

## **STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. George, Neal, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves and Miss. Stack

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Miss. Thornton

Cllrs. Firth, Fittock, Mrs. Hunter and Ramsay were also present.

### 1. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Strategy and Performance Advisory Committee meeting held on 3 December 2013 be approved and signed as a correct record.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

### 3. Actions from Previous Meeting

The actions from the previous meeting were noted.

### 4. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, who was also the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance advised that he had nothing further to report than what was already on the agenda.

### CHANGE OF AGENDA ITEM ORDER

Agenda Item 10 was moved forward for consideration after agenda item 6.

### 5. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were no referrals from the Cabinet or Audit Committee.

### 6. Human Resources Update

The Head of Human Resources presented the report which provided an update on key Human Resources strategies and their impacts. She highlighted several areas outlined in the report.

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A Member asked whether it was possible to have the full time equivalent (FTE) on comparable staff number projected either for the beginning or the end of the year as he was expecting a gentle drift that would help contribute to the budget.

In response to a request for more information on the coaching scheme the Head of Human Resources advised that there were twelve coaches trained in the GROW coaching model. An officer would identify areas they would like to improve on, or it would be identified through the appraisal process and the coach would work with that member of staff over a series of short sessions based over 4 – 6 weeks. It provided an opportunity to share knowledge and expertise and provide staff with alternative solutions. The coaches were trained by three 'super' coaches who were aligned with a network that met once a quarter. She confirmed that the team managers ranged from small team managers through to Chief Officer level. A Member asked whether there was any proposal to align appraisals and Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) with coaching and whether there was the capacity to go commercial. The Head of Human Resources replied that appraisals could identify staff who would benefit and if requested capacity to go commercial could be investigated.

A Member asked whether there would be enough staff left within the Council, was there any plan to backfill audit staff lost to any TUPE arrangements with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). In response, the Head of Human Resources advised that they were still awaiting further information from the DWP, and this would be reviewed once received. Concern was expressed as to the staffing situation if Universal Credits came online, and whether retention was proving difficult in the current circumstances. She advised that the ability to employ on fixed term contract rather than using agency staff had provided more stability.

Whilst the significant reduction in sickness absence was observed, a Member commented on how a few long term sicknesses affected the figures. She reported that in the current economic climate depression, anxiety and stress could affect the figures, however more information was available now to help support staff.

A Member commented that the previous Performance & Governance Committee had requested that it be possible to have figures with long term absence removed to get a better indicator of the current situation. The LGA Peer Review had commented on staffing resources and managing stress would be key.

The Chairman congratulated the Head of Human Resources and her team on the Investors in People Success (IIP). In response to a question she reported that the Council had been assessed by the new choices approach. The Council had been able to choose which areas to be assessed against. There were 174 indicators of which the Council had been chosen to be assessed against 168. It was a massive achievement by everybody.

A Member queried the number of fixed term contracts and its effectiveness if half way in staff were looking elsewhere, and why work related stress was not mentioned. In response she advised that work related stress was not featured as a common reason for being off sick. Stress did get reported as a reason but tended to be over issues outside of the workplace. She did not know the number of current fixed term contracts and would report back to Members on this. It was still a more stable option than agency staff. There were no zero hour contracts.

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*Action 1: The Head of Human Resources to advise the Committee of the number of current fixed term contracts.*

Resolved: That the work of the Council's Human Resources team over the past year, be noted.

### 7. LGA Peer Challenge - Feedback letter

In accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman had agreed to accept the papers for this item as an urgent matter. The papers had not been available five clear working days before the meeting for the following reason:

The letter summarising feedback from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge was only received on Friday 24 January. The findings of the Peer Challenge needed to be reported to the Committee and the next meeting was not until 11 March 2014 yet it needed to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting 6 February 2014 as much of the content of the feedback related to the strategic direction of the Council, including elements of the already adopted Corporate Plan.

The Chief Officer Corporate Support presented the report which summarised the feedback and suggestions of the Corporate Peer Challenge carried out in December 2013.

The Chairman commented that it had felt like an inspection and had been highly challenging. The Council had been fortunate in the high calibre of reviewer such as Simon Ridley, Director of Local Government Finance, DCLG.

A Member queried, when there was a stress on community involvement, why Parish and Town Councils had not been involved and in reality not many Councillors. The Chairman responded that the peer team had attended two council meetings, interviewed all party leaders and the Chairman of Scrutiny and Governance Committees. The Chief Executive further advised that a selection of officers had been interviewed.

In response to a question as to whether the peer group were suggesting releasing greenbelt, the Chairman explained that Harry Platt, Associate Growth Advisor, had visited sites with the Property and Facilities Services Manager. There were some areas on the greenbelt boundary that could possibly be looked at.

A Member queried, whilst appreciating the value, the officer time involved and cost, and whether the suggestions given were any different to those already in mind. The Chairman responded that it was a free national programme in its third year and offered to all councils. With regards to officer time it was not like an old Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection which required a lot of paperwork. Documentation forwarded was all information already publicly available or website links. It was hard to quantify the added value, but what other opportunity would the council get to have input from experts such as Harry Platt and Simon Ridley. Overall it had taken place over a period of four days. It was invaluable to have such collective expertise as a critical friend, and the validation of being on the right path.

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Resolved: That

- a) the findings of the Corporate Peer Challenge be noted and recommended to Cabinet for consideration; and
- b) the Corporate Peer Challenge Team be thanked for the time taken in completing the review and providing their feedback.

### 8. Communications Strategy and Working Group Report

Councillor Miss Stack thanked all her colleagues on the communications working group and the officers involved, and gave a [presentation](#) on behalf of the group. She spoke on barriers to innovation, branding and 'tone of voice'. The Group believed there were a number of areas within the Council that with more support could look to being more commercial, and had investigated better presentation of council webpages. The Group required the Committees agreement to carrying out more detailed analysis, identification of the scope of the task in hand and to look at the potential investment with a view to reporting back to the next meeting with comprehensive recommendations. The Group also wanted to look at what more could be done with members and the induction process of new councillors.

The Committee thanked Councillor Miss Stack for the wonderful presentation and the group's hard work.

The Committee agreed that the Group could push forward with this work and report back to the next meeting with formal recommendations.

### 9. LG Inform

The Head of Transformation and Strategy presented a report which advised Members that LG Inform, which had been developed by the Local Government Association, was publicly available and provided information about the Council's performance which could be used as a benchmarking tool.

Resolved: That the availability of LG Inform which publishes information about the Council's performance and can be used as a tool to benchmark Council performance, be noted.

### 10. Residents Survey 2013 - Results

The Head of Transformation & Strategy presented a report detailing the results of the Residents Survey 2013 which Members considered. It was noted that residents seemed more aware of the responsibilities of the District Council, and Members were pleased with the recognition of the value for money provided by 'In Shape.' It was also noted that Royal Mail were increasing their prices which is likely to affect the cost in the future.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

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11. Work Plan

The work plan was noted subject to a further report from the Communications working group at the next meeting.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.05 PM

CHAIRMAN