

COUNCIL MEETING – 7 OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

22 September 2014

Present: Councillors Allebone (Chairman), Elliott, Hawkes, B Patel, Simmons and Timms.

Also present: Mr P Grimley (Head of ICT Services), Mrs B Lawrence (Head of Resources) and Mr S Whiteley (Electoral Services Officer).

(Councillor Beirne did not attend the meeting.)

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the chairman welcomed Mr S Whiteley as the new Partnerships and Performance Committee Clerk.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emerson, Gough, G Lawman, Maguire, M Patel, Warwick and Watts.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that there were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2014 be confirmed and signed.

4. REVIEW: LEGAL SERVICES

The annexed circulated report of the Chief Executive on the shared legal service between the Borough Council of Wellingborough, Daventry District Council and Kettering Borough Council was received. The report set out the arrangements in respect of the shared legal service, including some background on the service.

Members discussed the content of the report and asked whether further information was available as follows:

- background papers relating to the management of the service, outlining details in relation to the Borough Council of Wellingborough;
- how workload was measured and how this was reflected in the cost balance between authorities;
- additional budget information on the total cost of legal services, in addition to those for District Law;
- performance indicators relating to the satisfaction of users of the service.

The questions raised by members could not be dealt with at the meeting, although a written response would be made when a representative from District Law was available. Councillor Hawkes therefore proposed that the

report be deferred until the next Partnerships & Performance meeting in February 2015, which was seconded by Councillor Simmons. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried.

Members requested that a briefing note outlining the full costs of external legal advice and associated issues be circulated immediately, with the proviso that it also be incorporated into the report for the meeting in February.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the report on shared legal services be deferred until the next Partnerships & Performance meeting in February 2015;
- (ii) an early members' briefing note, containing the full costs of legal advice/disbursements, be provided.

5. REVIEW: SHARED ICT SERVICE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of ICT Services was received to update members on arrangements relating to the shared Information and Communications Technologies.

The Head of ICT Services, Phil Grimley, explained some of the background of the service, adding that it had strong support from the Chief Executives of both the Borough Council of Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Council. Mr Grimley explained that there was a 50% split in partnership costs, and that the Borough Council of Wellingborough has, especially recently, accounted for more than 50% of the service, but that this would be balanced out over time. He also explained that all ICT employees recorded time spent for each council and each project. Mr Grimley went on to explain some of the projects undertaken in the last few months, including hardware changes and current work to update the council's email system.

Members requested information with regard to risk and data sharing between both authorities. Mr Grimley explained that there was already a daily data backup in place between sites so that all data was stored securely off site, but that each had a private network and dedicated hardware in a separate area to decrease risk.

Members requested clarification on "digital by default", member services and services to the public. Mr Grimley outlined the information requested but explained that ICT Services were led by the council. In terms of member ICT, its provision and operation had to be balanced against potential risks. Non-compliance with the Public Sector Network could result in loss of central government security clearance (affecting Revenue and Benefit services), and potential fines from the Information Commissioner.

Members asked whether the figures included in the report also covered costs of hardware, licences, and installation specifically for this authority. They also asked what effect potential shared services would have on the costs. Mr Grimley explained that this depended on what service would change, and how many employees would be affected, but the cost could be transferred to the new service provider. He went on to confirm that the costs in his report

referred only to the shared ICT Service between the Borough Council of Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Council, and that any software licences were budgeted separately. He explained that ICT was looking at hardware plans for the next 1-3 years.

Members requested further information about the new website and user feedback. They raised the idea of a public consultation for the website so as to provide some customer feedback on use, potentially in the form of an online survey.

Councillor Elliott proposed that investigations be carried out to see if there could be an opportunity for customers to feed back their views on the website. This was seconded by Councillor Simmons and on being put to the vote was declared carried.

He also considered that consideration be given to the creation of a working party to discuss ICT Services for members. Officers responded to this and considered that this could be explored for the future.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the report and comments made be noted;
- (ii) Investigations be carried out to see if a customer feedback survey could be included on the website.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

