

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Committee Room, Fourth Floor, Council Building, 2 High Street, Perth on Wednesday 12 June 2013 at 2.00pm.

Present: Councillors A Stewart, D Doogan, A Munro, R Brock (substituting for D Cuthbert), B Vaughan and A Younger.

In Attendance: G Taylor, J Symon, K Donaldson, D Henderson, S Watson and P Frazer (all Chief Executive's Service); B Atkinson, J Gilchrist, M Cochlan, R Goldsmith, J Halawi, R Drummond (all Education and Children's Services); R Freeman, J Maygothling, M Mitchell, A Taylor and M Weir (all Housing and Community Care) S MacKenzie and B Renton (the Environment Service).

Also in Attendance: Mr W B Hoy.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors M Barnacle and D Cuthbert; and Mr I Jackson.

Councillor A Stewart, Convener, Presiding.

374. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

375. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of 17 April 2013 was submitted, approved as a correct record and authorised for signature.

376. JOINT BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLANS AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Councillor Vaughan raised the following points in relation to the Business Management and Improvement Plans (BMIPS): (1) for consistency across services all BMIPS should include a risk evaluation; (2) due to the difficulty in predicting future demographic and political changes it might be more helpful to outline aspirations rather than set targets for 2022 – 2023; (3) financial indicators could be clarified to show if they were in real terms and the impact of inflation if appropriate; (4) it would be helpful, when predicting the size of age groups in the future, to use percentages instead of numbers; and (5) it would also be useful to provide more explanation on trend figures.

B Renton confirmed that targets in respect of financial issues were recorded in £'s and acknowledged that trend arrows had caused some problems and would be clarified for future reports. Councillor Doogan agreed that more consistency in the use of trend arrows was required between Services.

(i) Education and Children's Services

There was submitted a report by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (13/242) presenting the Education and Children's Services Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report 2012/13, which had been approved by the Lifelong Learning Committee at its meeting on 29 May 2013.

J SYMON LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

Councillor Vaughan referred to the Cultural Strategy outlined in report 13/242 and asked if there were any indicators reflecting the number of young people taking up employment in tourism and sport. B Atkinson agreed that there were a currently a lot of opportunities in sport and tourism and Education and Children's Services were investigating how to encourage young people to get involved in these industries. Further work would be done on how progress in this area could be reflected in the indicators and possibly broaden out what industry training was offered on campuses.

Councillor Doogan queried how the growing demands of additional support needs could be managed in the current economic climate. B Atkinson confirmed that the Service was currently looking at transitional arrangements for young people entering adult services and acknowledged that a level of creativity was required when developing services for the future.

Resolved:

The Education and Children's Services Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report 2012/13, as detailed in Appendices to Report 13/242, be accepted.

B ATKINSON AND J GILCHRIST LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

(ii) Chief Executive's Service

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive (13/286) presenting the Chief Executive's Service Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report 2012/13, which had been approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting earlier in the day.

Councillor Stewart referred to the current review of Legal Services and sought further information on the objectives of the review. G Taylor confirmed that both the volume and nature of work had changed over the last few years and it had been necessary to call in specialist expertise from outside on occasion; however, the review was intended to ensure that the Council would have the right balance of skills in place.

Councillor Vaughan noted that the Chief Executive had given an undertaking to closely monitor audit work over the next year to ensure audits were completed in a timely manner.

Councillor Doogan asked for clarification on the destinations of Modern Apprentices leaving the programme during 2012/13. K Donaldson confirmed that the figure represented a snapshot due to Apprentices arriving and leaving at various points throughout the period. Some decided the course was not for them, others went into permanent employment and a number went onto further study.

K DONALDSON LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

Resolved:

The Chief Executive's Service Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report 2012/13, as detailed in the Appendices to Report 13/286, be accepted.

(iii) The Environment Service

There was submitted a report by the Executive Director (Environment) (13/262) presenting The Environment Service's Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report 2012/13, which had been approved by the Environment Committee, the Community Safety Committee and the Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee, at their meetings on 5 June 2013.

Councillor Vaughan queried why tourism revenues only covered Perth City and not the wider Perth and Kinross area. B Renton advised that she would check why the figures focused on Perth and provide further information to the members of the Committee.

In response to a further question from Councillor Vaughan, B Renton acknowledged that the sickness absence figures had been disappointing and highlighted the following points: (1) the nature of some jobs within the Service meant that some employees were more likely to suffer musculoskeletal problems; (2) there had been an increase in sickness absence over the Christmas period due to flu; and (3) long-term absences were often related to surgical operations where the nature of an individual's job often precluded an early return to work. It was noted that the current level of sickness absence across the Council was 9.3 days.

It was noted that the Council's performance in relation to the determination of planning applications had improved in relation to the national position in Scotland and it was agreed that it would be useful to have a presentation on the changes to the planning application process at a future meeting.

Resolved:

The Environment Service's Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report 2012/13 as detailed in the Appendices to Report 13/262, be accepted.

S MACKENZIE LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

(iv) Housing and Community Care

There was submitted a report by the Executive Director (Housing and Community Care) (13/253) presenting the Housing and Community Care Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report 2012/13, which had been approved by the Housing and Health Committee at its meeting on 29 May 2013 and by the Community Safety Committee on 5 June 2013.

Councillor Vaughan commented that it would be useful to have a performance indicator on how well the Council is performing in helping young people into Modern Apprenticeships. A Taylor responded that he was not aware of a relevant performance indicator; however, case studies were available that would reflect the actions being taken to support young people. Councillor Vaughan added that it would be helpful to have a narrative section under the risk box in future reports.

Resolved:

Housing and Community Care's Business Management and Improvement Plan 2013/14 and Annual Performance Report for 2012/13, as detailed in the Appendices to Report 13/253, be accepted.

R FREEMAN, A TAYLOR AND M WEIR LEFT AT THIS POINT.

377. 2012-13 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal Services (13/310) outlining how Perth and Kinross Council complies with national standards for good corporate governance and meeting the requirements of relevant legislation and current good practice.

Resolved:

The 2012-2013 Annual Governance Statement be approved.

378. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) PERFORMANCE REPORT 2012

There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal Services (13/311) describing the Council's FOI performance for the year 2012. The information was reported annually following the completion of the requests received in each calendar year.

Councillor Doogan asked if consideration had been given to charging for frivolous or persistent requests in order to dissuade such applications and reduce

processing costs. D Henderson responded that the Council was restricted by current legislation which imposed a statutory charging scheme; only about 70 cases a year would be affected if the Council imposed a charge. The Committee noted that at present the comparative information with other local authorities was done on a voluntary basis, and that not all councils chose to respond.

Resolved:

- (i) The content of report 13/311 be noted.
- (ii) The FOI performance target for the Council for 2013 of 95% be confirmed.

D HENDERSON LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

379. REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS, MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

There was submitted a report by the Head of Democratic Services (13/293) commenting on the annual inspection reports from the National Records of Scotland on the provision of registration services in the Perth and Kinross local government area in 2012.

In response to a question from Councillor Younger, G Taylor confirmed that there were no concerns with performance in Crieff and errors had been identified during routine checks prior to entries being finalised, however, as with all offices the situation was being monitored on an ongoing basis.

Resolved:

The content of report 13/293 be noted.

380. PROCUREMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee heard a presentation by Mary Mitchell, Corporate Procurement Manager, Perth and Kinross Council on the Procurement Improvement Plan.

381. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD PLANNER 2013/14

There was submitted a report by the Depute Director (Environment Service) (13/294) presenting a forward planner for scrutiny at Perth and Kinross Council during 2013/14.

Resolved:

The content of report 13/311 be noted.

IT WAS AGREED THAT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS SHOULD BE EXCLUDED DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN ORDER TO AVOID THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION WHICH IS EXEMPT IN TERMS OF SCHEDULE 7A TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1973.

382. MINUTE OF MEETING OF SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS REVIEW COMMITTEE OF 7 MARCH 2013 FOR APPROVAL

Resolved:

- (i) The minute of meeting of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee of 7 March 2013 was submitted and approved.
- (ii) In response to questions from members, J Mayglothling confirmed that a report on the revised Housing and Community Care Complaints Procedure would be submitted to the Housing and Health Committee in August 2013.