

CORPORATE ISSUES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 8TH FEBRUARY, 2010

Present – Councillors Shaw (Chairman), P. Brierley (Vice Chairman) Ayub, Ashcroft, Cottam, Hayes, Hollick, Iqbal (as deputy for Councillor Hornby) Mistry, J. Silvester, Spencer and J. Walsh.

Also in attendance

Councillor Morris	-	Executive Member for Strategy and External Relationships
Councillor Mrs Thomas	-	Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Health
Councillor Kay	-	Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity
Mr. P. Molyneux	-	Assistant Director, Highways and Engineering and Committee Chief Officer Support
Mr. I.D. Mulholland	-	Principal Scrutiny Officer
Mr. S. Harriss	-	Chief Executive
Mr. A. Eastwood	-	Director of Chief Executive's Department
Ms. S. Johnson	-	Deputy Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. J. Rowlands	-	Assistant Director Tax and Benefits
Ms. L. Ridsdale	-	Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisation Development
Mr. J. Morrissy	-	VFM Programme Manager

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hornby and Chadwick.

Councillor Shaw in the Chair.

27. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th December, 2009 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

28. MONITORING OF DECISIONS

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which provided details of the progress of decisions taken at previous meetings of this Committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

29. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which set out details of the Committee Work Programme for the 2009/2010 Municipal Year.

Members discussed the Work Programme, in terms of any amendments that could be made.

Resolved – That the updated Work Programme be approved.

30. VALUE FOR MONEY

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources and heard a presentation from the Chief Executive updating the Committee on the current position in relation to the Value for Money(VFM) Strategy.

Members were reminded that the VFM Strategy was being developed to respond inter alia to the financial downturn and its anticipated effects on RSG, grants and other sources of income. Current forecasts suggested that savings of up to 30% could be required over the period to 2013/14 and departments had been asked to develop plans which would enable them to make these efficiencies.

Savings of approximately £7.7m for 2009/10 were being delivered; plans for a further 5% in 2010/11 had already been identified; and plans for an additional 10% to be delivered in 2011/12 were currently being worked up by departments with any proposals being shared with Members in due course.

The report went on to detail the three main strands of activity within the Plan (Programme, People and Projects) and advised that the programme plan was closely monitored by the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources in liaison with Members and Chief Officers. A key aspect of this liaison was to identify capacity issues and risks as they arose. Capacity constraints were evident in all Departments and a programme of training and development put in place to address this. A communications strategy was under development which would reinforce key messages in order to support the culture change aspects of the programme.

In terms of the departmental strands of VFM activity, the Committee were advised that the focus of the programme was to ensure the relevant skills, capacity and plans were in place to support delivery.

The corporate strand of VFM included consideration of how further efficiencies could be identified within a range of cross-cutting areas, including:

- property and accommodation;
- procurement;
- ICT;
- income options; and
- The Bolton/Bury Alliance.

In conclusion the Chief Executive highlighted that this area was a major challenge but the Council had started early and had sound plans in place. He also highlighted the importance of the budget timetable and the focus on pace and capacity.

Members in their deliberations referred to:-

- the issue of being able to test the effect on levels of service, comparing before and after a VFM exercise.

The Committee was advised that some areas of work had easily measurable outcomes whilst in others this would be more difficult. Many issues would be picked up in the normal departmental performance reports and dashboards.

- responding to the financial down turn.

The Committee was advised that the VFM programme was clearly focussed on helping to deal with the effects of the down turn and the consequent impact on Council finances, as well as supporting a cultural change which focussed on efficiencies in preference to service cuts.

- a referral to the differences between VFM and external tendering of services.

It was indicated that external provision of services might need to be considered as an option in some VFM proposals – but that the main focus of the strategy was concerned with continuing to provide effective services with fewer resources.

- matters around whether finance led/investment led, monitoring arrangements and Members awareness of the Programme and key issues.

Members were advised that the Programme was outcome and service led. Existing procedures would be used for monitoring and Member involvement including Executive Member meetings, Policy Development Group meetings and Scrutiny Meetings.

- frontline staff and their involvement in the process.

It was explained that the Council had a strong track record of staff engagement.

- matters around the need to change the cultural arrangements.

The Committee was advised that there was a need to change the organisational culture to reflect the reality as the context had changed.

Resolved – (i) That the report, presentation and Member discussions be noted.

(ii) That this matter be included in the annual work programme planning discussions for this committee in respect of the next municipal year.

31. CUSTOMER RELATIONS MANAGEMENT

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Corporate Resources updating Members in terms of the lessons learned from phase 1 of the changes outlined at the meeting of the Committee held in October, 2009.

Members were advised that the new “Lagan” system to replace Oracle had been successfully loaded and was working and the main roll out to all customer service officers would be on 31st, March 2010. Mr. Rowlands highlighted to the Committee that the live services would be phased in the terms of :-

- switch board;
- tourism;
- job application;
- telephone payments; and
- Business Bolton Advice Line.

The Committee was also reminded of the planned improvements.

In conclusion, Mr Rowlands highlighted that the project was broadly on track against the project plan, confidence had increased in terms of technology, users and functionality and consideration was being given to identify opportunities to

optimise the asset.

Members in their deliberations referred to:-

- the cost and life span of the system.

The Committee was advised that it had cost £400,000 to procure on the basis of a 5 year business case. It was anticipated that the system would provide a minimum seven year service.

- help for people with no web access.

It was indicated that there had been an increase in self service facilities in the One Stop Shop although some people would always need to use the phone.

- monitoring arrangements of calls received.

It was indicated that regular monitoring was undertaken.

Resolved – (i) That the presentation and Member discussions be noted.

(ii) That the matter be included in the annual work programme planning discussions for this Committee in respect of the next municipal year.

32. SAVINGS FROM IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report the purpose of which was to detail how the introduction of new technology played a key role in enhancing the efficiency of services and thus enabled financial savings to be made throughout the Council.

The report went on to detail where savings had been made from improvements in technology in the following departments:

- Adults and Community Services;
- Environmental Services/Development and Regeneration;

- Corporate Resources; and
- Children's Services

Resolved – That the report be noted.

33. MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Committee received the extract of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:

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- a) The Executive held on 7th December, 2009 and 11th January, 2010;
- b) The Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Health held on 19th January, 2010;
- c) The Executive Member for Strategy and External Relationships held on 20th January, 2010;
- d) The Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity held on 20th January, 2019; and
- e) The Corporate Resources and Health Policy Development Group held on 30th November, 2009.

Resolved – That the minutes of various meetings be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and ended at 7.25 p.m.)

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NOTES