

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 -
IMPROVEMENT, PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE

Thursday, 13 May 2010

PRESENT: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair); Councillor David Garlick (Deputy Chair); Councillors Keith Davies and Cllr Marianne Taylor

ALSO PRESENT:

Julie Seddon	Director of Environment & Culture (Item 6a)
Isabell Procter	Director of Finance & Support
Catherine Wilson	Head of Human Resources (Item 6b)
Tracy Tiff	Overview & Scrutiny Officer
Chris Cassidy	Overview & Scrutiny Administrative Support

OBERSERVING: Councillor Joy Capstick

1. APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Scott Collins and Matthew Golby.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings dated 5th January 2010, 13th January 2010 and 1st February 2010 were signed by the Chair as a true record.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. PROPOSALS FOR CLIFTONVILLE HOUSE

Isabell Procter, Director of Finance and Support, addressed the Committee advising of the Cliftonville House Project. She emphasised that Cliftonville House is under occupied and costing the Council approximately £1/2 million per annum, which includes running costs, business rates, utilities and cleaning.

The Committee further heard: -

- Other potential options were to primarily market Cliftonville House, to make improvements in other areas to improve culture, introduce different ways of working and improve and improve technology. Helping to change direction of the Council.
- Project teams were looking at specific areas.
- The Programming Board meets every two weeks and reports weekly to Management Board. The Programme Board is looking at issues such as utilising space
- The ICT Operations Room is five times the size needed by the Council, however the provision of a second ICT Operations Room is required in case of disaster recovery.
- There is a need for sufficient meeting rooms the possibility of introducing breakout rooms is being investigated.
- All Office space will be open plan, also looking at introducing breakout rooms as an option.
- The basement at the Guildhall has good storage space. There is a Retention Policy on filing and there will be the introduction of “throwaway days”.
- The Post room will have a scanner that would scan all documents and send to relevant departments to introduce a paper-free working environment.
- All personal printers will be removed and a main multi functional device introduced.
- Investigations into car parking are taking place.
- Catherine Wilson, Head of Human Resources, will facilitate workshops regarding open plan working
- It is envisaged kitchenettes will be introduced to each floor.
- The air conditioning system will be checked to ensure that it is sufficient to accommodate extra staff.
- It is anticipated that the project will be finished by the end of 2010.

The Committee asked questions, made comment and further heard: -

- Health and Safety issues should be closely investigated
- The possibility of shared services is being investigated
- The possibility of the demolition of Cliftonville House had been investigated together with potential costings.
- The Committee emphasised the need to maintain good working conditions for staff, potted plants
- In response to a query regarding staff involvement, the Committee heard that workshops would be held inviting staff to put forward suggestions and comments about various issues contained within the Proposal

In response to a question about the possibility of using additional properties within the town centre, the Committee was advised that commercial properties in the town are

beginning to fill up, and various leasehold properties have been looked at either to buy or rent for offices, but none of them have proved to be suitable or financially viable.

AGREED: That the update on the Proposals for Cliftonville House be noted.

6. TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES

(A) PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: PROCUREMENT (MARKET TESTING) OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Julie Seddon, Director for Environment and Culture, referred to the briefing note that had been circulated with the agenda recapping that it has been agreed to market test waste, grounds and street care. It would be jointly market tested with Daventry District Council. The costs of procurement were reported.

It was highlighted that this may or may not lead to a joint contract. The current process is testing the market to see if the service could be delivered at a lower cost for a better standard, i.e. significantly better value, should this be the case it would be recommended that the service is outsourced.

The project is now at the stage where a lot of responses to the invitation to tender have been received. Over twenty have expressed an interest. Short listing will take place soon.

From March to September 2010 competitive dialogue will take place, such as talking to shortlisted bidders for service solutions, obtaining idea of costs, types of service they could deliver. Throughout this process it is expected that some bidders may drop out. It is expected that a decision to select a preferred bidder will be made around December 2010. The process to enable any new contractor to mobilise the new service in March 2011 will then commence.

Julie Seddon confirmed that she would provide updates to future meetings of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny body.

The Committee asked questions, heard and commented: -

Each stage of the process would be scrutinised.

- It was noted that Councillor Ann Carter, Daventry District Council, had joined the pre-decision Scrutiny Appreciative Inquiry.
- The next meeting of the Appreciative Inquiry would be held, late May 2010.

AGREED: (1) That regular updates of the work of this Appreciative Inquiry be provided to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny body.

(B) REPORTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUP

The Chair advised that this Group had met recently and provided comment on the Budget Book. The Group would continue to meet, scrutinising the impact of the budget 2010/2011.

Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, advised that this form of budget scrutiny had been recognised as an example of best practice.

(C) COST OF CONSULTANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chair apprised that this Task and Finish Group had now completed its comprehensive Review and presented the final report to the Committee for its consideration. Work had commenced in June 2009 and concluded May 2010.

Councillor Joy Capstick, as a member of the Task and Finish Group, highlighted the importance of the recommendations contained within the report.

The Committee welcomed the Review, supporting the recommendations contained within. The Chair added that he would ask Councillor Tony Clarke, Chair, Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group, to present the report with him to Cabinet.

AGREED: That the report of the Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group be accepted and presented to Cabinet for consideration.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2010/2011

8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee considered the Performance data for the month of February 2010, making specific comment: -

- BV9 - Percentage of Council Tax received in the year - It was noted that this performance indicator had not been met which was due to a number of challenges in particular the state of the economy. The Audit Committee is scheduled to review the revised Debt Policy at its meeting on 17th May 2010.
- In response to a query about the assistance that is provided, the Committee heard that help and support is available in a number of ways such as money advice, CAB advice and mortgage rescue.

AGREED: That the Performance Report for February 2010 be noted.

9. FORWARD PLAN

The Chair advised that Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 had asked that this Committee undertake pre-decision Scrutiny on Delapre Abbey Options Appraisal . The correct procedure for requesting pre-decision scrutiny had been followed. Advice had been given that the time scale for this piece of pre-decision scrutiny to take place would be two weeks prior to the Cabinet meeting that would discuss this issue, but agreement of both the Leader and Portfolio Holder must be sought. It was suggested that the Chair of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider carrying out pre-decision Scrutiny on this issue.

AGREED: That Councillor Jamie Lane contacts the Chair of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee, requesting that pre-decision Scrutiny of the Delapre Abbey Options Appraisal is undertaken.

10. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting concluded at 7.10 pm