

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 23 February 2015 at 7.30pm at Salvation House, 2 Sterling Court, Mundells, Welwyn Garden City, Herts.

PRESENT: Councillors G.Michaelides (Chairman)
D.Bell (Vice-Chairman)

M.Birleson, S.Chander, T.Crump, S.Markiewicz, J.Nicholls,
A.Prest, S.Roberts, C.Storer (substituting for Councillor
G.Dowler)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director (Governance) (B.Baldock)
Director (Finance and Operations) (P.Kettle)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Senior Performance and Strategy Officer (G.Crawford)
Financial and Technical Accountant - Capital (T.Fortune)
Committee Manager (S.Hulks)
Human Resources Manager (K.Patel)
Company Accountant (K.Reynoldson)
IT Client Manager (W.Turnbull)
Finance and Technical Accountant (D.Williams)

26. SUBSTITUTIONS OF MEMBERS:

The following substitution of Committee Members had been made in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19-22:

Councillor C.Storer for Councillor G.Dowler.

27. APOLOGIES:

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G.Dowler.

28. MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2015 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

29. STERIA CONTRACT PERFORMANCE:

The Committee received a report which provided an analysis of the service performance of Steria.

It was noted that there had been a change to the rules for paying business rates whereby they could now be paid in 12 instalments, not 10 as they had been

previously. As a result of this, some of the big companies had taken that option, so impacting on the collection rates.

Members were advised that the Council looked at the optimum dates for paying the money over and some dates were agreed with the government.

The Committee felt that the performance indicator of three minutes for greeting visitors at reception was high and Members felt that visitors should be acknowledged immediately. Officers advised that a new queuing system was being looked at.

Officers agreed to provide a response to Members about the methods used for measuring the percentage of visitors who were greeted in the three minute timeframe.

Members commented that the reception staff were polite, helpful and usually acknowledged visitors in less than the three minute target.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

30. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING AT 31 DECEMBER 2014 (MONTH 9):

Members received a report which advised them of the monitoring position of the revenue, capital and HRA budgets.

The Committee asked whether officers explored opportunities to buy IT licences with other authorities. Officers responded that this was considered where possible, but the set up of IT differed from one authority to another and therefore licensing requirements were often different.

It was noted that the amount that had been paid to Microsoft was about half of the amount that had originally been demanded. This was a one off payment which would take the Council forward.

Members referred to paragraph 8.11 and commented that, if business growth was higher than previously assumed, they would have expected income to be higher. Officers explained that business rates were put through one account and the levy through another so making the figures look strange.

Members noted that there had been a timing issue with payment of gas bills and that the bills and payments would catch up with each other at year end.

There had been a reclassification of the Council's properties which had impacted on the depreciation figure. Depreciation was purely a book-keeping exercise. There was requirement to depreciate as per proper accounting processes. This had no impact on Council Tax.

Members commented that the Women's Cycle Tour showed a cost against it but there had been benefits such as increased business income. They felt that the report should show some of the benefits received.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

31. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT – RESOURCES:

Members were presented with a report which provided them with all the Performance Indicator data collected for those services that fell within the remit of the Committee.

It was noted that changes to targets could be made to reflect the challenges being faced so providing a more realistic picture of what could be expected. Members commented that, by having an unrealistic target, it could look as though teams were failing when in fact they were doing a good job.

It was noted that performance was good and that there had been an improvement in sickness absence levels.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

32. EMPLOYEE TURNOVER 1 NOVEMBER 2013 – 31 OCTOBER 2014:

The Committee received a report which provided additional information to the previous version.

Members asked whether future reports could show a breakdown of the figures in Strategy and Development. This was agreed.

Officers were asked to provide data exclusive of TUPE and casual staff as they felt that this would be useful.

It was noted that the exit interviews showed that most people had left the Council due to career advancement. It was thought that this was inevitable due to the streamlining of the workforce and the lack of opportunities for advancement in-house.

Officers stated that there were no concerns about turnover. Some areas had a higher incidence of leavers than others. The proximity of the borough to London meant that staff were attracted to the higher salaries at London authorities.

There was no preferred rate of turnover.

Officers said that the report highlighted the issues. If it appeared that there were too many staff leaving there would be an investigation as to why and a report

would be brought to Committee.

Members welcomed the new style report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

33. COMMITTEE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME:

Councillor Roberts asked for a scrutiny group to be formed to look at the car parks and particularly why the multi-storey was the least profitable. He was advised that this was a topic that should be raised at the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Meeting ended 8.45pm
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