

SELF REGULATION SELECT COMMISSION
Thursday, 21st July, 2011

Present:- Councillor Hughes (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Currie, Ellis, J. Hamilton, N. Hamilton, Sharman and Swift.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beck, Donaldson, Foden and Tweed.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

3. SELF-REGULATION - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

The Chairman welcomed Mark Edgell, Principal Adviser - LG Development, to the meeting who provided advice and background information on self-regulation and improvement in Local Government and what this meant in practice.

Following the decision of Central Government to reduce the burden of inspections Councils were now responsible for their own organisational performance with a move towards a new approach to self-regulation and improvement that would help Councils strengthen their accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluated and improved services.

The role of the LG Group had been subject to consultation and development and three guiding principles had been agreed:-

- That Councils would be responsible for their own performance.
- That Councils would be accountable to the local communities for that performance.
- That Councils would have collective responsibility for performance of the Local Government sector.

In terms of the Self Regulation Select Commission it was important that good performance data was available setting out how good Rotherham was performing against its targets with an agreed process of performance management and monitoring.

Councils were, therefore, encouraged to consider how they might take advantage of the LG Group's seven point offer of providing approaches to help Councils with their objectives.

The LG Group would provide a package of support that would allow Councils to compare data and benchmark performance in the form a new web-based service that would allow Councils to capture their own knowledge.

In addition, the LG Group were offering, free of charge, a peer challenge over the three year period starting in April, 2011 and also up to five days of free member peer support for all Councils undergoing a change of control.

The LG Group would also continue to provide leadership support through development support for political and managerial leaders and also provide support to networks of officers and Members at national and sub-national levels, working with other sub-national groupings of Councils and the relevant professional associations, to share good practice and to provide timely support.

Now the structure of inspection, assessment and improvement had changed, the challenge for Councils was to change culture and to move away from Central Government applying rules.

A discussion and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and subsequently clarified:-

- Effective models of management and the process of self regulation.
- The potential for taking forward self regulation and the holding of the Executive to account.
- Building capacity to effectively challenge and support with a shared vision to move forward.
- Engagement of communities rather than with members of the public on personal matters.
- Quality of the data and its availability within the Knowledge Hub.
- Double devolution and the process of challenging services.
- Recognition of the value that Local Authorities provide.
- Potential for communities to make a difference.
- Tools to self regulate provided by the LG Group.
- Further exploration of the Knowledge Hub by the Members' Training and Development Panel.
- Performance data management and measurement of standards locally, sub-regionally and regionally.
- Peer reviews and how these fit into the self assessment process especially around Children's Services.
- The need for strong leadership with strong challenging skills.
- Self assessment timetable and the areas to be self assessed.
- Peer review self assessment tools and their establishment.
- Self challenge at various levels.

Resolved:- (1) That Mark Edgell be thanked for his informative presentation.

(2) That the information be noted.

(3) That the Members' Training and Development Panel explore the LG Group's Knowledge Hub.

4. WORK PROGRAMME - FOR DISCUSSION.

Consideration was given to this Select Commission's terms of reference and copies were again circulated for all those present.

The Select Commission were asked for their views on which areas they wished to consider as a priority as part of the work programme for this year.

It was suggested that the annual budget setting process would be the main priority area for this Select Commission with the possibility of three day sessions to review and evaluate and whilst every effort should be made to make these dates as inclusive to all as possible, this Select Commission should adhere to the dates to prevent any unnecessary delay.

The Chairman pointed out that this Select Commission would have the opportunity to hold further meetings outside the agreed schedule.

Other areas for consideration could include the Area Assemblies and Parish Council Network to ascertain views and to listen to what people have to say whether this be positive or negative for the Council.

In addition, other areas for consideration could include RBT and delivery of the strategic partnership, 2010 Rotherham Ltd. and how this would now move forward, central establishment charges, the use of consultants and corporate complaints.

In considering all suggestions the Select Commission were in agreement that the first priority must be the budget followed by a review of 2010 Rotherham Ltd.

Resolved:- That the suggestions indicated above form the basis of the work programme with the budget for 2012/13 being the main priority for consideration.

5. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report presented by Matt Gladstone, Director of Commissioning, Policy and Performance, which provided an analysis of the Council's current performance on the twenty-nine key delivery outcomes contained within the Corporate Plan and based on available performance measures, together with analysis of progress on key projects and activities that contributed to the delivery of the plan.

The report submitted provided an overview of where there were concerns and issues where the Strategic Leadership Team needed to focus their resources agenda in terms of moving forward.

In considering the information the Select Commission experienced some difficulty in working through the data presented and what the detail actually meant. It was, therefore, suggested that consideration be given to a new method of how performance data was presented via a small sub-group and that three areas of concern from the report be considered at the next scheduled meetings for review and how matters could be improved.

Whilst the Select Commission noted that areas that were currently under performing, those improving and those that were performing well, it was suggested that the twenty nine areas be subject to review and they be assessed as to whether they were deemed value for money.

The Select Commission also requested that a brief overview be provided on the areas not meeting targets primarily No. 8 relating to the Town Centre, but that liaison take place with the Improving Places Select Commission to ensure there was no duplication or overlap.

Resolved:- (1) That the performance position of each of the Corporate Plan outcomes be subject to ongoing review.

(2) That Sub-Group, led by Councillor Ellis along with Councillors Atkin, Currie and J. Hamilton, review the format of future performance data.

(3) That the performance highlights and achievements to date be noted.

(4) That a brief overview be provided at future meetings of this Select Commission on the under-performing areas

6. REPRESENTATIONS ON WORKING GROUPS

Consideration was given to a report which set out the details of the sub-groups which required nominations from this Select Commission for the 20011/2012 Municipal Year.

Resolved:- That the memberships for 2011/2012 be approved as follows:-

HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY PANEL

Councillor Sharman with Councillor J. Hamilton as named substitute.

RECYCLING GROUP

Councillor Atkin and Councillor Ellis volunteered as a substitute.

7. 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 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any individual, including the Council).

8. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Bedford, Strategic Director of Finance, to the meeting who gave an update on the Strategic Partnership.

Information was provided on the details of the contract, issues that required addressing, the services that RBT delivered on behalf of the Council, items for further consideration, completion of the contract early and next steps.

A discussion and answer session ensued regarding a number of issues.

Resolved:- (1) That Andrew Bedford be thanked for his informative presentation.

(2) That the information be noted and the Select Commission be informed of progress.

9. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Consideration was given to the future dates and times of meetings for this Select Commission.

Resolved:- That the dates, as submitted, be noted.

10. TAKING THE LEAD.

Consideration was given to the Local Government Group's "Taking the Lead" documentation, that would help Councils strengthen their accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluated and improved services, which was referred to information.

Resolved:- That the Select Commission take the opportunity to look at the information that was currently provided.