

**DEPUTY LEADER
16th April, 2012**

Present:- Councillor Akhtar (in the Chair).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sims.

N42. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March, 2012 be approved as a correct record.

N43. RESOURCES PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2012

Consideration was given to a report presented by Anne Hawke, Performance and Improvement Manager, which summarised the performance by RBT and the Resources Directorate against current measures and key service delivery issues between April, 2011 and February, 2012 across the areas of:-

- Customer Access.
- Human Resources and Payroll.
- ICT.
- Procurement.
- Revenues and Benefits.

The Resources Directorate was currently in the process of determining its key priorities and service plans for 2012/13. Once completed, regular updates on progress and performance would be provided to the Deputy Leader in all areas including the former RBT service.

Full details of performance against operational measures for January, 2012 for all workstreams were set out in detail as part of the report and further explanations provided on various matters.

Reference was also made to integration of the customer access functions and the consolidation of services in the customer service centres. It was also noted that the Registrars Service would also be the subject of an inspection by the General Registrars Officer on the 18th June, 2012.

Further information was provided on the transfer of employees from Doncaster, the shared arrangements and the changes to terms and conditions and changes to the new accounting charging structure which would also have an impact on the HR and Payroll Section as the system was developed.

Resolved:- That the very good service performance achieved against key measures be noted.

N44. PROPOSED POLICY STATEMENT FOR PART 2 OF THE LOCALISM ACT, 2011 - GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

Further to Minute No. 172 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board consideration was given to a report presented by Steve Eling, Policy Officer, which set out details of how Part 2 of the Localism Act 2011(c. 20) provided a new discretionary power for the Government to require a public authority to pay all or part of any financial sanction imposed by the European Court of Justice for non-compliance (infraction) with any European obligation, where such a sanction had been imposed and the public authority demonstrably caused or contributed to that sanction.

Section 49 of the Act, therefore, required the Government to consult on a policy statement on the application of Part 2.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the proposed response to the consultation at its meeting on 13th April, 2012 and whilst they did not wish to amend the response as submitted, suggested that in relation to Question No. 4 there should be inclusion of the Local Government Association and SIGOMA as stakeholders for this process.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board was sufficiently concerned to suggest that any potential risks should be identified and included in the Corporate Risk Register and that all risks and uncertainties be clearly identified in Section 9 of the report template.

Discussion ensued on the proposed policy statement and the reasons for the sanctions even though it was noted the U.K. had never received sanctions in the past.

Resolved:- (1) That the recommended response be approved including the recommendation from scrutiny to add to the response to Question 4 as follows:-

- We would expect the Local Government Association and SIGOMA to be specifically referred to as stakeholders for this process.

(2) That the further recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be approved that arrangements be made to identify future risks for the Council arising from Part 2 of the Localism Act 2011 to include these in the Corporate Risk Register and identified in the "Risks and Uncertainties" section of reports and included in report writing guidance.

N45. LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

Consideration was given to a report presented by Pete Hudson, Chief Finance Manager, which set out the implications of the proposed introduction of a localised Council Tax Support Scheme in April, 2013. This would be replaced by a locally designed and managed scheme, but there would be a 10% reduction in funding for Council Tax Support. In Rotherham's case this would lead to an estimated loss of £2.3 million in support for the costs of Council Tax Benefit.

Local Authorities would have discretion to develop and manage their own scheme of Council Tax support subject to Government guidelines. Pensioners would be protected and schemes should be compatible with the Universal Credit and support incentives to work.

The main considerations were outlined that would have to be taken into account in designing Rotherham's scheme, together with the potential risks and uncertainties for the Council.

Reference was also made to the potential implications for affected claimants, how the Council would need to determine its approach to the introduction of the scheme and the decisions which would need to be made.

Discussion ensued on the details of the scheme and when it would be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Selection Commission for consideration.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the proposed outline timetable for the development and implementation of localised Council Tax Support be approved.

N46. REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report presented by Pete Hudson, Chief Finance Manager, which summarised the progress made in reviewing the Council's Revenues and Benefits function since its reintegration into the Council's Resources Directorate with effect from 1st February, 2012, as part of the successful conclusion of the Council's strategic partnership with BT.

The proposals involved a reconfiguration of resources. The new arrangements emphasised the need to focus on helping to sustain the excellent performance achieved by the function in maximising future income collection levels for the Council while supporting those most in need in the Borough through the provision of timely and accurate assessment of benefits due to them.

The proposals had been aligned with those coming forward from the other service reviews, in particular Customer Services, being completed as part of the reintegration of all former RBT functions.

Reductions through vacancy management, natural wastage and volunteers for severance and early retirement had eliminated the need for compulsory redundancies.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received, the contents noted and the staffing implications arising from the proposal and the timescales for implementation

(2) That the structural changes set out in the report be approved.

N47. REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX SINGLE PERSON DISCOUNTS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Pete Hudson, Chief Finance Manager, which related to a proposal that would have a positive impact on Council Tax income and help the Council tackle its budget challenge and

involved working with a partner supplier to identify wrongly claimed Council Tax Single Persons Discounts.

Additional Council tax income of over £400k per annum was expected to be achieved through the initiative and a further one-off sum of over £400k secured by backdating recovery of wrongly claimed discounts by one year.

Discussion ensued on the review process to potentially identify fraudulent claimants and the backdating cases.

Resolved:- That the proposals outlined in this report to appoint a supplier to identify wrongly claimed Council Tax Single Persons Discounts be approved.

N48. CABINET REPORTS

Reference was made to the items from the agenda for the Cabinet meeting to be held on 25th April, 2012.

N49. MEMBERS' ISSUES

Updates were provided on the following:-

- Staffing dispute at Swinton Comprehensive School due to take place on Tuesday 17th April against compulsory redundancy threat to 8 teachers. It was disappointing to record that this day of action was still to take place despite the offer of a suitable reasonable alternative job to the last remaining affected employee.
- Increment Freeze Proposals – Following the recent UNISON Ballot further discussions were being sought with Trades Unions to progress this matter and all parties still hope to reach a Collective Agreement.

N50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved, that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act (as amended March, 2006 (information relates to finance and business affairs)).

N51. RE-INTEGRATION OF RBT SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report presented by Colin Earl, Director of Audit and Asset Management, which provided an update on the re-integration of former RBT services into the Council, following the signing of a legal agreement by the Council and BT on 1st February, 2012 to end the RBT partnership.

The former RBT services would be subject to review whilst being re-integrated, in order to ensure they could meet current and future expectations and achieve savings that would contribute to the Council achieving its 2012/13 budget.

A summary of each of the key reviews was provided and showed that good progress was being made and on the identification of savings.

It was noted that the window of opportunity for voluntary severance was being extended to all employees who were the subjects of the reviews.

The charging mechanisms to Directorates would replicate the existing process, but this was subject to further examination.

Resolved:- That the positive progress being made in reviewing and re-integrating former RBT services and the associated identification of savings be noted.

N52. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Monday, 28th May, 2012 at 9.30 a.m.