

Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2009

Present:

Councillor Watson - In the Chair
Councillors Bhatti (Items 1 - 8), Clayton, Hitchen, McCulley, Morrison, Sandiford Smith and Trotman

Councillor Andrews, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Priest, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Apologies:

Councillors Glover, Jones and P. Murphy

RG/09/17 Urgent Business

A report produced by Councillor Clayton was submitted for consideration as urgent business. The report related to the item 'Information and Communication Technology Update.'

Decision

That the report should be considered as part of the item 'Information and Communication Technology Update.'

RG/09/18 Minutes

Minutes of the meetings of Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 February 2009 and 23 February 2009 were submitted.

Minutes of the meeting of the Governance Sub Group of Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2009 were also submitted.

Decision

To approve the minutes of these meetings as correct records.

RG/09/19 Information and Overview Report

A report of the City Solicitor was submitted providing information about relevant issues affecting the Committee's remit, tracking the implementation of previous decisions and reviewing the forward work programme.

Decision

To accept the work programme.

RG/09/20 LAA Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 3 2008/9

A report of the Head of Corporate Performance was submitted. The report set out performance towards the targets included in the city's Local Area Agreement. The performance information related to the period October to December 2008.

Members noted the changes to the formatting of the report and found that it made the information clearer and facilitated more detailed scrutiny.

In relation to target NI 154 'Net Additional Homes' the Committee was advised that this target would no longer be considered as a target within the Local Area Agreement as a result of the economic downturn. However the Council was still committed to sustaining the developing of new homes. Members expressed concern that information relating to NI 154 had not been provided to the Committee. It was explained that the information was unavailable because of commercial confidentiality and would also relate to the remit of Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee rather than this Committee. The Committee felt that work to sustain development in this area warranted further scrutiny and referred the matter to Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate as part of their overview of housing in the city.

Members commented that the method of collecting statistics relating to educational attainment did not provide a clear picture of how Manchester children were performing at school, but rather focused on performance in Manchester schools. The Committee felt that the Council should continue to lobby for statistics to be produced that indicate how children living in Manchester are performing at school.

Members also requested further information relating to how partnerships were working to improve performance for target NI 192, Household Waste Recycled or Composted.

Decision

1. To request that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee look at the target for Net Additional Homes as part of their work programme for next year.
 2. To request further information relating to how partnerships were working to improve performance for target NI 192, Household Waste Recycled or Composted.
 3. To request that Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee take account of the targets relating to educational attainment as part of their consideration of attainment in general.
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RG/09/21 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Update

An oral update on the current status of the Council's IT resources was given by the Strategic Head of ICT. A report produced by Councillor Clayton relating to the current status of IT resources was considered as part of this item.

The Council's IT estate was currently suffering under the effects of virus activity. These viruses, referred to as the 'Conficker' and 'Marioforever' worms were interrupting the performance of a number of the Council's computers.

The Council had taken action to control the spread of the virus and had obtained specialist technical advice and support from Microsoft and Kaspersky to resolve the problems. The Council had been advised that it was important that they strengthened their leadership in relation to ICT and exercised greater control over the Council's IT estate. The Council had recently taken the decision to ban the use of 'memory sticks' as a precaution against viruses and to strengthen the Council's ability to protect confidential data.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) had put the Council's Business Continuity Plan into effect so that the most crucial parts of the Council's work were affected as little as possible by the current problems, and were prioritised for IT support.

Members were concerned that the Council should be better able to resolve similar problems more rapidly and effectively in the future.

The Strategic Head of ICT commented that the Council was developing systems to identify and respond to viruses at first contact. In addition a number of PCs were being replaced with WYSE terminals which allowed access to the network via the Citrix system. These terminals were less susceptible to viruses and facilitated secure data storage.

Members asked what action had been taken to stop the virus updating itself, and when the current difficulties would be resolved.

The Strategic Head of ICT responded that where the virus had been found PCs had been taken off the network and 'quarantined' to prevent the virus from spreading or updating. He had put a target in place that the Council's IT estate would be fully operational by the end of the week.

Decision

To add an item onto the work programme to look at how the Council has reacted to the spread of the virus and what action is proposed to lessen the effects of future virus out breaks.

RG/09/22 Neighbourhood Funding Strategy (NFS)

A report of the Chief Executive and City Treasurer was submitted summarising the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy (NFS). A total of 208 proposals were submitted and a breakdown of how they were addressed was included in the report.

Members questioned why the maintenance programme of grounds, trees and street cleansing was not available. The Team Leader of the Area Co-ordination Team commented that work was underway to ensure that the Council could provide this information in a more accessible way through the Environment on Call service.

The Committee viewed the first year of the strategy as a success as proposals had not impacted on the Council's budget, and would serve to inform long-term budget setting. Members commented that some sections of the Council were more responsive to the strategy and more able to incorporate the proposals than other sections.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources said that the whole Council would review the way it reacts and responds to the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy. A Communication strategy for the NFS was being drawn up and would assist in embedding NFS into the work of the Council, as officers and ward Councillors find the best ways to engage with the strategy. He invited the Committee to establish a member-working group to review the operation of the NFS under its first year and make recommendations regarding how it can continue to improve.

Decision

1. To establish a member working group to review the operation of the Neighbourhood Funding Strategy and make recommendations about it can be strengthened.
2. To nominate Councillors Glover, Sandiford, Smith, Trotman and Watson as members of the working group.
3. To agree that an additional Councillor from the Liberal Democrat group will be appointed to the group at the Committee's next meeting.

RG/09/23 Working in Partnership with the Manchester Community- Securing the Outcomes of the Community Strategy

A report of the Interim Assistant Chief Executive (Performance) was submitted exploring ways in which the Committee could contribute to securing the outcomes of the Community Strategy. These included: -

- Considering the values and behaviours that public sector organisations should adopt to achieve the Community Strategy
 - Commissioning, communication and governance in the Local Area Agreement
 - Equality, community engagement and voluntary sector involvement in the Local Area Agreement
 - Commenting on the area assessment self-evaluation.
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Members questioned whether the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) would give Overview and Scrutiny new powers to scrutinise public bodies. The Interim Assistant Chief Executive (Performance) commented that although the CAA itself did not provide new powers, it did provide an evidence base of how public agencies were working together and the Committee may wish to look into this, or use it to identify further areas for investigation.

The Chair illustrated that the Committee should look into how partners' efficiency programmes are releasing savings for reinvestment in priorities.

Decision

To note the report and to agree to look at how partners' efficiency programmes are releasing savings for reinvestment in priorities as part of the work programme for next year.
