

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 APRIL 2016

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Gannochy Suite, Dewar's Centre, Glover Street, Perth on Wednesday 20 April 2016 at 2.00pm.

Present: Councillors A Stewart, B Vaughan, D Cuthbert, J Flynn, A Munro and A Younger.

In Attendance: B Renton, K McNamara, C Jolly and R Laurenson (all the Environment Service); S Devlin and J Chiles (both Education and Children's Services); B Atkinson, A Taylor, M Mitchell (up to and including Art 317) and G Dawson (up to and including Art 315) (all Housing and Community Care); G Taylor, L Simpson, K Donaldson, L Potter and H Rheinallt (all Corporate and Democratic Services).

Apology: Councillor D Doogan.

Councillor A Stewart, Convener, Presiding

310. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES / SUBSTITUTES

The Convener welcomed all those present to the meeting and an apology was noted as above.

311. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

312. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of 10 February 2016 (Arts. 90-97) was submitted, approved as a correct record and authorised for signature.

313. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

314. MODERNISING PERFORMANCE REPORTING REVIEW – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

There was submitted a report by the Depute Chief Executive, Environment (Sustainability, Strategic and Entrepreneurial Development) (16/173), making proposals for a set of guiding principles to steer the Modernising Performance Reporting Transformation review, and to be used to inform the final business case to implement transformational change to performance reporting as a result of the review.

In response to a query from Councillor Cuthbert regarding authorisation required before the Council's performance information is reported, K McNamara provided assurance that performance information will be authorised at the appropriate level, ensuring it can be provided as quickly as possible.

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Councillor Munro commented on the importance of providing training for elected members on changes to performance reporting. C Jolly advised that there is a planned engagement event for elected members, with details to be circulated in due course.

Councillor Younger highlighted the importance of including an element of human analysis in performance reporting.

In response to a query from Councillor Vaughan on the importance of continuing to focus on quality of services where appropriate, and of ensuring that any performance information is easily understood by the public, K McNamara provided assurance that her points would be taken into consideration.

Resolved:

- (i) The proposed principles, as detailed in Report 16/173, be approved.
- (ii) The Depute Chief Executive (Sustainability, Strategic and Entrepreneurial Development) be requested to submit a progress report on the modernising performance reporting review to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

315. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK VARIANCE AND COMPARISON REPORT 2014/15

There was submitted a report by the Depute Chief Executive, Environment (Sustainability, Strategic and Entrepreneurial Development) (16/174), presenting the Committee with a summary of Perth and Kinross Council's performance during 2014/15 against the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators published by the Improvement Service on 29 January 2016.

In response to a query from Councillor Cuthbert regarding the comparability of figures used in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators, K McNamara advised that the indicators are not audited, which continues to raise concerns, however, he provided assurance that this is being worked on.

Councillor Cuthbert expressed concern with regard to the increase in rent arrears. A Taylor provided assurance that work is being done to reduce rent arrears, with the pace of increase already reduced. In response to a further query from the Convener, A Taylor advised that rent arrears can be due to a number of factors and therefore a range of discretionary measures have been taken. B Atkinson further commented that a key aspect of the action plan to tackle rent arrears is early intervention.

In response to a query from Councillor Cuthbert regarding Council Tax collection rates, A Taylor responded that the increased cost of collection is due to the addition of customer service centre costs to the indicator, however, the cost of collection continues to decrease. Councillor Younger highlighted the importance of ensuring that the costs attributed to the collection of Council Tax reflected the amount of time spent by the customer service centre on this issue.

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Councillor Vaughan commented on the importance of considering the indicators in the report in conjunction with the National Benchmarking Overview Report. B Renton provided assurance that the Improvement Service is continually reviewing the best way to provide indicators.

Resolved:

- (i) The Local Government Benchmarking Framework results for 2014/15 and explanations of performance, as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report 16/174, be noted.
- (ii) It be noted that the Local Government Benchmarking Framework results will be used to inform the development of the Council's wider performance management and planning framework.

G DAWSON LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT

316. SUMMARY REPORT ON CARE INSPECTORATE AND HMI INSPECTIONS

There was submitted a report by the Director (Education and Children's Services) (16/175), (1) providing the Committee with an overview of the performance of Education and Children's Services inspected and reported over the past year, since the previous report of this type, by the Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI); and (2) setting out the Service's approach to implementing improvement actions arising out of the inspection.

S Devlin highlighted that the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 confers revised duties on local authorities and therefore updates to the school improvement framework will be required.

In response to a query from Councillor Stewart regarding self-evaluation in schools, S Devlin responded that schools are expected to carry out self-evaluation against their core quality indicators and standards, which are the same as those used by Education Scotland (HMI).

Councillor Cuthbert referred to Appendix D, in respect of the quality indicator Meeting Learning Needs in particular. S Devlin responded that other schools achieving very good or excellent indicators are currently being looked at, in order to improve the Council's own practice.

Councillor Vaughan highlighted the infrequent nature of inspections carried by Education Scotland (HMI), commenting that this made the statistics difficult to use. S Devlin advised that once clarity on the number of inspections carried out in the future is obtained, another way of measuring performance would be considered if necessary. Councillor Vaughan commented further regarding the possibility of a joint meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee of Lifelong Learning and the Scrutiny Committee for considering reports of this type.

Resolved:

The contents of Report 16/175 be noted.

317. AUDIT SCOTLAND: PROCUREMENT IN COUNCILS: IMPACT REPORT

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There was submitted a report by the Depute Chief Executive, Environment (Sustainability, Strategic and Entrepreneurial Development) (16/176), providing the Committee with an update on the report published by the Accounts Commission in February 2016, on the impact of the Audit Scotland report, 'Procurement in Councils' (2014).

In response to a query from Councillor Vaughan, M Mitchell responded that an appropriate balance is struck while managing procurement, and that there is a ten point plan to enable businesses to respond tenders. She commented that new legislation coming into effect on Monday 25 April 2016 will make the self-certification process of procurement standard across Europe and more convenient for those making tender submissions.

In response to a query from Councillor Cuthbert regarding resources, M Mitchell provided assurance that procurement teams across the Council are sharing procedures and knowledge.

Resolved:

The contents of Report 16/176 be noted.

M MITCHELL LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT

318. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FIFTH SCRUTINY REVIEW CHARGING FOR COUNCIL SERVICES

There was submitted a report by the Depute Chief Executive, Environment (Sustainability, Strategic and Entrepreneurial Development) (16/177), (1) providing an outline of the Fifth Scrutiny Review (Charging for Council Services); and (2) providing the Committee with an update on the implementation of the recommendations which were detailed in the final report of 28 January 2015.

In response to a query from Councillor Cuthbert regarding the availability of data on service charges, K McNamara responded that obtaining data on customer feedback and benchmarking would require extra work to be carried out, however, this will be considered. Councillor Vaughan commented that it would be useful if the impacts of charges could be reported to Committees, with an explanation provided for any impact which cannot be measured. The Convener responded that a certain amount of information on impacts of charges will be contained in the annual charging reports to the Committees.

Resolved:

- (i) The work undertaken within the Services to implement the recommendations in the Fifth Scrutiny Review, as detailed in Section 2 of Report 16/177, be noted.
- (ii) The rolling programme of reviews to be undertaken, as detailed in Appendix 3 of Report 16/177, be noted.

319. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD PLANNER 2016/17

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There was submitted a report by the Depute Chief Executive, Environment (Sustainability, Strategic and Entrepreneurial Development) (16/178), presenting the Committee with a forward planner for scrutiny at Perth and Kinross Council during 2016/17.

C Jolly advised members that the Adult Protection Committee Standards and Quality Report will be submitted to the Committee following the June meeting, to fit in with the biennial report submitted to the Scottish Government. Lisa Simpson further advised that reports on Horsecross Arts, Live Active Leisure, and Culture Perth and Kinross will be submitted to the Committee twice a year, and reports on the Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board will be submitted to the Committee at least twice a year.

Councillor Vaughan highlighted the usefulness of the rolling programme, and suggested that other Committees adopt the same approach. The Convener indicated his agreement and commented on the benefits of a report of this nature.

Resolved:

The outline Scrutiny Committee Forward Planner, attached as Appendix 1 of Report 16/178, be noted.

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