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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES**

**18 NOVEMBER 2015**

Present: Councillors Webb (Chair), Howard (Vice-Chair), Batsford, Sinden, Roberts, Beaver and Pragnell

**7. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015 be approved as a correct record**

**8. QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance submitted a report which advised members of performance against the 2015/16 targets and performance indicators in the corporate plan for quarter 2. The report also provided a summary of financial information.

The Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues presented an update on key areas of activity during this quarter. He explained that the Legal Services team had been making arrangements for the lease of space at the Town Hall to East Sussex County Council and SEAP. The council had previously agreed that the majority of its democratic and civic functions would be transferred to Aquila House. The Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues commented that staff across the organisation had continued to work flexibly during the office moves.

Members were advised that a busy programme of recruitment had been undertaken during quarter 2. This included the appointment of two new officers to the accountancy team. Discussion also took place regarding the work of the East Sussex Procurement Hub; an experienced member of the team had recently left the service. The Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues commented that the procurement hub had made arrangements to redistribute tasks amongst the team.

The committee noted that call waiting times at the Community Contact Centre had improved during this quarter. The Lead Member for Corporate Services added that reporting of transactional enquiries, such as missed bins and fly tipping, via the My Hastings Online portal had increased. Consideration was given to the integration between the My Hastings Online portal and the council's contractor's systems. The Accommodation and Transformation Manager explained that the team engaged with key contractors, including Kier, to develop this system. The initial testing phase had identified some areas for improvement, which had been addressed.

Members noted that there had been an increase in short term sickness absence, and added that this was likely to increase further during the winter months. The Executive Manager of People, Customer and Business Support explained that her team continued to work closely with service managers to consider sickness absences on a case-by-case basis and take appropriate action where necessary.

The Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues updated members on the latest in-year collection rates for council tax and non-domestic rates. The council tax

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collection rate had increased to 73.16%, compared to 73.34% at the same point last year. The collection rate for non-domestic rates had also increased to 73.3%. Although this was slightly below the collection rate for the previous year, a number of customers had opted to pay their business rates over 12 months rather than 10, so the year end target of a 98% collection rate remained achievable.

Discussion took place regarding the benefits customer first and efficiency service review. The Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues explained that the outcomes and recommendations of the review were due to be presented to senior managers soon. After the meeting an action plan to implement the recommendations would be drawn up.

Councillor Beaver thanked the Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues and his team for gaining an unqualified audit opinion on the council's annual statement of accounts on behalf of the Audit Committee. The committee also thanked the Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues for his earlier presentation on the medium term financial strategy.

**RESOLVED (unanimously) that: -**

- 1) The committees comments on quarter 2 performance be addressed by the relevant lead member(s) with appropriate action and report back;**
- 2) Members reflect and feedback on ways of reporting performance information being tested and set out in the report, and;**
- 3) Staff in the Corporate Services and Governance Directorate be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter**

The reason for this decision was:

To assist the council enhance performance management arrangements in the context of broader organisational transformation.

### **9. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION WORK PACKAGES**

The Accommodation and Transformation manager presented a report on three work packages, which would be delivered as part of the council's organisational transformation programme.

A series of service reviews were underway across the organisation. The purpose of the reviews was to ensure that the council's processes were as efficient and customer-focused as possible; each review began by process mapping the existing process and engaging with the relevant teams. As part of the reviews, consideration had also been given to the interface between council services and external contractors. Following the implementation of the initial findings, the services would need to be subject to a further review to ensure continuous improvement and processes were adapted to meet the changing needs of service users.

Efforts were also underway to support internal and external communication throughout the council. A communications plan had been drawn up, and a recruitment process was underway to appoint a new Communications Champion. The Communications

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Champion will take a key role in continuing to engage staff with the transformation programme. They will also promote the availability of online services to the local community through the council's social media accounts and website.

The Communications Champion would also assist with the ongoing reconfiguration of the council's website. Each department within the council will be asked to review the content they were responsible for on the website. The purpose of the review is to ensure the council's website was fully accessible. Alongside this process, a group of overview and scrutiny members were also undertaking a review of digital inclusion.

Members welcomed the update, and commented that it was helpful to understand how good practice developed by the individual work packages of the organisational transformation programme were shared between teams.

## 10. **FINAL REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO REVIEW SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS, PROCESS AND POTENTIAL STREAMLINING**

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance submitted a report which put forward recommendations from the scrutiny task and finish group which had been reviewing existing arrangements for overview and scrutiny.

Councillor Howard, as chair of the task and finish group presented the recommendations to the committee. He explained that the task and finish group had considered good practice from a number of other local authorities.

The task and finish group were seeking an in principle agreement from members of both committees, to create a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee from June 2016, which would replace the current services and resources committee. The task and finish group considered that the proposed structure better reflected the organisational structure of the council and would optimise the expertise of members and officers.

It was intended to reconvene the task and finish group after the quarter 2 committee meetings to refine the details of the proposal, including the proposed number of seats of the committee and to make recommendations on the allocation of allowances. The new structure, together with any associated constitutional changes, would then be considered by Cabinet and Full Council.

The committee noted that the changes proposed by the task and finish group had been supported by Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services at its meeting in November. Members suggested that the re-convened task and finish group should seek advice from other authorities who had adopted similar arrangements for their overview and scrutiny function when refining their recommendations. It was also agreed that the changes to the committee structure would need to coincide with a review of the process for reporting performance management information.

Councillor Howard proposed approval of the recommendations to the report, which was seconded by Councillor Pragnell.

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**RESOLVED (unanimously) that the committee endorse the recommendations set out in the task and finish groups report**

The reason for this decision was:

To ensure that scrutiny review and refresh existing arrangements in line with broader transformation efforts underway within HBC.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.15 pm)