 had been set for average number of days lost per year per Full Time

Equivalent member of staff, averaged across the whole organisation (based on actual working days in a year). As of September 2012 the current average was 8.74, however this was a significant improvement on September 2011 when the rate was 9.60. It was hoped the target would be reached by the end of the financial year. Absence levels were also broken down by Department, and each Department had their own target to reduce absence.

It was confirmed that the figures provided included long term sickness absences, and Members heard that the top three causes of employee absence were stress, influenza and muscular skeletal problems.

Members heard that Managers were now held accountable for employee absence through their Individual Performance Plan, and the Counties contracted provider of temporary staff Manpower now followed similar principles of absence management for the temporary staff employed by the County Council. In addition, when trigger points are reached of number of days absence taken, Managers in the future would be required to submit to Human Resources a record of what action they had taken. Members welcomed this approach.

Working Well in Hampshire is a recent successful internal web initiative, designed to provide staff and managers with support and guidance on managing sickness absence. Included on the web pages are details of staff activities, discounts and health awareness as well as the tools to manage absence.

Occupational Health had been reviewed to both ensure its systems and processes meet the needs of the organisation and ensure it adopted a wellbeing approach – to aim to support staff in order to help shorten or avoid periods of absence. One area of improvement was the instigation of triaging of employment medical questionnaires to ensure Occupational Health only assess those of potential concern rather than all. Members also heard that consideration was being given to opportunities to share Occupational Health services with the Police and Fire Service, as part of shared services arrangements.

Members welcomed the developments made since the absence management update received last year, and supported plans to maintain a high profile for absence management in the future within the organisation.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Officer be thanked for the update.

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

The Chairman noted that the Open for Business Quarter 1 Report produced for Cabinet had been circulated to the committee, and confirmed that no Member had highlighted any concerns arising from this monitoring at this early stage. The Chairman then went through the committee's future work programme and invited Members views regarding the items listed.

The Chairman proposed the following:

- that the committee receive a future update on Consultation Policy
- that the committee receive an update on the new gypsy and traveller strategy due to be considered by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources, at the January 2013 meeting
- that Councillor Wheale would be attending a meeting regarding parking provision at schools, and could report back on this to the next meeting of the committee

In addition, a Member requested that consideration be given to inviting the Executive Member for Communities and International Relations to provide the Committee with an overview of his portfolio.

RESOLVED:

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

That the work programme be updated

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Chairman, 24 January 2013