

CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

THURSDAY 3 MARCH 2011 AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE, WALSALL

Panel Members Present	Councillor M. Longhi (Chair)
	Councillor M. Nazir (Vice Chair)
	Councillor M. Flower
	Councillor B. Sanders
	Councillor J. Rochelle
	Councillor I. Shires
	Councillor D. Turner
Portfolio Holders Present	Councillor M. Bird – Leader
	Councillor C. Towe – Finance and Personnel

Officers Present	Rory Borealis –	Executive Director (Resources)
	Carol Williams –	Head of Programme Delivery
	Paul Milmore –	Head of Business Solutions
	Darren Caveney –	Head of Communications & Marketing
	Kevin Dwyer –	Senior Strategic Web Development Officer
	Joanna Stewart –	Communications Manager
	Helen Dudson -	Corporate Performance Manager
	Steph Simcox -	Service Accounting and Financial Training Manager
	Neil Picken –	Senior Constitutional Services Officer

53/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Burley and Jeavons.

54/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

55/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

56/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2011, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

57/10 WEBSITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REVIEW

The Panel considered a report and received a presentation informing of the improvements, both implemented and proposed, to the Walsall Council website.

Members were advised that the system supporting the website had been reviewed and alternative open source products had been investigated. The content, functionality and opportunities for web marketing and business continuity had all been considered with a number of improvements being undertaken.

Officers advised that the Council had undertaken a great deal of work in-house and many aspects, such as the web banner, had been acknowledged as examples of best practice in many forums. The use of micro sites, of which the Council had 12, was identified as a useful tool as it was free to develop and did not have the same restraints imposed on it as the main Council website.

Members considered the legal implications of using the Council's Website to advertise local businesses. It was thought that this was an important element for Scrutiny to consider, especially the policy and protocols of web advertising.

Councillors expressed concern that they often received links for information contained on the intranet but were unable to access the site as they did not have the relevant permissions.

'MyWalsall', an integrated technology platform that provided the customer with a single, simple, friendly user interface to interact with the Council's functional departments was met with positive responses by Members. Personalisation of the site was being considered and would form part of future improvements. The Council's Committee Management Information service was identified as software which could be improved to make it more accessible and easier to navigate. Officers explained that this was being investigated as part of overall improvements.

Members noted that a considerable amount of improvement had taken place and welcomed proposals to continually update and improve the Website. The recent 24 hour twitter initiative was praised and highlighted as a good example of using social media to reach the public.

RESOLVED:

- 1) **That the report be noted.**

- 2) **That the Panel consider the development of the website to advertise businesses when setting the work programme for 2011/12.**

58/10 **'BUILDING PRIDE IN WALSALL' DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2011 - 2014**

The Panel considered a report which detailed the Draft Corporate Plan and afforded Members the opportunity to influence the document prior to its consideration by Cabinet and Council.

The Leader introduced the report and advised that the plan also set out the proposed new Council Operating System: 'Delivering. Right, Fast and Simple'. It was highlighted that residents were the most important focus within the Corporate Plan. Comment was made as to the future delivery of Council Services and the possibility of the Council's role changing to that of a commissioning body. If implemented, it was stated that the process would be a significant change for a large number of staff which could see the workforce reducing significantly.

Members asked how the document and messages it contained would be cascaded through the organisation. In response, the Leader stated that there would be a significant period of change within the Council which would see the structure and delivery of services change dramatically. It was his view that it was every managers role to ensure the new way of working was embedded to ensure effective delivery. The Plan had also been streamlined to make it more readable and useable by all.

In relation to the Aims, Ways, Actions and Results (AWARE), it was asked how this would be measured and how often. In response, it was stated that a good indication of how an Authority was performing was the number of complaints received. Surveys would also be carried out to establish how the Council was performing.

With regard to the level of staff within the new operating model concern was expressed that the number may reduce to dramatically. In response, it was stated that services would still be required they but may be commissioned from other providers. This type of provision saw the Council's role as an enabler of services rather than a provider. The voluntary sector would be an important part of the process and it was envisaged that, with support, they would grow as providers of services.

A view was expressed that historically the Council had not been effective at contract management. This would be the key to ensure that the quality of future provision of services was high. Members acknowledged that the voluntary sector would require support to ensure they were 'contract ready'. Reference was made to the successful transfer of the Council's housing stock to Walsall Housing

Group which worked well and continued to be successful.

The Leader stated that as part of improving services, Officers had been tasked with visiting other authorities deemed 'best in class' to learn and implement change in Walsall to ensure that services were improved. The provision of library services and the introduction of new technology had identified substantial areas of savings. The Area Partnerships were an example of improved delivery with a range of partners such as the Police, Primary Care Trust and the Council all working effectively together.

Members welcomed the new streamlined approach which made the document useable.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Draft Corporate Plan be noted.**
- 2) That the new Council Operating Model – 'Delivering. Right, Fast, and Simple' be noted.**

59/10 WORKING SMARTER PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel considered a report and received a presentation updating Members on the progress with the Council's business change programme.

Officers advised that £8m of the £17.2m savings identified in the formal budget were expected to be achieved through the application of Working Smarter principles.

Members noted the progress being made in a number of areas and made comment that the revised area partnership model was, in their view, effective. Officers commented that the Council redesign put customers at the heart of the process.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

60/10 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2010/11

The Panel received a report summarising the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2010/11, based on the performance to the end of quarter 3 (April to December 2010), for services within the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Members questioned why the print and design service had overspent.

Officers advised that due to spending constraints many departments were cutting back on printing services. This had impacted upon the print room as they were not generating income. It was stated that alternative revenue streams were being investigated such as undertaking services for other Council's and businesses.

Arising from further questioning, it was explained that staff within the print and design service had been diversifying and assisting the Communications team with web improvements. Members stated that the cost of staff time should be recharged to the Communications budget as it did not accurately reflect the true picture. Officers undertook to rectify the matter.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That any work undertaken by the print and design team for communications should be recharged accordingly;**
- 2) That the 2010/11 forecasted year end financial position for services under the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel of a predicted underspend of £487k, after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards and action plans, be noted.**
- 3) That the capital forecast of a planned slippage of £400k, which will be requested to be carried forward to the new financial year be noted.**

61/10 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED:

That the following item be added to the work programme to be considered at the next meeting:-

- Smarter Workplaces**

62/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as 14th April, 2011.

The meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.

Signed:

Date:

