

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Thursday, 7 April 2016 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Roger Hickford – Chairman  
Councillor Kevin Cuffley – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:	David Bard	Grenville Chamberlain
	Jose Hales	Graham Cone
	Philippa Hart	Bunty Waters

Councillors Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Peter Topping and Robert Turner were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers:	Victoria Wallace	Democratic Services Officer
	Julie Baird	Head of Development Management
	Richard May	Policy and Performance Manager
	Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
	Mike Hill	Health and Environmental Services Director
	Jean Hunter	Chief Executive

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies of absence were noted from Councillors Kevin Cuffley and Henry Batchelor. Councillors Christopher Cross and Anna Bradnam were in attendance as substitutes for them.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2016 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- Under Agenda Item 6, the wording would be amended from 'Not all customers were self-serving' to 'Not all customers were able to use the self-service facilities'.

### **4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

### **5. SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS PLANS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE JOINT GROUP**

The Leader of the Council and the Executive Director (Corporate Services) presented the Business Plans for the ICT, Legal, Building Control and Waste Shared Services, and the Terms of Reference for the Shared Services Joint Group.

The following points were discussed and noted regarding the shared services:

ICT Shared Service

- The committee was informed that the ICT management structure was in place and many of the officer posts had been appointed. There was an Interim Head of Service and the remaining vacant posts would be advertised externally later in the month.
- Some concern was raised that the structure was potentially top heavy and as such savings from this were questioned. The committee was assured that the structure was not top heavy and that the savings as outlined in the report were significant. Overall there was a headcount saving of 10-14 posts.
- The structure of the service had been informed by the needs of the service and it was felt that this reflected best practice in the industry.
- Concern was raised over the language used in the ICT Shared Service Business Plan, particularly in relation to the term 'roadmap'. It was suggested that this be replaced with the word 'plan'. Concern was also raised over the term 'thought management' and 'technical architect'.

#### Building Control Shared Service

- Concern was raised over the number of staff vacancies in the Building Control Shared Service and the ability to deliver the service as a result. The Executive Director confirmed that this was a concern and that a pay supplement was being put in place for existing and future Building Control staff, as the Council had struggled to recruit to vacancies at the current pay grade. A more permanent mechanism to encourage staff retention was being worked on, as legally the pay supplement could only be in place for one year.
- It was acknowledged that Building Control was competing with commercial businesses and that this service was dependant on income generated. An advantage of the shared service was that the Council was no longer competing with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council Building Control services.
- It was clarified that the Council had a statutory duty to provide some building control services but it did not have a duty to employ a service.
- It was confirmed that a number of agency staff were in post to cover vacancies.
- Concern was raised over the two Building Control hubs being in Huntingdon and Cambridge City and that none would be in Cambourne. Members were informed that the main interaction for Building Control surveyors with the customer was on the customer's site and not at these hubs. These hubs were felt to be the best places from which the surveyors could travel to clients' sites.

#### Legal Shared Service:

- Only two permanent posts had been recruited to in the Legal Shared Service and work was ongoing to fill the vacancies. Interviews were taking place at the end of April 2016 for a head of the shared service.

#### Governance arrangements were discussed:

- It was clarified that the Head of Service was responsible for delivery of the service and reported to the Management Board, which consisted of Executive Directors and met on a monthly basis. The Management Board reported to the Senior Officer Board on which the three Councils' Chief Executives sat. The Senior Officer Board met every six weeks. The Shared Services Joint Group consisted of the three Council Leaders. The Joint Group was meeting in shadow form until it was formally constituted. It would meet formally and in public from September 2016.

Concern was raised over shared service staff morale. Members were informed that it

was felt that staff morale was positive in ICT and Waste services, however more work was to be done with Building Control and Legal shared services. It was recognised that the shared services had created uncertainty and staff had been displaced and some made redundant. As a result some other staff had taken up employment opportunities elsewhere or taken the opportunity to retire.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **SUPPORTED**:

- The business plans for the ICT, Legal, Building Control and Waste Shared Services
- The Terms of Reference for the Shared Services Joint Group.

The committee requested a further shared services update in July 2016. In particular an update on recruitment in building control and legal services was requested.

## **6. PLANNING PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS IN SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**

The Planning Portfolio Holder and Head of Development Management presented an update on planning performance and service improvements. The committee was informed of the following:

- There was a high number of complex planning applications.
- The upgrade of the Planning ICT system had caused a backlog of applications.
- Five new members of staff had been recruited. These staff members had been recruited externally and would work across the whole Planning Department. Senior Planner vacancies would increase to two as a Senior Planner was retiring.
- A member of staff had been recruited externally in order to clear old applications.
- The five day target to process validations was being met.
- The Planning Portfolio Holder confirmed that the drop in performance in December 2015 was seasonal. Prior to this, staff recruitment had led to performance improvements.
- In December 2015 there were around 900 out of time applications, which included pre-applications. These were being cleared at a rate of about 50 per month.
- Members were informed that around 70% of planning applications were householder applications. There were more complex planning applications due to issues of the five year land supply. The Head of Development Management was confident that progress and improvements were being made. The revised Scheme of Delegation for planning would make a significant difference to workload with fewer applications having to go to formal Planning Committee.
- The target of determination of a planning application within 13 weeks, was a national government standard.
- A checklist with which every planning application received had to comply was in place. If an application did not comply then it was rejected. It was suggested that this application checklist be provided to the customer so that applications that were not fit for purpose would not be submitted.
- Planning training for Parish Councils would be provided after the local elections in May 2016.
- The Planning Portfolio Holder would like to visit parish councils in order to discuss planning issues and would also like to hold a planning open day at the Council offices, for parish council members to visit the planning department in order to see what officers did.

Members expressed concern about the high workload of planning officers, with most

officers having around 30 live applications on their case load. It was hoped this could be reduced to 20 applications per officer. The committee was informed that staff morale had improved.

Members requested a organogram of the Planning service, to include officer names and telephone numbers. The Planning Portfolio Holder assured members that this would be produced and circulated to them.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the Planning Performance update and requested a further update at its meeting in July 2016.

The committee requested that additional information be included in the performance report, such as information regarding the wellbeing of officers, the number of planning applications per officer, the number of staff and the number of staff vacancies.

## **7. CORPORATE PLAN OUTCOMES AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2016-2017**

The Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder and Policy and Performance Manager presented the Corporate Plan outcomes and Key Performance Indicators for 2016-2017.

The Policy and Performance Manager informed the committee that:

- The 'Living Well' outcome measures of the Corporate Plan had been updated, and an updated version would be circulated before the Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder and Leader would be asked to agree this.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **RECOMMENDED** the Leader of the Council approve:

- a) Key Performance Indicators for 2016-2017 as set out at Appendix A of the report presented to the committee.
- b) Corporate Plan Outcome Measures as set out at Appendix B of the report presented to the committee, identifying for each action what success looked like and how this would be measured.

## **8. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016**

Members of the committee were asked to email the Democratic Services Officer with any suggested amendments to the 2015-2016 Scrutiny Annual Report.

## **9. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee's work programme was noted.

## **10. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE**

There were no updates from Scrutiny Monitors.

## **11. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The dates of future meetings would be confirmed as soon as possible. Dates for 2016-17 Cabinet meetings were awaited before these could be confirmed. The next Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting would take place some time in July 2016.

Councillor Hickford informed members that he would be standing down as Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee as he would not be standing again at the local elections. He thanked members for their support and contributions to the work of the committee. The Chief Executive thanked the Chairman on behalf of officers and the Leader of the Council thanked him on behalf of the Cabinet.

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**The Meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.**

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