

EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12th July, 2018

PRESENT – Councillor Haszeldine (in the Chair); Councillors Carson, Coultas, Crumbie, K Nicholson and H Scott (6)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Crichlow, Johnson and C Taylor (3)

ABSENT –

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE –

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Elizabeth Davison, Assistant Director Resources, Luke Swinhoe, Assistant Director, Law and Governance, Sarah Hutchinson, Head of Procurement and Principal Lawyer (Commercial), Helen Whiting, HR Manager, Policy and Strategy and Barbara Copson, Performance Manager.

ER1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

ER2. TIMES OF MEETINGS – RESOLVED – That meetings of this Committee for the Municipal Year 2018/19, be held at 9.30 a.m. on the dates, as agreed on the calendar of meetings by Cabinet at Minute C111/Feb/18.

ER3. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 19th April, 2018.

RESOLVED - That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

ER4. YEAR-END SICKNESS ABSENCE – The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the outturn sickness absence figures for 2017/18.

It was reported that the absence figure for 2017/18 was 9.22 days per full-time equivalent (FTE), a reduction of 0.5 days from the last year and 0.32 days over the target of 8.9 days, with stress continuing to be the highest reason for absence and the highest absence levels being within Adults Services, although, since April 2018, this had started to show a continual reduction.

The Assistant Director Resources reported that the overall attendance rate was 95.8 per cent, with 45.4 per cent of staff having no sickness absence during the period.

It was reported that absence levels were generally higher during the quarter 3 reporting period and discussion ensued on the possible reasons for that. It was suggested that further analysis could be undertaken to ensure that targeted action plans could be put in place in particular areas if needed and, as planned hospital operations were higher during that period, whether the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee could look at the reasons for that.

The submitted report also outlined the health and well-being interventions which had been introduced and the need to continue with those initiatives to try to reduce absence rates and discussion ensued on the difficulties in evidencing the effectiveness of those interventions over a short period of time and the need to continue to create a culture, within the organisation, where wellbeing, mental health and healthy lifestyles was openly discussed, promoted and supported, linked to strategies and policies.

Discussion ensued on the comparative figures with other local authorities and whether Members should be more closely scrutinising the implementation of the sickness absence policy within the Council to ensure that it was working and that a consistent approach was being operated, however, Scrutiny were reassured that, at this stage, the policy and interventions were working.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

ER5. – CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2017/18 – The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) updating Members on the Authority's performance in relation to health and safety for the financial year 2017/18, which, overall, showed an improvement on the previous year.

It was reported that health and safety continued to be a high priority for the Authority and the main focus for the year had, again, been to continue to embed the health and safety management system and improve health compliance.

A full review of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy had also been undertaken, which reflected the commitment of elected Members and senior management to health and safety within the organisation and that the Council's General Statement of Intent poster had also been updated and was displayed at various locations throughout the organisation.

Discussion ensued on how verbal abuse and threatening behaviour, including on-line abuse towards both staff and Members was managed, and it was reported that the Employee Protection Register contained details of any individual who may present a potential threat to the safety of an employee, that operating procedures had been reviewed and additional response arrangements had been put in place at all customer facing receptions and that, in certain circumstances, additional action could be taken.

Reference was also made to security arrangements within Council buildings and the need to ensure that all staff and Members wore their ID badges at all times when working and it was suggested that there should be a 'Council' standard lanyard, which was easily identifiable.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

ER6. – PROCUREMENT – The Head of Procurement and Principal Lawyer (Commercial) gave a presentation on the process and procedures in place within the Authority in relation to procurement.

The presentation covered the legal and contractual obligations, the internal and EU thresholds, the role of the Procurement Board, compliance and monitoring of the

agreed processes, existing frameworks, documentation, spend information and social value in Procurement.

Discussion ensued on the role of the Procurement Board as the main Officer decision-making forum for procurement decisions; the involvement of Members in monitoring compliance with the processes and procedures, through the Annual Procurement Plan which was reported to Cabinet and which gave visibility to Members of all existing and new contracts which were over £100,000; the requirement, under the Local Government Transparency Code 2014, to publish all procurements with a value that exceeded £5000 on a Contract Register; the need for all Officers to comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules; and the approach in balancing cost and quality when considering tender specifications.

Particular reference was also made to the social value of contracts and it was reported that all local businesses and small and medium enterprises were encouraged to participate in tendering processes and that Officers should use tender procedures which encouraged maximum participation, including preliminary market consultation and the splitting up of contracts into lots that might encourage wider participation.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

ER7. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - The Performance Manager submitted a report (previously circulated) giving an update on performance against those key performance indicators within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee for the period 1 January to 31 March, 2018.~

The submitted report also requested that consideration be given to the proposed indicator set for this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2018/19, which had been reviewed for continued relevance and the reporting schedule.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That the proposed basket of performance indicators for 2018/19, together with the reporting schedule, be agreed.

ER8. REVENUE BUDGET – (1) Outturn 2017/18 – The Managing Director submitted a report (previously circulated) advising Members of the revenue outturn for 2017/18, subject to auditing.

It was reported that the draft year-end position showed an improvement of £0.530 million from the opening balance projections reported in the MTFP 2018/19 to 2021/22, which was mainly due to significant improvements within children and Adult Services. It was reported that the outturn figures were welcome, especially as a number related to the early delivery of savings which provided a solid base for achieving future year efficiencies.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

(2) Quarter 1 Monitoring Report 2018/19 – The Managing Director submitted a report

(previously circulated) advising Members of the quarter 1 revenue budget monitoring report 2018/19.

It was reported that the Council's projected revenue reserves at the end of 2018/19 were £16.445 million, £0.955 million more than the initial 2018-22 MTFP position and included a brought forward amount of £0.530 million from 2017-18 and the rebasing exercise of £0.425 million. Of those reserves, it was reported that there was a risk reserve balance of £4.330 million and a commitment to use £11.134 million to support the 2018-22 MTFP, leaving £0.981 million one-off funding to support the general fund moving forward.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

ER8. WORK PROGRAMME – The Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Committee and to give consideration to any additional areas Members felt should be added to the previously approved work programme.

It was suggested that the results of the 2018 employee survey be reported to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on 13th September, 2018.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.