

CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday, 2 January, 2014 at 6.00 p.m. in a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Members in attendance Councillor S. Coughlan (Chair)
Councillor J. Rochelle (Vice-Chair)
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker
Councillor M. Longhi
Councillor R. Worrall

Portfolio holders in attendance Councillor C. Towe (Resources)

Officers Present Paul Gordon - Head of Business Change
Rose Collinson - Interim Executive Director (Children's Services)
Sue Butcher - Interim Assistant Director (Specialist Services)
Craig Goodall - Committee Business and Governance Manager

252/14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D. Shires.

253/14 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

254/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

255/14 MINUTES

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting which took place on 28 November, 2013, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

256/14 DELIVERY OF THE WORKING SMARTER PROGRAMME - THEME 4 - IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING, LEARNING AND THE LIFE CHANCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Panel were provided with details on action taking place to achieve the objectives set out under Theme 4 of the Working Smarter Programme: 'Improving safeguarding, learning and life chances for children and young people'.

The Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) gave a presentation to Members setting out the framework, activity and assessment process for improving safeguarding and effective school improvement (annexed).

The following were the principle points from the ensuing discussion:-

Reducing spending

Members were concerned about the impact of budget savings on children and young people. An example of a reduction in funding to Children's Centres was given and the potential detrimental impact this could have on early intervention services.

The Interim Executive Director acknowledged this challenge and explained that the priority was to shrink sustainably in the right areas. Working with partners was key to ensure that collectively, the right areas were reduced and services to residents maintained. Activity was taking place to reduce core costs such as agency staff and the cost of care.

Benchmarking with other Local Authorities took place on a regular basis and it was noted that many areas looked to Walsall for good practice following the improvement in Children's Services from "inadequate" to "adequate".

School Improvement

Members learned how a framework was being developed to drive school improvement since the return of responsibility for the function following the end of the Serco contract. The Interim Executive Director explained that areas for improvement in the management of school improvement had already been identified, for example warning letters, and further work was required to consider how schools could be challenged further. Members requested that this be considered at a future meeting.

Members were concerned about the previous unavailability of meaningful performance information and urged that further improvements to this area were sought.

Resolved

That:-

- (1) the framework for school improvement be considered at a future meeting;**
- and;**
- (2) the report be noted.**

257/14 FINANCIAL AND CAPITAL PLAN 2014/15 - 2018/19: UPDATE ON DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND OUTCOME OF BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Panel received further details of the financial and capital plan for 2014/15 - 2018/19 and the findings from the second stage of resident and stakeholder consultation.

The Head of Business Change introduced the report and explained that the Council wished to take into account as many views as possible regarding the budget setting process.

The Portfolio Holder (Resources) highlighted that he had attended a number of consultation sessions where lots of valuable feedback both for and against the proposals had been received. This feedback would influence the final draft budget presented to Council.

Following questions it was explained that a number of budget road shows had taken place which was why "face to face" was the manner in which the highest number of local people were consulted. Much effort had been put into promoting and undertaking the consultation to gain as many views as possible.

The Chair expressed concern about the low response rate when compared to the overall population of the Borough.

The Panel requested further information on the following issues:-

- The cost of consultation;
- Reasons for the low online/e-mail response rate in Phase 2 of the consultation;
- How the views to save money from a staff member in Children's Residential Services were taken forward;
- The impact of ceasing contracted mobile security to three homeless projects;
- Projections for potential savings from the following suggestions:-
 - Turning off street lights;
 - Reducing travel expenses for staff and Members;
- The number of people that responded in last year's budget consultation.

Resolved

That:-

(1) concern be expressed regarding the low consultation response rate;

and;

(2) further information be provided to Members on the following:-

(a) the cost of the consultation;

(b) reasons for the low on-line/e-mail response rate in Phase 2 of the consultation;

- (c) how the views to save money from a staff member in Children's Residential Services were taken forward;
- (d) the impact of ceasing contracted mobile security to three homeless projects;
- (e) projections for potential savings from the following suggestions:-
 - (i) turning off street lights;
 - (ii) reducing travel expenses for staff and Members;
- (f) the number of people that responded in last year's budget consultation.

258/14 WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14 AND FORWARD PLAN

Resolved

That the following items be considered at 11th February, 2014 meeting:-

- (1) Working Smarter Programme - Theme 5 "Support for Delivery" focusing on the following objectives:-
 - (a) Business change capacity;
 - (b) Employment support;
- (2) third Quarter budget monitoring;
- (3) Walsall Crisis Support Scheme.
and;
- (4) the Forward Plan be noted.

259/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 6.00 p.m. on 11th February, 2014.

The meeting closed at 7.03 p.m.

Chair:.....

Date:.....