

SELF REGULATION SELECT COMMISSION
2nd May, 2013

Present:- Councillor Currie (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont, Beck, Ellis, Godfrey, J. Hamilton, Mannion and Sharman.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Atkin, The Mayor (Councillor Pickering), Tweed and Watson.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

73. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

74. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH MARCH, 2013

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Self Regulation Select Commission held on 28th March, 2013 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

Further to Minute No. 67 (Corporate Plan Outcomes) it was acknowledged that this Select Commission could only recommend that the Corporate Plan outcomes be revised with suggested involvement from this Select Commission.

Reference was made to Minute No. 69 (Performance Clinics) and the deferral of the report until the next meeting of this Select Commission owing to sickness absence by the relevant officer.

75. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 28TH FEBRUARY 2013

Further to Minute No. 189 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 10th April, 2013, consideration was given to a report presented by Stuart Booth, Director of Finance, which provided details of progress on the delivery of the Revenue Budget for 2012/13 based on performance for the first eleven months of the financial year. It was currently forecast that the Council would overspend against its Budget by £0.601m (+0.3%); an improvement of £0.677m on the January report which showed a forecast overspend of £1.278m (+0.6%). The main reasons for the forecast overspend related to:-

- The continuing service demand and cost pressures in looking after vulnerable children across the Borough.

- Additional, one-off property costs relating to the continued rationalisation of the Council's asset portfolio as part of the efficiency drive to reduce operational costs.

It was expected that this forecast overspend would further reduce in the final month of 2012/13 financial year following Cabinet's instruction, endorsed by Scrutiny, that future spend should be on essential items only. For the remainder of the financial year spend must only be in respect of ensuring that vulnerable children and adults were safeguarded, be contractually committed, where to not spend would be a false economy, or to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements.

Continued, concerted management action would also be required to ensure that the Council was able to deliver a balanced outturn and preserve its successful track record in managing both its in year financial performance and its overall financial resilience.

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

- Definition and determination of essential spend and the need for this to be consistent across the Authority, the statutory obligations and as to what it actually entailed.
- Overspend position for Children and Young People's Services and the Invest to Save Bid for out of authority foster placements to mitigate key pressures.
- Need for more clarity and narrative on the savings to ascertain whether the position was positive or negative year on year.
- Continuation of the Multi-Agency Support Panel in Children and Young People's Services in order to support a move towards a balanced budget.
- Timetable for early sight of monitoring reports by this Select Commission.
- Key pressures in Asset Management as a result of accommodation costs and property sales.
- Forecasted underspend on the Housing Revenue Account and the impact and significant risks arising from the social sector size criteria rules.
- Close monitoring of the financial management arrangements and the risk that this poses from the social sector size criteria rules.
- Potential overspend arising from the pressures of winter maintenance and the basing of this on an average winter.
- Parking income targets and the reasons for the overspend through the target not being achieved.
- The need for adequate and robust budget challenge.
- Non-contractual overtime and the impact of this with the reduction of staff.
- Credit to Waste Management in savings arising from contract renegotiations from changes to collection arrangements.

Resolved:- (1) That the recommendations made to Cabinet be noted.

(2) That the any comments made be forwarded onto the Cabinet for further deliberation.

(3) That a report be submitted to a future meeting on the progress and impact of the Invest to Save Bid for out of authority foster placements in Children and Young People's Services.

(4) That further information be provided on the reasons for the parking income target not being achieved, thus resulting in an overspend.

76. COMPLAINTS - 6 MONTH REPORT (APRIL 2012 - SEPTEMBER 2012)

Consideration was given to a report presented by Dave Roddis, Performance and Quality Manager, which presented information about complaints made between 1st April, 2012 and 30th September, 2012 under the Corporate Complaint's Procedure, the Adult Social Services and Children's Social Services Complaint Regulations.

The figures in the report included details of the number of customers and the number of complaints made with each Directorate area providing information and a breakdown summary.

In total over the last six months the number of complaints received by the Council was **335** (on target decrease - **724** received 2011-12) and overall **98%** of all complaints were responded to within the timescales promised, compared to **94%** (2011/12).

This progressive approach had continued, leading to a year on year improvement and all Directorate leads were targeted to achieve 100% performance.

The report set out in detail the headline results from April to September, 2012 along with lessons learning from complaints and each Directorates' performance.

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

- Inclusion of Councillors' surgery reports and the capturing of data not logged through the proper channels, i.e. by telephone and face to face.
- Awareness raising with Elected Members.
- Appeals against school admissions were not included in the report and were subject to separate categorisation.
- Positive management of complaints.
- Changes to services driving the level of complaints received.

- Improvements arising through the creation of a centralised complaint function and staff training.
- Formalisation of a complaint and the important elements of a comment.
- External complaint investigation costs, which whilst increased were deemed as good practice across complex Children and Young People's Services cases.
- Submission of an end of year report to this Select Commission.

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

77. WORK PROGRAMME - UPDATE 2012/13 AND YEAR AHEAD 2013/14

Consideration was given to a report presented by Deborah Fellowes, Scrutiny Manager, which provided an update on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2012/13 and sought views on the work programme for 2103/14 and whether the areas below remained a priority:-

- Scrutiny of commissioning arrangements.
- Corporate plan outcomes – review of priorities.
- HRA – impact of welfare reform.
- Public Equality Duty (update).
- Twelve months implementation of the revised laundry charges with a view to ascertaining whether they provide value for money.
- Private Finance Initiative – update.

Issues of concern needed to be fed into the Self-Regulation Select Commission 2013/14 work programme, which would be submitted for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to prioritise the overall work programme across each of the Select Commissions. This would highlight any areas of joint working, thematic approaches or potential duplication.

The work programme was flexible and issues may be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Select Commissions by various sources.

Discussion ensued on the work programme and it was suggested that this also include some work on Councillors' Structures.

Reference was also made to reviewing previous scrutiny reviews completed in the last few years as part of Scrutiny aftercare, especially with the challenges now facing the Council and the changes to staffing structures and which would then be captured as part of the Scrutiny Annual Report, which would be presented to Council in July, 2013.

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

(2) That the areas identified in 2013/14 work programme remain valid with the inclusion of a review into Councillors' Structures.

(3) That any additional areas be identified and be fed into the wider scrutiny work programme to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

78. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next scheduled meeting of the Self Regulation Select Commission take place on Thursday, 27th June, 2013 commencing at 3.30 p.m.