

Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2010

Present:

Councillor Watson - In the Chair
Councillors Bhatti, Clayton, B Fisher, Glover, McCulley, Morrison, P Murphy (RG/10/28 - 31), E Newman, Sandiford and Trotman.

Councillor Priest, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources
Councillor Smith, Assistant Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Apologies

Councillors Lomax and Swannick
Councillor P Murphy apologised for those items he was not present for.

RG/10/28 Welcome to new Members

The Chair welcomed Councillors B Fisher and E Newman to their first meeting of the Committee.

RG/10/29 Urgent Business

The minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Subgroup on 16 March 2010 were submitted as urgent business.

Decision

To note the Chair's decision to accept the minutes as urgent business.

RG/10/30 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 March 2010 were submitted for consideration, along with minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Subgroup on 16 March 2010.

Decision

To approve the minutes submitted as correct records of the meetings.

RG/10/31 Information and Overview Report

A report of the City Solicitor was submitted. This included an overview of the major financial decisions the Council would be taking over the next four months which related to the Committee's remit. Members asked for briefing notes providing more details on the proposed decisions relating to Modesole governance arrangements and the supply, delivery and collection of concrete. The Chair also suggested that the Committee look at the proposed governance arrangements for the combined authority in Greater Manchester through the Governance Subgroup.

In discussing the forward plan members asked what effect the change of government would have on the decisions included in the plan, particularly those regarding the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme. The City Treasurer advised that it was too early to say, but that this would become more apparent when decisions had been taken regarding which specific central government grants to local government were being cut. Specifically in relation to BSF he advised that the bulk of the programme was secure as contracts had been signed to carry out much of the work required and building work was now underway. The Committee requested a monthly briefing note setting out the implications of the new coalition government's actions on funding for services in Manchester and governance arrangements for public bodies.

The report also included briefing notes for information on the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 and the response to the Chair's letter to the Chief Executive expressing the Committee's dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy, particularly in relation to Highway Services.

Members had recently received a further communication regarding the status of proposals under the strategy in their ward. Their main concern with the implementation of the strategy related to the communication of outcomes. Members said that many Councillors had been put in a difficult position as they had told their constituents that certain improvements would take place in the ward based on what they had been told by officers, only later to be told that these improvements could not now take place. Furthermore where proposals could not be pursued there was no information passed on to members about what other funding streams were available to pursue local improvements.

The Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services, who had written the response acknowledged the failures in the process and the difficult position it had put elected members in. To address the problem she offered to submit a report on the communications protocol and how it was addressing the concerns raised to a future meeting of the Committee.

A member proposed that for each submission under the strategy members should receive a brief summary of the proposal and details of other possible ways of pursuing funding for it. The Chair suggested that ward co-ordination meetings could carry out this task at their next meeting.

Decision

1. To request a briefing note providing more details on the proposed decisions relating to Modesole governance arrangements and the supply, delivery and collection of concrete in the next information and overview report.
2. To look at the proposed governance arrangements for the Combined Authority in Greater Manchester through the Governance Subgroup.
3. To request a monthly briefing note setting out the implications of the new coalition government's actions on funding for services in Manchester and governance arrangements for public bodies.
4. To request that a report on the operation of the communications protocol for the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy is submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
5. To suggest that at their next ward co-ordination meetings Councillors receive a brief summary of Neighbourhood Funding Strategy proposals relating to their ward and details of other possible ways of pursuing funding for them.

RG/10/32 Delivering Value for Money through AIM

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Transformation providing an overview of the Analyse and Improve Manchester (AIM) Programme in the context of the Council's corporate Value for Money Strategy. The report demonstrated how the AIM programme contributes to the objectives and intentions of the Value for Money Strategy in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Chair introduced the item and stated that she had suggested that the Committee receive the report to test how well the AIM Programme and the Value for Money Strategy complemented each other.

Members noted that the programme involved a shift to cheaper access channels, for example by offering services such as the renewal of library books over the Internet where the cost per transaction was lower. They were advised that the programme also supported neighbourhood working and involved looking at how staff could respond to a variety of different issues within a ward. The Committee suggested that officers be mindful of ensuring that this complements rather than duplicates the role of Street Environment Managers, and that care be taken on how this works in practice in wards with few service delivery locations.

A member sought to test the evidence base that the Directorate of Transformation was using to plan its programmes to make savings. He asked what evidence the Council had that an electronic document record management system (EDRMS) would result in time and cost savings. The Strategic Director of Transformation advised that a number of models had influenced the design of the Directorate's approach from both other local authorities and the private sector. A benchmarking tool was also used in redesigning services. Members requested that a report is submitted to a future meeting of the Committee setting out how services are selected

for redesign and giving practical examples of how benchmarking information is used to redesign services.

The Strategic Director also advised that the Council was still looking at how it might best use an EDRMS, the use of EDRMS systems had not always resulted in cost savings and care would be taken to ensure any such system was used in the most effective way.

Decision

To note the report and request that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee covering how the Directorate of Transformation prioritises areas to transform, and how benchmarking is used in the transformation process and in designing improvements.

RG/10/33 National Performance Framework

A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance) on the National Performance Framework was submitted. The report gave an overview of national performance management framework set out in the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' and its implementation.

The Head of Partnerships and Performance told the Committee that shortly after the production of the report the Government announced that the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) would be discarded. It was not yet clear what sort of inspection regime might replace it. Members requested that they be updated on plans to replace the inspection regime once they are clearer.

Decision

To note the report and to request a report updating members on what will replace the Comprehensive Area Assessment once this has become clear.

RG/10/34 Work Programme 2010/11

A report was submitted to the Committee containing information about setting its work programme for the next ten months ahead. The report provided terms of reference for the two subgroups that the Committee had been running and advised members of changes to the Committee's remit and a new pilot for carrying out inductions for new members of the Committee and generating suggestions for the workprogramme.

Decision

1. To appoint the following members to the Human Resources Subgroup: Councillors Clayton, B Fisher, McCulley, Trotman and Watson.

2. To appoint the following members to the Governance Subgroup: Councillors Glover, Morrison, E Newman, Sandiford and Watson
3. To agree the Terms of Reference for the Human Resources and Governance Subgroup and to agree that a member may attend a subgroup meeting as a substitute for another member of the same party for the first meetings of both subgroups.
4. To request that the Chair of the Committee, in consultation with the relevant officers, draft a work programme based on topics raised in the induction and work programming event.
5. To request that the Committee receive a report at its June meeting including information on training and development opportunities that could support the Committee to carry out the work programme it has devised