

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES 21 FEBRUARY 2012**

Present: Councillors Corello, Dowling (as the duly appointed substitute for Councillor Clark), Hodges, MJ Lock, Pragnell (in the Chair), Sabetian and Westley

Lead Members in attendance: Councillors Birch and Kramer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clark.

### **18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

### **19. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings held on 16 and 21 November be approved as a true record.

### **20. UPDATE ON SCRUTINY REVIEW OF INFLUENCING AND APPRAISING THE DECISIONS OF THIRD PARTIES**

Councillor Hodges gave a spoken update on progress, on behalf of the Chair, Councillor Cartwright.

The review team had met with Karl Taylor, Assistant Director of Transport and Operations at ESCC. From this meeting, the review team learnt that Highways Stewards had been introduced within East Sussex, in order to act as an interface between residents, elected members and the County Council as far as any highways issues were concerned.

Members also invited the main utility companies (Southern Water, BT, Southern Gas Networks and EDF) to a meeting in January, however only Southern Water had accepted this invitation.

The review team had now reached their conclusions and a final report was currently being drafted.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES  
21 FEBRUARY 2012**

**21. QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL  
MONITORING REPORT**

Jane Hartnell, Head of Policy and Performance, presented the Quarter Three Performance and Financial Monitoring Report.

The report detailed performance by the staff in Policy and Performance and the Corporate Resources Directorate against the 2011/12 targets and performance indicators set out in Part II of the Corporate Plan.

Members discussed the Castleham Business Centres, efficiency and resilience within the Council and the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2012.

Councillor Sabetian asked for clarification around the Performance Indicators for collection of Council Tax and non-domestic rates. Peter Grace, Head of Financial Services, explained that the current figures had exceeded those of the same time last year, therefore would be on target for the end of the year. Councillor Pragnell asked that all staff within Revenues and Benefits be thanked for their efforts. Staff were also commended for the exceeded targets in relation to new Housing Benefit claims and change of circumstances.

Councillor MJ Lock asked to see the action plan arising from the Staff Survey undertaken in Quarter Two. Jane Hartnell, Head of Policy and Performance, explained that this was currently being worked through, but would be happy to share the action plan when appropriate.

Councillor Pragnell asked for clarification around the Contact Centre Project. Kevin Boorman, Head of Communications and Marketing, explained that the design for the new Contact Centre had been changed at the request of Members late on in the process and there had been concerns that the project may not have been completed on time. However, it was now hoped that the project would still be completed by Easter. The current temporary arrangements for the Information Centre had so far been successful and Councillor Kramer expressed her thanks to staff for their efforts with this.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. the Committee's comments on Quarter 3 performance be addressed by the relevant Lead Member(s) with appropriate action and report back; and**
- 2. staff in Policy and Performance and the Corporate Resources Directorate be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter.**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES  
21 FEBRUARY 2012**

**22. FINAL REPORT ON SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)**

Councillor Hodges, as Chair of the review, introduced the report to the committee.

The review team had concluded that Social Return on Investment (SROI) was a useful tool with which to assess the value of investments in identified areas that fall outside of those normally recognised by accountants, and that could be resolved in financial terms by the application of the SROI process.

SROI could be used for exploring the benefit of potential investment as well as a retrospective tool to monitor social return on projects already implemented.

Members agreed that this could be a beneficial process for Hastings Borough Council to adopt for specific projects.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. the first three recommendations of the Review Team be forwarded to the 2 April Cabinet meeting for consideration and;**
- 2. the fourth recommendation be forwarded to the Annual Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees on 18 June 2012 for their consideration.**

**23. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PAYMENT OF HOUSING BENEFITS MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

Peter Grace, Head of Financial Services, introduced a report to the committee, highlighting progress made with the recommendations arising from the scrutiny review of Payment of Housing Benefits.

Considerable progress had been made in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provision over the last 18 months. The recommendations made in the original report had been substantially addressed.

Councillor Hodges questioned progress on recommendation 6 in the report. He suggested that this could be looked at again in terms of alleviating errors in transcription. He offered to speak to officers again to discuss further.

Councillor Corello questioned why Hastings Borough Council was only using a social landlord to trial the 'landlord portal'. He commented that social

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES  
21 FEBRUARY 2012**

landlords and private landlords often had different requirements. Peter Grace advised he would take this comment away and investigate further the proposals for trialling the module.

**RESOLVED that the management update be noted.**

**24. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS**

Katrina Silversson, Scrutiny and Electoral Services Officer, submitted 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 7.27pm)