

MINUTES of the MEETING of
the CORPORATE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE held on
15 SEPTEMBER 2009 at 7.00 p.m.

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the meeting)

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|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| * Cllr Mrs Gillian Beel | * Cllr Bryn Morgan (Vice Chairman) |
| * Cllr Brian Ellis | * Cllr Stephen Mulliner |
| * Cllr Jim Edwards | * Cllr David Munro |
| * Cllr Mrs Mary Forsyszewski | * Cllr Ken Reed (Chairman) |
| * Cllr Bob Frost | Cllr Steven Renshaw |
| * Cllr Peter Isherwood | * Cllr Ms Jane Thomson |
| Cllr Alan Lovell | Cllr John Ward |
| * Cllr Peter Martin | * Cllr Mrs Liz Wheatley |
| * Cllr Tom Martin | |

*Present

15. MINUTES (Agenda Item 1)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 June 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Alan Lovell, Steven Renshaw and John Ward.

17. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (Agenda Item 3)

There were no interests declared.

18. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Agenda item 4)

There were no questions from members of the public of which notice had been duly given in accordance with Procedure Rule 10.

No member of the public had yet attended the Committee to ask a question, whether informally in the 15 minutes allocated before the start of the meeting or at the meeting. The Chairman proposed, the Vice-Chairman seconded and it was RESOLVED that in future informal questions would be taken at 7.00p.m and the meeting would commence once informal questions (if any) had been answered

WORK PROGRAMME

19. EXECUTIVE - FORWARD PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 5; Appendix A)

RESOLVED that the Executive forward programme of key decisions be noted.

20. OMBUDSMAN'S INVESTIGATIONS INTO COMPLAINTS MADE ABOUT WAVERLEY'S SERVICES IN 2008/09 (Agenda Item 6; Appendix B)

20.1 The Committee received a report addressing the issues raised in the Ombudsman's annual letter to Waverley for the year 2008/09. This included information about the types of complaint made to the Ombudsman about Waverley's services over the past year, Waverley's approach in responding to such complaints and the eventual outcomes.

20.2 The Committee welcomed the efforts made by officers to further improve the average time taken to respond to the Ombudsman's initial enquiries and RESOLVED to pass the following comments to the Executive:

- (i) It was reassuring to note that the Ombudsman found no cases of maladministration or injustice in respect of complaints about Waverley's services in the past 15 years, and this was a considerable achievement on the part of the Council.
- (ii) The Council's average response time to the Ombudsman's first enquiries in 2008/09 was a significant improvement on performance in previous years. While Waverley took a little longer in responding to the Ombudsman's first enquiries than 3 out of the other 10 districts and boroughs in Surrey, this could be due to the fact that our investigations were more thorough.
- (ii) In future years it would be helpful to know whether there were any complainants who had submitted more than one complaint to the Ombudsman which had then been the subject of further investigation by the Ombudsman.

21. COMPLAINTS HANDLING IN WAVERLEY IN 2008/09(Agenda Item 7; Appendix C)

21.1 The Committee received a report providing information on complaints handling in Waverley in 2008/09, including the number of complaints received, Waverley's performance in responding to complaints, levels of customer satisfaction and lessons learned.

21.2 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee were pleased to note the improving picture in terms of response times, and the relatively low level of complaints bearing in mind the very large number of interactions between the public and the Council.

The Committee expressed some concern about the number of planning complaints, and the fact that almost 50% of these were either upheld or partly upheld (31 out of a total of 65 planning complaints).

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend the Executive to approve the following recommendations:

- (i) In future years, it would be helpful to draw attention to the total number of complaints received by Waverley at the beginning of the report. HOST (Heads Of Service Team) should be asked to develop further the recording of lessons learned and action taken in response to complaints, so that this information could be used more effectively in improving the delivery of services.
- (ii) Officers should undertake a review of planning complaints, with a view to effecting a reduction in the numbers of complaints and the proportion of those complaints that were upheld.
- (iii) Further consideration should be given to whether there was any real value in obtaining feedback through the customer satisfaction questionnaires, given the low response rate of approximately 24% (despite a reply paid envelope being supplied). If this was considered important, then officers should look at ways of increasing the feedback from complainants.
- (iv) Officers should investigate the feasibility of obtaining comparable complaints handling statistics from other Surrey authorities, bearing in mind that there may well be differences in the way in which other authorities record customer complaints, and report back to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

22. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 1 (Apr – June) 2009/10 & REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS
(Agenda Item 8; Annexe 1)

22.1 The Committee reviewed the performance indicators for the 1st quarter (April to June) 2009/10, and considered the outstanding proposals for performance indicators and targets for Quarter 2 2009/10 onwards. The outturn for 2008/09 for National Indicator NI 179 was also included. A amended Annex 1 was presented at the meeting.

22.2 The Committee RESOLVED to pass the following comments to the Executive;-

(i) L1 13b Take up of benefits in target groups

This showed performance more than 5% off target with an 11% decrease from Q4 2008/09, but a 32% increase from Q1 2008/09. The reason for the decrease was unknown and officers were asked to include a detailed explanation in the Q2 report.

(ii) L15b Percentage of invoices from local/small businesses paid within 10 calendar days

The Committee noted that this initiative had been well received and that officers were not aware of any similar initiative by other local authorities. The officers reported that performance had now increased to 87%, the backlog had been cleared and HOST was trying to improve

the cover arrangements for authorising officers during the summer when staff were on leave.

(iii) L18 Annual average rate of return on Council investments above market rate

The Committee noted that the rate of 2.3% for Q1 reflected the higher rate for 2 longer-term investments during this period. These had now matured, reducing the overall rate. The rate would also be reduced because the Council had decided to limit the number of organisations with which money could be placed, to reflect their priority of safety over rate of return.

Members were informed that a revised, higher, target is being considered by the Executive at its next meeting.

(iv) N1180 Number of changes of circumstances affecting customers' HB/CT entitlement in the year

The Committee noted the large increase in these numbers in the last 2 quarters. These resulted from, for example, increases and decreases in income, family make-up changes, changes of address. The Council had no control over the numbers of changes which occurred.

The Committee asked the officers to make a statement to the Executive as to why there were so many changes and whether there were any resource implications.

(v) N1 179 Value for Money Total Net Value

Officers clarified the meaning of this category which reports savings made by efficiency (cuts in services and fortuitous savings in costs are not included). They confirmed that it was anticipated that savings of £2 million will be made by the end of 2009/10 and therefore the target of £2.3 million by the end of 2010/11 was achievable.

(vi) Format of report

The Committee noted that some indicators related to performance but others related only to activities. The Committee requested that in future these should be shown in separate sections.

There being no matters needing to be dealt with in exempt session, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.51pm.

Chairman

