

MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 March 2014 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors Richard Speight (Chair), Barry Johnson, Wendy Curtis, Terry Hipsey and Yash Gupta

Apologies: Councillor Charlie Key

In attendance: S. Welton- Performance Officer
K. Wheeler – Head of Strategy
F. Taylor – Head of Legal Services
S. Clark– Head of Finance
R. Harris – Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning
J. Hinchliffe – Head of HR OD & Customer Strategy
R. Parkin – Head of Housing
M. Boulter – Principal Democratic Services Officer

33. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 January and 17 February 2014 were approved as a correct record.

34. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

a) Interests

No interests were declared.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

35. CORPORATE SCORECARD PERFORMANCE REPORT – MONTH 9

The Committee ascertained that 40% of indicators had performed less well when compared to their performance the previous year. Councillor Gupta asked whether the reduction in budgets and staff had caused a lower performance overall and officers explained that performance was affected by a number of different factors so reduction in resources was not the only factor.

The Committee discussed sickness absence and noted that it would not reach the desired target for this year. Officers stated that they were continuing to deal with stress related issues and that working in a stressful environment, certainly within the local government sector,

would continue to be a challenge. Officers added that a large proportion of stress related absence was related to stress at home rather than at work.

The Committee asked whether there was any discrepancy between the good performance figures relating to housing repairs and the reality of tenants complaining to Members at surgeries. Officers explained that the indicators were informed by an independent survey company who asked 400 tenants per month, their opinion of their recent repair work. This equated to 4000 tenants per year, which represented about 40% of all the Council's tenants. To achieve a 400 person response rate, per month, the company rang around 1600 tenants.

The Committee wondered whether instant feedback forms were used at every repair and it was responded that this was avoided because it put pressure on the tenant to give a biased opinion as the repair officer would be present in the house at the time the form was filled. All feedback received from the surveys were fed back to the contractors and used to manage their performance and service.

The Members noted that the general housing satisfaction survey was lower than the repairs satisfaction survey and officers highlighted that some of tenants contacted in the general survey would not have received a recent repair and were therefore basing their judgement of the housing service on their experience from a few years previous, for example. 20% of tenants in the general survey put their satisfaction level as 'fair' and the housing department was working to move those tenants to choose 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

One member stated that since the Council had left the Morrison's contract, the repairs service had improved dramatically. Another member questioned the cost of all the surveys and officers agreed to provide this information outside the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- 1.1 Acknowledge and commend services where there is good delivery against priorities.**
- 1.2 Notes the performance in areas of concern and identifies, where it feels necessary, any further areas of concern on which to focus.**
- 1.3 Recommends the areas In Focus to be circulated as appropriate to relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs.**

36. YEAR 2 DELIVERY OF THE CORPORATE PLAN

Members questioned the need to receive this report as it had already been agreed by Cabinet but noted that, as the Corporate Committee, they should have sight of it. Councillor Gupta queried how many schools were in special measures and stated he had some more questions around the performance of some of the education plans. Officers explained that this was still a strategy document and that it represented what would be achieved from April 2014 onwards.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- 1.1 Note the Year 2 Corporate Deliverables as detailed in Appendix 1**
- 1.2 Notes the addition of the theme “a well run organisation” which represent the cross cutting themes of Finance & Governance, Staff and Customer which underpin the organisation.**

37. REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee noted that two thirds of the whole council membership needed to vote in favour of a four yearly election for it to come into practice. Members queried the process should certain Members not be present at the full council meeting in which the vote would be taken. How would they cast their vote? The Monitoring Officer noted this point and stated she would come back to the committee to clarify.

The Committee noted the well written report but felt they could not make a decision at the meeting as the issue needed to be discussed with groups. There were many implications to consider.

The Committee asked for clarification around when the Police Crime Commissioner elections would take place and whether they would be held in November or with the other elections in May.

RESOLVED that the Committee inform and update their respective groups around the report and its contents and seek to progress debate on the issue in the new municipal year.

39. FAIRNESS IN THURROCK REVIEW

Councillor Speight introduced the report and noted the work and efforts of Stephanie Young, Democratic Services Officer, in pulling the report together. Councillor Speight briefly outlined the timeline of the review and added that the panel would oversee the establishment of the commission before is disbanded.

The Committee thought the report was well written and clear. Councillor Gupta noted that some community groups had been sceptical about the use and effectiveness of a commission and Councillor Speight responded that he had welcomed the scepticism because he wanted the community groups to challenge and think realistically about the role of a commission. Councillor Speight pointed out that the model of establishing a commission had worked in other councils and there was every chance it would be successful in Thurrock.

Councillor Johnson added that he had sat on the panel and supported all its recommendations but also, that it was important for the Council to help residents raise their own attainment and aspirations.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) The Fairness Review Panel Report is noted.**
- ii) The recommendations contained within the report be endorsed and commended to Cabinet for agreement.**

The meeting was finished at 8.00pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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or alternatively e-mail mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk**