

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES 22 FEBRUARY 2011

Present: Councillors Corello, Hodges, Lock (in the Chair), MJ Lock, Sabetian and Westley

Lead Members in attendance: Councillors Birch and Kramer

Apologies were received from Councillor Clark

Members of the Committee stood for a few moments' silence in memory of former Councillor Keith Bing, whose funeral had taken place earlier that day.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at this meeting.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes meeting held on 22 November be approved as a true record.

19. QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Mark Horan, Policy and Partnerships Officer, presented the Corporate Plan Part III.

The report advised Members of the Quarter Three performance by the staff in the Corporate Resources Directorate against the 2010/11 targets in Part II and Part III of the Corporate Plan, with related budget and risk issues.

Members discussed Council Tax collection, annual report on key priorities, efficiency and resilience targets and Business Process Improvement.

Particular reference was made to the target relating to review of the Council's Constitution. Cllr Hodges explained that the target was incorrectly referred to as 'Achieved', as reviewing the Constitution was an ongoing improvement measure. This prompted discussion around whether the Working Arrangements Group (WAG) should have an annual work programme, combined with a built in allowance for additional ad-hoc items that may require a time limited decision. Cllr Hodges suggested that a measure of continuous improvement, both statutory and discretionary be adopted. It was agreed that this be taken back for discussion by officers, in conjunction with the Chair of WAG.

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The committee extensively discussed the Member Training and Development Programme, noting its success with councillors in terms of the variety of training issues covered. Members found the programme to be both interesting and informative; they asked that Emily Horne, Member Training and Development Officer be formally thanked for her role in organising the programme.

Whilst discussing the targets referring the annual report on key priorities and a proposed Town Centre Conference, members questioned why, if a target was not met because of external factors, it was described only as 'Will Not Meet Target' with no explanation as to why. This prompted further discussion on whether such a target should remain in the quarterly reports or be removed. The majority of members were in agreement that, as the targets were already in the public domain, they should remain reported on, albeit in a different form. Councillor Westley suggested these particular targets be reported as an appendix to the report, for information purposes only. It was agreed to take the discussion to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs prior to the annual meeting in June 2011.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the possibility of a defined annual work programme for Working Arrangements Group (WAG) be looked into by officers, in conjunction with the Chair of WAG;**
- 2. ways in which targets that had not been or would not be achieved due to external factors could be reported to the quarterly committees', be discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting prior to the annual meeting in June 2011;**
- 3. staff in the Corporate Resources Directorate be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter; and**
- 4. the Committee be assured that action is being taken to improve any shortfalls in performance and/or to address risks highlighted.**

20. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2009/10

Neil Dart, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources, presented the Annual Audit Letter for 2009/10. The report had been brought to the meeting at the request of the Chair of Resources Committee, Councillor Lock.

Members asked how external auditors were appointed for local authorities. Neil Dart explained that, under the Audit Commission, external auditors were

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imposed upon local authorities; the external auditors for Hastings were the same as for the rest of East Sussex.

Members were pleased with the outcome of the letter, stating it showed that the Council had managed its finances well in spite of the current financial climate.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the Committee acknowledge the content of the Annual Audit Letter 2009/10; and**
- 2. the Committee's thanks be extended to all those who worked towards achieving this high standard.**

21. UPDATE ON SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PAYMENT OF HOUSING BENEFIT

Councillor Hodges gave a verbal update on the scrutiny review of Payment of Housing Benefits, currently being undertaken. He had also circulated an overview of the review so far to members of the committee prior to the meeting.

Councillor Hodges asserted that the review had been lengthy and in-depth to date, but was almost complete. The review team were now looking towards a visit to another local authority in order to view a particular software system in a live environment. Following on from this, the review team would be in a position to finalise their report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

22. MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CABINET DECISIONS

Katrina Silverson, Scrutiny and Electoral Services Officer, presented a report on the recent Cabinet Decisions made since the last formal meeting, highlighting areas that fell within the Committee's remit.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm)