

Executive Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of Executive Scrutiny Committee was held on Tuesday, 22nd September, 2009.

Present: Cllr Robert Gibson (Chairman); Cllr Jim Beall (Vice Councillor Ann Cains), Cllr Julia Cherrett (Vice Councillor Mrs Allison Trainer), Cllr Mick Eddy (Vice Councillor David Harrington), Cllr John Fletcher (Vice Councillor Maureen Rigg), Cllr Miss Tina Large, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Mrs Liz Nesbitt, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell and Cllr Mick Stoker.

Officers: M Waggott, J Trainer, P K Bell (LD); G Cummings, L King (R); P Diggins, J McCann (DNS).

Also in attendance: None.

Apologies: Cllr Ann Cains, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Maureen Rigg, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Allison Trainer, Cllr Bill Woodhead, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Sherris and Cllr Mick Womphrey.

EXC 22/09 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

EXC 23/09 **Minutes of Previous Meeting - 28th July 2009**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

EXC 24/09 **Quarter 1 Performance and Finance Report April - June 2009**

Consideration was given to a report that outlined the Council's service performance for the first quarter of the 2009/10 year from 1 April 2009 to 30 June 2009 highlighting achievements, areas for improvement, consultation activity undertaken, complaints, commendations and comments received and outturn against revenue and capital budgets.

With regard the financial position the position for 2009/10 was structured around three "ring-fenced" financial areas:-

- o General Fund
- o Housing Revenue Account
- o Capital

The report summarised the Council's position, with regard to these funds.

The report detailed the current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position of each Council service area. Recent reports had identified the difficult financial position facing the Council and officers were considering carefully expenditure in all areas. Although there were a number of emerging issues, this proactive approach meant that it was anticipated that expenditure would be in line with original plans. It was however very early into the year and these matters would be monitored closely. As such there were no significant changes to the MTFP.

With regard the performance update the report provided members with a picture of the Council's performance against the National Indicator set as well as details of resident feedback and consultation activity. A series of appendices were attached to the report to provide members with a full picture of performance.

With regard the overall performance of the National Indicator measures where information was available at the end of quarter 1, 83 % (72 indicators) across all themes were predicted to achieve targets or were within the agreed tolerance set. For the remaining measures remedial action was being taken to address areas of slippage. Details of achievements and areas of slippage were included in the thematic sections of the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The overall report be noted.
2. The revised MTFP be approved.
3. The level of working balances be approved and retained at £8.4 million.
4. The re-profiled Capital Programme be approved.
5. The annual Treasury Management report be approved.

EXC 25/09 Efficiency Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Programme - Commercial Trading

Consideration was given to a report that presented the baseline and initial challenge information relating to the EIT Review of Commercial Trading Services, and provided an update on progress to date on the review.

The Executive Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed scope and project plan of the EIT Review of Commercial Trading Services at its meeting on June 10th 2009.

The overall aim of the EIT review was to investigate options for the future strategy and business development of the Commercial Trading Services. This would help to ensure that these services were commercially focused and at least maintain their market share and profitability during the economic downturn and were fully prepared to take advantage of the opportunities for appropriate growth afforded by economic recovery. Services included were:

- Heating, ventilation and electrical works
- Civic catering
- Fleet management
- Vehicle maintenance
- Highway schemes and improvements
- Commercial trade waste collections

There was a built-in expectation within the Medium Term Financial Plan that trading profits would be generated by the Commercial Trading Services to help the Council as a whole to deliver its key objectives. As the financial position becomes tighter in terms of grant, investment and subsidy income, the need to generate income from external commercial operations and to maximise the opportunities to deliver services to internal customers becomes more pressing, if the expectations of residents in terms of service delivery were to be met whilst

keeping Council Tax increases to reasonable levels.

In the current year, the various Commercial Trading Services as a whole had received a budget allocation of £10.623m and were targeted to achieve income targets of £12.188m, a targeted surplus of £1.565m.

The report provided a breakdown of these figures for each service area within the EIT Review of Commercial Trading Services.

The report outlined that because of the diverse nature of the services within the EIT Review, the individual service baselines and initial challenge documents relating to the various Commercial Trading Services were attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the baseline and initial challenge information be noted.

EXC 26/09 **Chairs' Support Arrangements**

Consideration was given to a report on future support arrangements for Select Committee Chairs given the wider scrutiny powers and the potential increasing complexity of reviews.

The report outlined that during the implementation of the Council's new scrutiny co-ordination arrangements in 2006, regular informal meetings with Chairs were arranged in order to share experiences and discuss development ideas prior to formal consideration by Executive Scrutiny Committee.

Recent months had seen the introduction of legislation strengthening scrutiny powers and placing more emphasis on scrutiny of partner organisations. Over the next year, the Council would need to consider how scrutiny responded to the new legislation and it was likely that future review work would have a greater emphasis on external scrutiny and holding partner organisations to account. It was therefore timely to review the support given to Chairs given the new developments and potential increasing complexity of review work in the future. This could be achieved through:-

- Re-instating monthly informal chairs' meetings (although it may be difficult to identify dates which accommodate all Chairs' commitments); or
- Introducing individual Chair's support meetings with the Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Leader

Scrutiny Officer support to Select Committees would continue to be flexible with officer support rotating around the themed Select Committees in order to maintain freshness of support and team development.

Members felt that at this present time there was no need for any more support arrangements for Chairs of Select Committees but this should be reviewed at a future date.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**EXC
27/09** **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan for 1 September 2009 to 31 December 2009 was provided for Members information.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

**EXC
28/09** **Report on Chairs Updates**

Corporate, Adult Services and Social Inclusion Select Committee

The Committee were undertaking a review of Communication, Consultation and Engagement as part of the EIT programme. The elements of the review and the information that had been presented to the Committee was contained within the update.

Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee

The Committee were providing independent challenge to the following three "gateway" reviews as part of the EIT programme:-

- Adult Operations
- Highways, Lighting and Network
- Property and Facilities Management

Housing and Community Safety Select Committee

At the meeting of 27 August, the Committee considered the baseline information for Environmental Health, and the mandatory licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation. This was being followed by Development Control and Building Control at the meeting of 8 October.

The Committee had deferred the opportunity to meet with members of the taxi trade. The trade were consulted as part of the review and requested to attend a meeting, however they had an ongoing objection to the Council's accounts (in respect of the transportation licensing account) and so the Committee had deferred the matter until the objection was resolved.

A demonstration of the potential role of ICT in delivering efficiencies would be delivered by Xentrall in October and the results would be reported to the Committee.

Environment Select Committee

The Committee has received all the planned evidence for this review of carbon management and had agreed a draft report.

A tripartite meeting was held on 3rd September 2009 at which the draft recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet Member.

The report was being updated to include the recommendations and would receive the committee's final agreement at its meeting on 5th October.

The report would be presented to Cabinet on 29th October 2009.

Regeneration and Transport Select Committee

The Committee held three sub group meetings in August to discuss the baseline information and options for the EIT review on Commissioning and Provision of Public and Community Transport. Each sub group concentrated on different areas of service: concessionary fares, Boroughbus contracts, and community transport which included dial-a-ride, home to school transport, and adult social care services transport.

The scheduled meeting on 24th August was cancelled to allow for all the sub groups to meet before reporting back to the full Committee, and an informal meeting was held for the officers and chair/vice chair to discuss progress made so far. It was agreed that there was further information still needed before the options could be presented to the full committee and therefore the following formal meeting, due to be held on 7 September was also cancelled. The options following the sub group meetings are now due to be presented, along with an SWOT analysis for each option, to the full committee at the meeting on 5th October.

Children and Young People Select Committee

The Committee had received all baseline information from the 5 workstreams identified to cover all aspects of the review of Child Placements and Residential Care.

Health Select Committee

The Committee was surveying other authorities in order to gain from their experiences of applying the FACS bandings. At the meeting of 3rd August, Members received evidence from Middlesbrough regarding its review of FACS bandings. Also on 3rd August the Committee received legal advice from the Council's Principal Solicitor.

On 14th September, the Committee met with representatives of North Yorkshire and Sunderland Councils in order to benefit further from the experience of other authorities.

Work on data regarding the numbers of clients in each FACS banding, and associated costs, is ongoing and will be used to inform the committee's decision making process, and the Committee continue to monitor developments related to the Care and Support Green Paper.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

**EXC
29/09**

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09

Members were provided with a draft of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09. Members commented upon the draft and it was requested that further comments be submitted to the Head of Democratic Services.

A distribution for the Annual Report would be produced to include Council Services, Libraries, External Partners etc. The Annual Report would also be available to view on the Councils Website.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Report be noted and that comments be submitted to the Head of Democratic Services