

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 13 April 2010, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Knight (Chair); Councillors Malcolm Doody, Edwards, Guest, Kinson, MacKay, Pittarello, Rhead, Mrs Tyrrell and Vincett.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Illingworth.

117. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

118. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2010 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

119. **DATA QUALITY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive's Office providing an update on the Data Quality Strategy and its associated action plan.

Most of the items covered by the action plan were on target. The Audit and Risk Manager's team had taken on a lot of responsibility for this area.

During April the County Council was due to consider a data sharing protocol for partnerships, which the District Council intended to sign up to.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the current position regarding progress in strengthening Data Quality at Warwick District Council and the progress regarding the action plan be noted;
- (2) the proposed revised action plan for 2010/11 (Appendix A to the report) be approved; and
- (3) the extract from the 2008/09 Use of Resources Audit Commission report be noted, along with the response to the report, both of which were addressed by the Executive on 2 December 2009.

(Councillor Malcolm Doody joined the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)

120. PROCUREMENT WORKING PARTY

The Committee considered a report updating it on issues raised within the Procurement Working Party report, produced in September 2009, and detailed several key recommendations to ensure good procurement practices were adopted across the Council.

Both the Working Party and the Committee were pleased with the progress which the Council had made to date in embracing procurement, but recognised that there was still much else to learn, highlighted by recent issues that had come to light including the contract for void repairs and managers exceeding thresholds on tenders. Some Services had yet to fully grasp the need to involve the Procurement Manager in their processes. The Working Party intended to continue working until at least December, focusing on areas of weakness, which were being monitored.

The Procurement Manager responded to Members' questions, confirming that more training was due to be arranged for managers, that SMT were due to receive a report on spend analysis and explaining that an electronic tendering system was being introduced which would assist in requiring compliance from managers. An advertisement for the post of Procurement Officer, to assist the Procurement Manager, had recently been placed on the Council's website.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted, with the progress in improving procurement practices within the Council being acknowledged; and
- (2) the Procurement Working Party continues to meet at regular intervals to monitor the progress made with regards to the Procurement Strategy and Action Plan.

121. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following non-confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 14 April 2010.

Item Number 7 – Review of the Code of Contract Practice and Procurement Strategy

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report, but were disappointed that the Code of Contract Practice did not address the contract management side of procurement, and requested a report addressing this for its June meeting. The Executive was asked to note that while the Code was a positive step forward in supporting procurement, it by no means covered all the issues included in the Roots Report 2009.

The Committee recommended to the Executive that paragraph 5.2.2 in the Code of Contract Practice be reworded to read "beyond officers' **normal control and defined responsibility**..."

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)

122. PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item, by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

123. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 14 April 2010.

Urgent Item – Contract for the procurement of works to repair void dwellings

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report, but sought assurances from the Executive that fail safe systems would be put in place as soon as possible to prevent such issues recurring. The Head of Housing was congratulated on his prompt action which led to the discovery of the problem. It was added that the level of staff seniority for signing contracts needed to be clarified and understood by all staff concerned.

Item Number 11 – Spencer Yard Update Report

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report.

124. USE OF RESOURCES

The Committee received a report from Finance which provided an update on the Use or Resources Action Plan. This followed a decision made by the Executive in December 2009 that the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee monitor progress on the plan.

In its 2008/09 Use of Resources assessment, the Council received a score of '2'. The assessment suggested areas where improvements could be made. One of the functions of the action plan was to assist in monitoring these improvements.

RESOLVED that on-going progress on the Use of Resources Action Plan be noted and a further report be brought to the July meeting of the Committee.

125. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

A report from Committee Services summarised the Executive's response to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 17 March 2010.

RESOLVED that the contents of this report be noted.

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)

126. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services informing them of the current Forward Plan, attached as an appendix to the report.

One of the five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government was to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions. If the Committee had an interest in a future decision to be made by the Executive it was within the Committee's remit to feed into the process.

The Forward Plan detailed the future work programme for the Executive. If a non-executive member highlighted a decision which was to be taken by the Executive which they would like to be involved in, members could then provide useful background to the Committee when the report was submitted to the Executive and they were passing comment on it.

RESOLVED that there were no forthcoming Executive decisions which they wished to have an input into before the Executive make their decision, at present.

127. END OF TERM REPORT

Members received a report for Council which detailed the work undertaken by the Committee during 2009/10. It was noted that the report would be updated to take into account this meeting, prior to it being presented to Council.

The Committee felt it had achieved a lot over the past year and the Chair thanked Members for their hard work.

RECOMMENDED that the list of matters considered by this Committee during the municipal year 2009/10 (detailed at Appendix 1) be noted.

128. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

A report from Members' Services detailed the Committee's work programme for 2009/10.

The Committee noted that a work programme for 2010/11 would be presented to the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) a report on the closure of BIP be presented to the May meeting of this Committee, followed by quarterly updates on the programme which replaces BIP;
- (2) a report on South Warwickshire Tourism be brought to the Committee or to the Executive as soon as possible;

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(3) quarterly updates on Procurement be scheduled into the work plan; and

(4) the work plan for 2009/10 be noted.

129. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 14 April 2010.

Item Number 4 – Deputy Leader – Special Responsibility Allowance

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report, but did not feel that the Independent Remuneration Panel's advice should be implemented at the present time bearing in mind the financial climate.

Item Number 5 – Review of future accommodation needs

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report.

(The meeting ended at 7.30 pm)