

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **28th June 2016**.

Present:

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman)

Cllr. Michael (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Feacey, A. Howard, Hicks, Krause, Link, Mrs. Martin, Sims, Wedgbury.

Also Present:

Cllr Knowles, Shorter

Human Resources Manager, Policy & Performance Manager, Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

48 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Chilton	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Bureau	51
Feacey	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as a member of the Ashford Volunteer Bureau	51

The Chairman gave thanks to the Committee for their understanding and co-operation over the past few months whilst he had been called away to meetings regarding the EU Referendum. He also advised that Cllr Jill Britcher would be stepping down and he wished her well in the future and gave thanks for her hard work. Cllr Wedgbury seconded that.

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The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer explained that, in relation to an item requested for inclusion on the Tracker, that he would circulate the response from Officers regarding the IT Disaster Recovery and Power Supply item via e-mail to the Committee.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 24th May 2016 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

50 Sickness Absence Report 2015/2016

The report provided annual information on sickness absenteeism for 2015/2016. The Chairman opened up the report to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised: -

- The Group discussed the need to strike a balance between receiving more in-depth studies whilst maintaining complete confidentiality. Members agreed that the topic should be handled sensitively with no details of individuals released in an open forum.
- A Member asked if any long term absence was owing to work related causes and whether an analysis by department was available. The Human Resources Manager explained that the typical reasons reported for long term absence included stress, depression and anxiety, all of which were synonymous with UK trends, as reported by the CIPD. Of the cases that she had dealt with, there had been no departmental issues for absence.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

51 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2015/2016

The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer introduced the item and explained that it would probably be the last report presented in that style, since the intention was to move away from purely quarterly reporting and instead introduce a new online Performance Dashboard.

The Chairman opened up the report to the Committee and the following questions/comments were raised: -

- A query was raised regarding the source of the statistics. The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer advised that the Dashboard would encompass the Council's four overarching priorities, to include information from across the authority which included management data already used by Services, input from resident engagement and contextual data from KCC and other partners.
- The Committee discussed the introduction of a Cabinet Task Group that had been set up specifically to focus on Ashford after the EU Referendum result, and the impact this may have on budget and resources, which in turn could affect performance. The Chairman clarified that the Task Group would not affect Overview & Scrutiny.
- A Member requested the information on the Dashboard be clearly labelled to help decipher which area was being referred to e.g. rural, town centre. The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer confirmed that they hoped to

display sub categories to illustrate which data related to which area.

- A query was raised regarding Universal Credit and Jobseekers Allowance and the difficulty in identifying and differentiating between the claimants. The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer explained that DWP and KCC were now in a position to provide a robust experimental figure which did provide a more accurate picture and the Office of National Statistics had set out a new calculation methodology to assist with this.
- A Member asked whether the take up of Direct Debits should have increased more significantly and the Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer explained that the current figure was already very close to the optimum level since a portion of residents were exempt from paying Council Tax.
- Information on the reasons why the number of disabled adaptations had decreased was requested by a Member and the Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer would find out this information and circulate to the Committee.
- A Member expressed concern that the number of customers visiting Customer Services had decreased since they had relocated to the Civic Centre and asked if any statistics were available. The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a small amount of information was available since the move only happened in April. 1342 face to face appointments had taken place in April, compared to a reduction to 1200 in May. The Customer Services Team were moving towards a more streamlined approach and would be working to ensure customers were still able to access the service they required. The Member went on to say that some of their constituents had complained about the Council's telephone service and wondered if any information was available concerning the number of calls lost. The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer would obtain this information and circulate to the Committee.
- The Portfolio Holder made reference to the Residents Survey that had been carried out two years ago and said that the Performance Report should take the issues raised in these on board. He also spoke about the evolution of the Dashboard and that it would give users the ability to drill down through data, but Members should be mindful that it was a work in progress and to provide any feedback to the Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer, which would be useful in informing the system's future development.
- The Chairman advised that an update report on Universal Credit was currently scheduled to be presented to the Committee in September.

Resolved:

- (i) that the report be received and noted.**
- (ii) that information about disabled adaptations be circulated**

- (iii) that statistics relating to the number of Customer Service calls lost be circulated**

52 Scoping Report – Review of Raising the Profile and Awareness of Scrutiny

The Chairman introduced the item and explained that the Committee needed to consider ways to raise its profile. Members were asked to e-mail the Chairman or The Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer with ideas and the review would hopefully be conducted within two months. The Policy & Performance Manager said that it was a worthy review to begin with and it would assist in evaluating the impact that Overview & Scrutiny had.

Resolved:

- (i) that the report be received and noted.**
- (ii) that Members consider and feedback ideas to the Chairman and the Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer**

53 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Chairman noted that the Housing Framework Annual Report and Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 would be discussed at the next meeting in July. The Flowchart adopted at the last meeting would also be used for future items coming onto the tracker.

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Clare Ricketts:
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