

AT A MEETING of the POLICY AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle Winchester on Thursday, 31 October 2013.

**PRESENT**

Chairman:  
p Councillor Jonathan Glen

Vice-Chairman  
p Councillor Keith Evans

Councillors:

p Ray Bolton	p Patricia Stallard
p Adrian Collett	p Mark Staplehurst
p Criss Connor	p Elaine Still
a Keith House	p Bruce Tennent
p Robin McIntosh	p Pat West
p Andy Moore	p Sharyn Wheale

Also in attendance:

Councillor Roy Perry, Executive Member for Policy & Resources and Leader of the Council

Councillor Stephen Reid, Executive Member for Human Resources

11. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Keith House (who was on Borough Council business).

12. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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.

13. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Policy & Resources Select Committee meeting held on 25 July 2013 were confirmed as a correct

record and signed by the Chairman.

14. **DEPUTATIONS**

No deputations were received for this meeting.

15. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed the Executive Members in attendance.

The Chairman reported that it had been agreed for himself or the Vice Chairman of the Policy & Resources Select Committee to have a standing invitation to observe the meetings of the other Select Committees.

The Chairman highlighted that at the last meeting, Members indicated their interest in receiving a future update on economic development. The Executive Member who covers Economic Development was not able to make this meeting and there was also a proposal from Cabinet that the scrutiny of economic development become the remit of the Environment & Transportation Select Committee in future. However, the Chairman reported that he had requested a Briefing on Economic Development be held for the Members of this committee. This would not be a formal scrutiny, but would be an opportunity for Members to be briefed on the current thinking in terms of the County Council's role in economic development, and for Members to provide feedback on this.

16. **CORPORATE PRIORITIES 2013-17**

The Executive Member for Policy & Resources and Chairman of the Cabinet spoke on the context for the County Council and how this fed in to the refreshed corporate priorities for 2013-17 outlined in the 'Shaping Hampshire' strategic plan (see Item 6 in the Minute Book).

Members heard:

- That the County Council continues to face a difficult economic situation, with £90m in budget pressures expected in 2015 as a result of a further reduction in government grant of 12%
- That recent media reports about future job losses at the Council were not accurate – 1800 posts had been lost in the previous round of savings, of which only eighteen had been through compulsory redundancy. It was hoped the majority of the next round could also be achieved through deleting vacant posts, voluntary redundancy and early retirement. It was not possible to put a precise figure on the number of role reductions expected at this stage, but it could be in the order of around 1,000.

Following questions Members heard:

- That a delivery plan was in development to support the strategy, and key measures would be monitored quarterly by the Corporate Management Team and twice a year by Cabinet.
- That the strategy contained high level ambitions, and the detail of how this would be achieved would be picked up through other specific plans e.g. the Children & Young People Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Plan
  - The performance monitoring report will include targets and milestones, so the organisation can be held to account for achievement against the ambitions set out
  - That the three overarching corporate aims (Hampshire safer and more secure for all, Maximising well-being and Enhancing our quality of place) remained in force, and the new strategic plan complemented them
  - That the plan had been draft when circulated for this meeting, however it had been agreed by Cabinet earlier that week.

Members commented:

- That the implications of the funding reductions for jobs were required to avoid uncertainty for staff
  - The Chairman of the Safe & Healthy People Select Committee commented that the summary of the priority areas mentioned children & young people but not older people. It was highlighted that there were several mentions of older people in the more detailed section on health and wellbeing.
  - The Chairman of the Culture Communities & Rural Affairs Select Committee commented that it was a shame there was no mention of the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the strategy document
  - That as a document setting out the direction of travel for the County Council, all Members may wish to comment on it. The Leader indicated that it was an Executive function to agree strategy, however he undertook to explore the option to place the document on the agenda for a meeting of the full County Council to bring it to Members attention.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Member for Policy and Resources for presenting this item and responding to Members questions.

RESOLVED:

That the Delivery Plan supporting the strategy be circulated by email to Members of the Select Committee when available.

That this topic remain on the work programme for a future update.

Delivery Plan  
be circulated  
when available

Work  
programme be  
updated

## 17. **PARTNERSHIP WORKING – AN INTRODUCTION**

The Director of Policy & Governance gave a presentation in support of the report provided regarding partnership working and working with communities (see Item 7 in the Minute Book).

Members heard:

- That more intelligent provision of services in communities, and early intervention, could help the County Council to provide services with a smaller budget in future
- That public services needed to be aware of the work of partner organisations and the impact any changes could have on each other
- That often communities want to be self reliant and it is the role of the County Council to facilitate that
- That work was ongoing to identify how the improvements made through the 'troubled families' initiative could be sustained without ongoing intensive staff time required
- Pilot areas had been selected where there was high demand for public services e.g. Leigh Park, to investigate opportunities to provide services more efficiently and effectively
- That the County Council was taking part in the Public Service Transformation Network, which offered the opportunity to learn from the good practice of other Local Authorities. Other Authorities in the Network were interested in learning from Hampshire regarding joint working with the Police and Fire service

Following questions Members heard:

- That the tougher financial climate for public services in recent years had encouraged partners to look increasingly at working together, as all organisations were seeking opportunities to operate more efficiently
- That the County Council was taking part in a Local Government Association Peer Challenge in early 2014

Members commented:

- That it was important to avoid duplication of effort as far as possible. Members highlighted that District Councils were also undertaking pilots on how services are provided in the community, and that ideally this should be joined up with what the County Council was undertaking
- That it was disappointing Leigh Park was so often selected for additional focus when there were pockets of deprivation in other parts of Hampshire

**RESOLVED:**

That the Chairman and Vice Chairman work with officers to develop further involvement of the committee in this topic,

Involvement of the committee be developed

including convening an additional meeting of the committee in the spring at Havant Plaza.

and an additional meeting convened in the Spring

18. **CONSULTATION**

The Director of Culture Communities and Business Services and Director of Economy Transport & Environment gave a presentation (see Item 8 in the Minute Book) regarding public consultation.

Members heard:

- That a consultation that had taken place on changes to library opening hours was an example of good consultation practice. This included alerting local Members to the proposals in their area prior to the public consultation, adapting plans in response to feedback, and publicising the decision taken following the consultation
- That guidance regarding consultation existed across the organisation, and that it was intended to remove out of date advice and focus on providing up to date guidance in one place
- That the external County Council website included a portal for active consultations, and that the outcome of consultations would be sign posted from here

Following questions Members heard:

- That officers liaised with colleagues in Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils and the Police and Fire service in order to avoid potential confusion from different organisations consulting at the same time
- That consultation leads from all Departments met to share information

Members commented:

- That the principles were sound, however there had been examples where consultation had not been targeted at all those affected e.g. regarding Fleet railway station – people from Yateley use the station but were not consulted.
- To avoid such omissions, Members suggested that where a consultation is related to a specific location, a circle be drawn with the location at the centre, and the elected representatives for the areas covered by the circle be contacted.
- That it was best to avoid consulting in August or launching a consultation in any holiday period
- That it would be preferable to have basic standards of consultation enshrined in corporate policy, with the flexibility that elements could be adapted to suit the scale and specific needs of particular consultations

RESOLVED:

That a Working Group be set up to feed in Members' views

regarding consultation policy comprising:

- Cllr McIntosh
- Cllr Staplehurst
- Cllr Wheale

The work of this group be reported to a future meeting of the Select Committee.

Arrangements  
be made for a  
working group

## 19. **MANAGING ATTENDANCE**

The Director of Corporate Resources presented a report (see Item 9 in the Minute Book) regarding absence management within the Council.

Members heard:

- That reducing sickness absence had been a focus in the organisation over the past two years. Progress had been made but it was acknowledged there was more to do
  - That some sickness absence was inevitable, but the County Council could work to reduce inappropriate sick leave, and to assist staff to a swift return to work following a period of sickness absence
    - That data had been used to identify areas to focus efforts to improve absence rates. Specific advice had been provided to managers regarding staff with stress, with the aim to identify the signs early and provide support to avoid the situation getting worse
      - That work had been undertaken with Occupational Health which had reduced the wait for appointments
        - That in April 2012 a stretch target of 8.48 days of absence per Full Time Equivalent member of staff had been set. At the time the rate was 9.59 so to reach the target would have required a 10-11% reduction in a year. The current level was 8.81
          - It was difficult to benchmark against other authorities as different Councils provide different services and therefore have a different staff mix with different demands. However, the latest available average from the Local Government Association was 9.1 days per FTE so Hampshire was now below this average
            - Regarding long term sickness absence, guides had been produced informed by guidance from the British Medical Association regarding typical recovery times for common types of surgery and treatment. This assisted managers to have an informed conversation with staff about appropriate timescales for a return to work
              - Some staff groups do manual work and are therefore susceptible to muscular skeletal problems. The Council was investigating options to support these staff, for example piloting providing physiotherapy, as this could be put in place quicker than waiting for NHS provision. It was being assessed to see if a quicker return to work made this cost effective.

The Executive Member for Human Resources outlined that it was his ambition to maintain the County Council's position as a good employer, while balancing this with the need to get good productivity from staff. He was open to suggestions of tools and techniques to support this aim.

Following questions Members heard:

- That the top causes of sickness absence were mental health and muscular skeletal
- That the absence rate was disproportionately affected by a large head count change due to how it was calculated, therefore reductions in staff numbers over the past year affected the extent to which the rate had come down
- That less than 20 days of absence was classified as short term absence. 95% of people off sick came into this category. Managers could look for trends to identify potential absence that was not genuine e.g. often falling on a Friday

RESOLVED:

That the committee be notified if sickness absence rates exceed the previous year's level for three months in a row.

20. **HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP**

The Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the terms of reference for a working group regarding mental health, in particular use of section 136 of the Mental Health Act (see Item 10 in the Minute Book). It was noted that the Vice Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be chairing this working group.

RESOLVED:

That the terms of reference for the Working Group regarding section 136 of the Mental Health Act are approved.

21. **CULTURE COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE SUB COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Culture Communities & Rural Affairs Select Committee presented the terms of reference for a sub committee to consider major grant applications received under the Community Buildings Capital Grants Scheme in the 2013/14 financial year (see Item 11 in the Minute Book).

RESOLVED:

That no further update be required unless absence rates increase for a sustained period

That the terms of reference for the sub committee regarding Community Buildings Capital Grants are approved.

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

Members noted the work programme for the committee and the overview of scrutiny activity across all Committees (see Item 12 in the Minute Book).

The Chairmen of each of the other scrutiny committees gave an update to report on the work of their committee.

The Chairman suggested that an item be added to the work programme on Transformation to 2015.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme is agreed, subject to any amendments arising from this meeting.

23. **FOLLOW UPS FROM LAST MEETING**

The Chairman reported on the following issues raised at the last meeting:

Concessionary fares – Cllr Connor was put in touch with the Officer leading on Passenger Transport. Cllr Connor reported that he had spoken to the officer and understood that the County Council's concessionary fares scheme was already over and above statutory requirements. He would take up his views directly with the Executive Member for Economy Transport & Environment.

Sub contracting of bridge repairs – An explanation of the highway contract had been sought and circulated to committee Members. Cllr Moore who had raised the issue had left the meeting, therefore his feedback on this would be sought at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the updates are noted.

The work programme be updated in consultation with the Chairman

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Chairman, 23 January 2014