

**Notes of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee**  
**Finance and Performance Working Group**  
**18<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

**Present:** Councillors: John Bailey, Leonard Crosbie, Jonathan Dancer, Brian O'Connell, Ben Staines

**Apologies:** Councillors: John Chidlow, Nigel Jupp, Stuart Ritchie, Michael Willett

**Also present:** Councillor: Christian Mitchell

**Officers:** Katharine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources  
David Plank, Customer Services Manager  
Mark Pritchard, Commissioning and Performance Manager

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Stuart Ritchie was elected as Chairman of the Working Group for the ensuing year.

**2. TIME OF MEETINGS**

The Working Group agreed to postpone this item until the next meeting when the Chairman would be present, along with all the Members of the Working Group.

**3. TO APPROVE AS CORRECT THE RECORD OF THE FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP MEETING ON 18<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2015**

The notes of the Finance and Performance Working Group meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

**4. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM CHAIRMAN OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

There were no announcements.

**6. TO APPROVE THE WORKING GROUP'S TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Terms of Reference were approved by the Working Group.

The Working Group discussed the combination of the finance and performance elements being scrutinised together under the same

working group and whether this was effective. The Members discussed the reasons for this combined review and the pros and cons and agreed to leave the Working Group as it stood for approximately six months and review it again once the new Members had experienced the existing process.

**4. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS MONITORING REPORT  
1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2015 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2015 INCORPORATING  
ANNUAL FIGURES**

The Customer Services Manager presented the report Complaints and Compliments Monitoring Report 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 Incorporating Annual Figures.

The Working Group noted the figures for the quarter which were detailed in the report. The Council had recently procured a new Covalent system which meant that the individual departments were now responsible for recording and updating their own complaints on the system.

It was also noted that the primary role of the Customer Services Manager was to investigate the cause and nature of complaints received by the Council.

There had been some changes to the complaints structure, there had previously been three stages for complaints, this had been reduced to two and the Council now had 21 days to respond to complaints, which was considered to be best practice and in line with other authorities and the Local Government Ombudsman. In addition there was a new definition of a “complaint” which had been agreed by full Council in February 2015.

The Members noted the complaints figures for the quarter, along with the annual figures.

The report detailed a breakdown of the figures for the Working Group.

The appendices to the report illustrated how the new Covalent system could produce the data and a breakdown of the figures for individual departments.

The Working Group reviewed and noted the breakdown of the Ombudsman complaints figures for the reporting year.

**5. ANALYSIS OF REQUESTS MADE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2014/15**

The Customer Services Manager presented the report of the Analysis of Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014/15.

The Working Group noted the figures in the report for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 and how they compared to the previous year.

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests now fell within the role and responsibility of the Monitoring Officer in the Legal department.

The Working Group noted that overdue responses were being monitored.

The highest number of FOI requests were received by Business Services and the majority of these related to software contracts. A data share and contracts register had been set up which released as much information as possible into the public domain to therefore to reduce the number of FOI requests in this department.

**6. REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE, DISTRICT PLAN PRIORITIES AND KEY PROJECTS FOR 201/15**

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the report on the Council's Finance and Performance, District Plan Priorities and Key Projects for 2014/15.

This report detailed the finance and performance figures for the year end. An underspend was reported, which would contribute to the general reserves. There was a low variance on the previous year and the variances were detailed in the report. The Working Group noted that more work would be undertaken to forecast the figures in order to try and avoid the major items of variance.

Members raised some concerns; these included the officer time involved in planning appeals and the cost.

The Working Group discussed implementing a system to prevent appeals escalating to the high court and avoiding the enormous costs involved, similar to other councils. The Working Group felt strongly about this and made the following recommendation to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

The Working Group asked that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee ask Cabinet to determine and confirm the process relating to the planning appeal process, with a view to implementing an element or trigger that high court appeal decisions should go to Cabinet first for a "sign-off".

Members suggested that a Working Group be established to help understand and confirm the process of planning appeal cases.

The Director of Corporate Resources talked the Working Group through the Budget and Key Performance Indicators.

The Working Group was pleased to see an increase in the attendance figures for The Capitol and Horsham Museum.

The Working Group noted that parking was a high income area for the Council; however officers were anticipating a loss with the opening of the new John Lewis and Waitrose stores with their own car park, the impact of this would be monitored closely.

Members also discussed the car parks in the rural villages within the District and whether charges should be implemented, the Group was concerned that this could be detrimental to the villages The Working Group suggested that the cost of these car parks could be transferred to the parish councils, with an increase in their precepts, in order to maintain free of charge parking in the villages and parishes. Therefore the Working Group wished to raise this for the attention of the Cabinet Member.

The Working Group noted SLT Tracked Projects List which provided an update on the progress of the Council's major projects.

**9. MEMBER OVERVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S USE OF THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000**

The Working Group noted that the Council had not used the powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 in the past quarter.

The meeting ended at 7.28 p.m. having commenced at 5.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN