

CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND COMMISSIONING
8th November, 2010

Present:- Councillor Wyatt (in the Chair) and Councillor Buckley (Policy Advisor).

K29. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11TH OCTOBER, 2010

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th October, 2010.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October, 2010, be approved as a correct record.

K30. REQUIREMENT TO PUBLISH PAYMENT OVER £500

Stuart Booth, Director of Central Finance, submitted a report which set out that, as part of its Open Data Agenda, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wrote to all local authorities in June, 2010 committing them to publish items of spending over £500 including tenders, contracts and actual payments by January, 2011. The Government had also recently announced its intention to publish certain information on salaries by this date. The report did not consider this aspect of the open data agenda which was being considered by Strategic HR and RBT HR/ Payroll.

To achieve the internal publication of actual payments data on a monthly basis would require Directorates, working with Financial Services, to define and assign a supplier classification to approximately 16,500 existing supplier records as well as any new suppliers. There was also a requirement to examine every payment record and redact any personal information to comply with Data Protection legislation for each published report. Due to the considerable internal resources this would entail, Spikes Cavell had been identified as a service provider to publish the contracts and actual spend on the Council's behalf via their 'Spot Light on Spend' website.

It was noted that, at its meeting on 3rd November, 2010, the Cabinet had approved Spikes Cavell as the service provider (Minute No. 97 refers).

The annual cost of working with Spikes Cavell would be £8,310 for the provision of the Contracts Module and the provision of monthly spend data (>£500) that would be published on the website. It was understood that the Yorkshire and Humber RIEP was now expected to provide funding to Local Authorities to undertake such spend analysis using Spikes Cavell. The company had confirmed that a

refund or credit for any sum paid prior to funding being received would be returned to the Council.

The use of Spikes Cavell in processing and publishing contract and spend data would help to mitigate the risk that the Council did not fully meet the evolving open data agenda and publicised data that breached data protection legislation.

Discussion ensued on the report with issues of staff resources, data protection and the possible increase in Freedom of Information requests raised.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

K31. WELFARE RIGHTS AND MONEY ADVICE SERVICE

In accordance with Minute No. K26(2) of 11th October, 2010, Anne Hawke, Performance and Improvement Team Manager, presented a performance report on the work of the Welfare Rights and Money Advice team drawing attention to the following:-

Welfare Rights Performance

- RBT secured funding from Macmillan Cancer Support in June 2009 to deliver Welfare Rights to people living with cancer
- In 2009/ 10 the Service had helped 1,529 clients (951 general, 578 Macmillan), with secured benefits of £5,253,857.60 (£3,658,218.00 existing team, £1,595,639.60 Macmillan)
- Between 1st April, to 30th September, 2009, the Service had received 647 client referrals (432 General, 170 Macmillan, 45 Breathing Space Project). For the same period in 2010 there had been 794 client referrals (300 General, 494 Macmillan)
- As at 25th October there were 57 referrals awaiting appointments

Money Advice Service

- 475 clients assisted in 2009/ 10, advising on £19,271,691.84 of unsecured debt and £13,694,518.00 of secured debt. £717,390 of debt was written off following advice and intervention from the Team
- Between 1st April to 30th September, 2009, the Team had assisted 211 clients advising on £16,156,525.01 unsecured debt and £4,395,395.95 of secured debt. £527,630.00 was written off following advice and intervention from the Team
- For the same period in 2010 the Team had assisted 181 clients,

advising on £3,018,994.74 of unsecured debt and £5,862,537 of secured debt. £625,871.00 was written off

Customer Satisfaction 1st April-30th September, 2010

- 88% customers stated the information given was very easy to understand and 12% fairly easy
- 94% customers satisfied and 6% fairly satisfied that the service provided to them met their needs
- 87% customer said they were kept up to date and 12% fairly well

External Factors impacting the Service

- Increase in the number of Employment and Support Allowance appeals due to them being refused by the DWP at the initial stage
- Lack of specialist Appeals Officers within the Advice Sector as a whole causes additional impact on the Service
- Impact of the recession and resultant increase in clients ringing for advice or help with the benefits system
- Forthcoming changes in Legislation

- Rolling programme of moving Incapacity benefit claimants onto Income Support
- Revised Limited Capability for Work test – the National Association of Welfare Rights Workers estimated a further 5% of clients would be refused/ would not meet the criteria for the support component of Employment and Support Allowance
- Change in criteria for lone parents on Income Support
- Proposed Tax Credit changes
- Increased number of clients with mortgage arrears

In order to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service, it would be restructured to improve how casework was both handled and processed. A case management system would be implemented and Neighbourhood Benefit Officers transferred from the Revenues and Benefits Service into the Welfare Rights Team.

As part of the recent Scrutiny review into debt recovery, a scheme had been agreed in how to deal with customers who had multiple debts with the Council which were at advanced stages of debt recovery. Customers were now able to refer themselves to the Money Advice Service during a period where action was on hold pending them contacting the Service. In order to implement the changes, it had been identified that short term help would be required. A retired Welfare Rights member had been temporarily appointed to allow for the new structure and case management system to be implemented to lessen the impact on the operation.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

K32. RBT PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mark Gannon, Transformation & Strategic Partnerships Manager, presented the submitted report which summarised RBT's performance against contractual measures and key service delivery issues for September, 2010, across the areas of Customer Access, Human Resources and Payroll, ICT, Procurement and Revenues and Benefits.

Key points for this period included:-

Customer Access

- All performance targets achieved
- Work underway to ensure that the Contact Centre was able to successfully manage the transfer of Housing Repairs and Maintenance to externalised contractors from 1st November, 2010
- Successful update of Siebel CRM to enable automatic tracking of avoidable contact
- Continuing work with Strategic Directors and management team to identify achievable benefits from the Customer Service Consolidation programme
- 3 complaints received in September; 1 inconclusive, 1 carried over to October and 1 upheld
- Process of capturing customer e-mail and mobile telephones had commenced

Human Resources and Payroll

- All performance targets achieved
- Following Brinsworth and Wales Comprehensive Schools move to Academy status, new "companies" set up on the payroll system and transfer of employees
- Further approved applications for Voluntary Early Retirement/ Voluntary Severance
- Final TUPE list provided by 2010 Ltd. for the transfer of 350 employees to the 2 new contractors
- E-payslip became mandatory as from October, 2010

ICT

- All performance targets achieved
- Work underway of ICT Strategy for 2011-2016
- Serious difficulties had been experienced by schools using the internet and e-mail products provided by RBT via the Rotherham Grid for Learning. The problems had now largely been resolved
- Reopening of the Town Hall which now had a wireless network

- Suppliers had been invited to bid for the provision of a new network in preparation for the move to Riverside House
- No complaints received

Procurement

- All performance targets achieved.
- Following review, PO6 (catalogue orders) had been removed from the suite of Operational Measures
- Former BVP18 achieved 94.47%. The current year to date position was 95.57%, an improvement on the same point during 2009/ 10 when performance achieved a year to date figure of 94.09%
- Following the outsourcing of the Repairs and Maintenance Service, work between 2010 and RBT Procurement was being undertaken to finalise orders through the ROCC system by the end of October followed by payment of subsequent invoices

Revenues and Benefits

- Council Tax Collection Rate 55.84% at the end of September, 2010, 0.1% lower than the same point in 2009/ 10
- The target for 2010/ 11 continued to be a Council Tax Collection Rate which placed Rotherham in the upper performance quartile for Metropolitan District Councils with a minimum collection level of 97.0% regardless of quartile position
- There had been 2,290 Council Tax Liability Orders referred to the bailiff up to the end of September, 1 of which were classed as vulnerable case
- Average number of days taken to action a Council Tax Change of Circumstance was 11.46 days. This was better than the performance level which the service aimed to achieve i.e. 14 days
- NNDR collection rate was 61.06% at the end of September, 2010, 0.1% behind the same point in 2009/ 10.
- The NNDR collection figure had been adjusted to incorporate the affect of the NNDR Deferral Scheme. The year end target remained a collection rate which placed Rotherham in the upper performance quartile for Metropolitan District Councils with a maximum collection level of 98.5% regardless of quartile position
- 257 Business Rates Liability Orders had been referred to the bailiff in the current financial year up to the end of September, 2010
- The number of cases under NNDR Deferral Scheme had decreased substantially due to changes in small business rate

- relief effective from 1st October, 2010
- The benefits caseload had increased to 30,292
 - 3 complaints were closed during September; 2 closed not upheld, 1 closed upheld.

Resolved:- That RBT's performance against contractual measures and key service delivery issues for September, 2010, be noted.

K33. E-GOV BOARD

Consideration was given and discussion took place on the minutes of the E-Government Board held on 20th October, 2010.

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

K34. WEBSITE STRATEGY GROUP

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Website Strategy Group held on 6th October, 2010.

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

K35. COMPLAINTS FORUM

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Complaints Forum held on 6th October, 2010.

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

K36. CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY GROUP

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Customer Access Strategy Group held on 6th October, 2010.

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM TO ENABLE THE APPROPRIATE BOOKING TO BE MADE.)

K37. CONFERENCE

Resolved:- That the Chairman (or substitute) be authorised to attend the Annual Procurement 2011 Conference to be held at the QEII Conference Centre, London on 10th February, 2011.