
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2013 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY**

Present: Councillors Miles (Vice-Chairman) (In the Chair), Bucke, Caines, V E Guglielmi, Nicholls, Platt, White and Wood.

In Attendance: Business Manager (Jon Barber), Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney), Democratic Services Officer (Michael Pingram) and Finance and Procurement Manager (Richard Barrett).

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Steady (Chairman) with Councillor White substituting.

43. SILENT TRIBUTE - THE LATE COUNCILLOR A J MITCHELL

The Chairman paid tribute to the late Councillor Mitch Mitchell and all those present stood and paid their respects to his memory.

44. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 28 October 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Nicholls declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 4 (A.3) by virtue of the fact he was a member of Great Bromley County Council.

Councillor Miles declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 4 (A.3) by virtue of the fact she was a Frinton and Walton Ward Member.

Councillor White declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 4 (A.3) by virtue of the fact he was a St Osyth Ward Member.

Councillor Bucke declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 4 (A.3) by virtue of the fact he was a Holland and Kirby Ward Member.

46. PERFORMANCE REPORT – SECOND QUARTER 2013-14 (SEPTEMBER 2013)

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) which highlighted the performance of the Council for Quarter Two of the reporting year 2013/2014.

The Council's Business Manager explained that, further to Minute 29 of the Corporate Management Committee meeting held on 16 September 2013, where it was agreed that a Corporate Director would attend each meeting to answer any questions the Committee might have, he had spoken with Corporate Directors and felt it would be more beneficial to invite the relevant Corporate Director or relevant officer depending on the subject of the meeting. The Committee agreed that this was a sensible approach.

He then gave an overview of the report to the Committee and said how he wanted it to be more focussed whilst being a flexible report that could develop over time. It was noted that the report was divided between the current progress of projects and targets and that all of the projects were on target, except for Coast Protection, which had been achieved ahead of target. He stated that effective performance management would involve some targets not being met, especially if challenging targets were set. The strength of the approach was understanding deviation from target (whether above or below) and where necessary putting in place appropriate steps to ensure corporate priorities were delivered and stated that although some targets had not been met, he would have felt uncomfortable had they all been achieved as it could suggest that the targets were not challenging enough.

The Council's Business Manager explained the reasons behind certain targets not being met and, in relation to the recycling rates and waste tonnage collected, it was in line with the regional and national trend rather than a local issue. However he stressed that work was ongoing to understand the reasons behind this and that it was being reviewed by the Locality Board. With regards to being behind target in the handling of minor planning applications, the Council's Business Manager said that, having spoken with the Planning Department, this was mainly due to the Council delaying some applications in order to receive unilateral undertakings attached to the applications. Refusing applications due to delays in receiving information from the applicant would not be good practice although steps were being taken to ensure such impacts were minimised.

The issue of customer satisfaction was discussed, including that for planning service customers. The Business Manager stated that it was difficult to get reliable satisfaction data but agreed that he would look at what information was collected by Departments. It was **AGREED** that further consideration would be given to determining levels of customer satisfaction, particularly with the determination of planning applications.

The Council's Business Manager then explained the figures relating to sickness amongst the Council's staff which were behind target. He said that although the figures were higher than the target, the underlying trend showed the figure was reducing month-by-month. He also stated it was important to consider the impact of long term sickness on overall sickness rate which could have a significant impact. The Chairman felt this was an important issue and raised a concern as to whether this was indicating there was low morale across the Council.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was **AGREED** that the Council's Business Manager speak with the Human Resources Department and report back on the sickness-related issues at the Council.

In conclusion, Mr Barber explained that complaints received were behind target in terms of being responded to in the prescribed time limits and that he was working hard in order to find out why this was the case. In discussion, the Committee expressed its concern at an increase in the number of Stage 1 Complaints being received by the Council.

The Chairman thanked the Council's Business Manager for his report.

47. CORPORATE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2013/14

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services), which provided the Committee with an overview of the Council's actual financial position against the budget, as at the end of September 2013.

The Council's Finance and Procurement Manager explained his report in more detail and said that Page 27 provided a good snapshot, showing that after one-off budgets were

removed, the Council was currently just under £900,000 behind profile. He then stated that income budgets were ahead of profile which could be a sign of economic recovery. He further added that some vacancies were still being held as vacant but each one was being challenged and only filled if necessary.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that officers to report back on where capital receipts had been received and where they had been spent.

48. SPECIAL EXPENSES – ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) which sought to provide the Committee with a report that would examine special expenses, including alternative options for recommending to Cabinet.

The Council's Finance and Procurement Manager explained the current situation with regards to special expenses and advised the Committee of four alternatives to the current approach to special expenses and explained each of them in detail, explaining the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was moved by Councillor Miles, seconded by Councillor Nicholls and **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that the Committee recommends that Alternative One (pass a contrary resolution for all special expenses) is adopted.

49. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) which set out to review, refresh and reaffirm the roles and responsibilities of the Committee and its terms of reference following a request to do so by the Council's Service, Development and Delivery Committee.

Following discussion by the Committee it was **AGREED** that the report be noted.

50. OUTCOMES OF MEETINGS HELD WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND THE CHAIRMEN OF THE COUNCIL'S AUDIT AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) which provided Members with the outcomes on matters of commonality discussed at a meeting held with the leader of the Council and the Chairmen of the Council's Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on 11 October 2013.

Following discussion by the Committee it was **AGREED** that the report be noted.

51. ANNUAL BUDGET SCRUTINY MEETING 2 JANUARY 2014

The Committee was provided with details of the Annual Budget Scrutiny Meeting and reported that it was to be held on Thursday 2 January 2014 in the Connaught Room, Town Hall, Clacton-on-Sea. The Committee was also informed of the likely timetable for the day as well as details for any subsequent meeting with Portfolio Holders.

52. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the new item relevant to the terms of reference of the Committee contained in Forward Plan No.146.

53. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.20 p.m.

Chairman