

POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

8 March 2017

Chairperson: Councillor D.W.Davies

Vice Chairperson: Councillor A.Jenkins

Councillors: A.Carter, C.Clement-Williams, M.Harvey,
Mrs.L.H.James, D.Jones, A.R.Lockyer and
Mrs.K.Pearson

Officers In Attendance Mrs D.Hopkins, S.John, Ms.L.Doyle, N.Chapple,
D.Rees, C.Cole, D.Michael, S.Davies,
Mrs.S.Rees and N.Evans

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and A.N.Woolcock

1. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2017**

The minutes were noted by the Committee.

2. **HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING, TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT TEAM REPORT CARD - QUARTER 3 2016 / 2017**

Members considered the Human Resources and Learning, Training and Development Service Report Card.

Human Resources

Members noted the work of the long-term sickness absence task force and welcomed the additional funding that had been agreed to for the work to continue. Members asked for assurance that the work of the task force was working. Officers stated that whilst it was frustrating to see that sickness figures had recently increased across the Council, more people were taking time off work due to sickness absence but due to the work of the taskforce, employees are

returning to work sooner than was the case before the launch of the taskforce.

Members noted the statement about keeping compulsory redundancies at a minimum and how was the Council ensuring this remained the case. Officers advised that within the past year there had been 23 compulsory redundancies compared to 73 voluntary redundancies and over 200 people were successfully redeployed, avoiding their compulsory redundancy.

Members asked for clarification on why customer satisfaction was not measured and Officers confirmed this was largely to do with the nature of the work of the HR team – so for example, it would not be appropriate to ask an employee who has been subject to disciplinary processes, how satisfied they were with the outcome. That said, there are some processes which will lend themselves to a customer satisfaction, for example, recruitment, and work is underway to develop this further.

Members noted that the figures for individuals in HR with 3 or more short term absences had increased and asked whether this could be looked at. Officers confirmed that where appropriate cautions were issued, and the employees concerned were quite clear on what acceptable attendance looks like.

Recruitment of senior officers was mentioned and whether the Council would address this issue or would consultants continue to be used. Officers stated that it is the responsibility of each service area or Directorate to decide how they wish to fill vacancies but the preferred option is always directly employed staff. A further question in relation to consultants in Social Services was raised and officers confirmed that one consultant will leave in March 2017 and the interim post of Director is interim until March 2018.

Members asked how the service managed an 8% underspend in the previous year and officers stated that this was because of vacant posts.

Training and Learning and Development

Members asked what training is provided for Social Workers. Officers confirmed that in the first instance an individual would require a Social Work degree and then on the job training and formal training as set out in the the Care Council for Wales Continuing Professional

Education & Learning (CPEL) Framework, beginning with the First Year in Practice.

Members asked how the training materials were developed for Social Work training. Officers stated that training material are developed on an all Wales basis, and then rolled out regionally. The Learning, Training & Development Manager for NPT works with the national training group to support the development of training materials.

Members asked in relation to the HR Report Card, whether sickness absence figures for the Council include pregnancy related sickness. Members then asked whether pregnancy related sickness should be included within normal sickness absence figures. The Head of Human Resources stated that she would speak with colleagues from other Councils to get an understanding of whether they include this within the wider figures and confirmed that NPT figures do include all pregnancy related sickness absence

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

3. **LEGAL SERVICES REPORT CARD 2016/2017**

Members considered the Legal Services Report Card.

Members asked whether there was an opportunity to generate income from work in relation to environmental impact work and officers confirmed that the Council could only cover its costs and not make a profit.

Members asked for clarity that with the impending staff changes of the next year or so would the department be a new looking one. Officers confirmed that a policy of developing in house legal experts was the preferred option to ensure business continuity.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

4. **LEGAL SERVICES REPORT CARD 2016/17 - LICENSING SECTION**

Members considered Licensing Section' service report card.

Members were advised that Safeguarding training has commenced for taxi licence holders and a specific report on this had recently been considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Members asked whether the 6th person waiting for an appraisal would receive one by the end of March 2017. Officers advised that the 6th person had only recently started within the section.

Members asked how many taxi drivers there were within the County Borough. Officers stated that there were currently 355 taxi licence holders and between 250 and 260 taxis. Members continued by asking whether there was an upper limit on the number of licences that can be issued. Officers confirmed that there was no power to limit driver numbers. A limit can be imposed on hackney carriage vehicles, (subject to a survey showing no unmet demand), but there was currently no intention to implement a limit.

Members asked why there had been unplanned departures from the section and were advised that this was because the individuals had secured better, higher grade positions within the Council.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

5. **ICT AND PROCUREMENT - REPORT CARD 2016/17**

Members considered the ICT and Procurement Service Report Card.

Officers advised that given the nature of the service upwards of 75% of the budget was in relation to staffing costs and if additional savings targets were identified then it would result in staff having to leave.

Members welcomed the service's use of modern apprentices and asked whether this would continue in the future. Officers stated that there currently 8 full time staff employed by the service, two are modern apprentices and six had previously been apprentices. The service will continue to identify opportunities to utilise more apprentices in the future.

Members asked how sickness absence was monitored within the service. It was confirmed that every Monday the Head of Service and his accountable managers are e-mailed a copy of all the sickness absence taken the previous week to ensure that it is managed immediately. Each individual's sickness absence details are appended to the return to work interviews and submitted with the monthly returns.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

6. **CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE - DIGITAL BY CHOICE
- HIGHLIGHT REPORT - QUARTER 3 PROGRESS REPORT
(APRIL 1ST - 31ST DECEMBER) 2016-17**

Members considered the quarterly highlight report of the Corporate Improvement Objective Digital by Choice.

Members asked was the Council on target to deliver all the actions contained within the report. Officers advised that they were but there had been some issues in particular in relation to Margam Park and the provision of WiFi. The issue has now been resolved but it required in-depth discussions with CADW on where the transmitter could be sited at the orangery.

Members asked whether any training is available for Community Councils and their staff on using computers as this will increase the accessibility for the public. Officers noted that there was nothing that the Council was currently doing to provide training but it may be something that One Voice Wales may be able to offer.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

7. **TO RECEIVE THE SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
2016/17**

The work programme was noted by the Committee.

8. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

Cabinet Board Papers

The Committee scrutinised the following items:

9.1 Closed Circuit Television Service (CCTV) and Out of Hours Update

Members considered the progress report on the decisions made by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board in June 2016.

Members stated that the paragraph within the report in relation to the savings was unclear and clarification was sought so that the public are able to understand what it means. Officers stated that the

paragraph meant that originally £114k of savings had been identified which was subsequently reduced to £44k but now there will be no savings taken forward.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

9.2 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2016-2017 – Quarter 3 Performance.

Members considered the quarter three performance report.

Members asked how many Enterprise clubs were run within the County Borough. Officers stated that the information would be circulated outside of the meeting.

Members were disappointed to read that there was minimal information in relation to the Adult Services Improvement Objective. Officers advised that this would be raised at the next meeting of the Social Care Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee when the performance report is presented to the Committee.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

9.3 Supply of Groceries, Provisions and Frozen Foods

Members considered the report that sought to extend the current framework arrangements in relation to the supply of groceries, provisions and frozen foods.

Members asked whether we could get goods cheaper if the Council went to tender rather than extend the framework. Officers advised that it was a possibility and this would be tested when the NPS carried out their tender. However, given their failure to tender to timescale an extension to the existing contract is the logical option. Following Scrutiny the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

9.4 Council Tax and Business Rate Court Costs

Members considered a report to determine the costs to be recovered from Council tax payers and business rates payers in respect of the issue of summonses and the granting by the magistrates of liability orders.

Members asked if the figures were correct within the report. Officers stated that the costs are worked out based on the work involved pulling cases together and Business Rates liability order cases tend to be more time consuming.

Following scrutiny the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON

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