

Time commenced – 6.00pm
Time finished – 7.10pm

RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE BOARD 23 JULY 2012

Present Councillor L Winter (Chair)
 Councillors Ashburner, Davis, Radford, Roberts, Sandhu, Stanton, Tittley

In attendance: Councillor Russell

01/12 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Carr

02/12 Late items introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

03/12 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

04/12 Call-in

There were no items.

05/12 Remit and Work Programme 2012-13

A report from the Strategic Director of Resources detailed the portfolio of the Council Cabinet Member for Business, Finance and Democracy and explained that the board's remit covered scrutiny of these council services. It was reported that members of the board would be expected to consider areas for detailed topic reviews in the 2012-13 municipal year.

Presentations were received from the Director of Finance and Procurement and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services detailing services they were responsible for delivering.

The Director of Finance and Procurement provided detailed of areas covered under financial planning, reporting and control. It was explained that the council had been able to agree an early budget for 2012-13 and an ambitious programme was in place for 2013-14. Specific explanation was given to different areas of council finance, including the General Fund, Capital Programme, Housing Revenue Account, schools' budget and treasury management. Challenges for the year ahead were detailed, including the anticipated financial settlement from Government and early closure of the Statement of Accounts for 2011/12.

Details were also provided of the responsibilities falling within the Procurement

division. These included compliance and training, advice, commissioning, category planning and contract management. Achievements included better directorate awareness and improving the culture and perception.

In response to questions from members, the Director of Finance and Procurement confirmed that penalty clauses could be used where contracts were not being adhered to but that in such situations the council always sought to achieve the right balance with maintaining good relations to achieve a better outcome. It was also confirmed that contract waivers could be used where necessary but that the council had to adhere to its Contract Procedure Rules, and that the contract register was published on the council's website to ensure transparency.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services delivered a presentation on services within that department. Areas detailed within Legal Services included civil litigation, criminal and regulatory, and property and commercial. Specific mention was made of the growth of licensing matters within the criminal and regulatory section. The Children and Adult section was also detailed. Information was also provided on Democratic Services, including Constitutional and Civic Services, Overview and Scrutiny, Elections and Local Land Charges and Registration Services.

Details were provided by the Strategic Director of Resources on the various activity statements also available to assist members with understanding the services the board was responsible for scrutinising.

Members considered the report and presentations with a view to agreeing on topic reviews to be undertaken in the 2012-13 municipal year.

Resolved to receive a report at the August meeting offering guidance on how the board could:

- 1) conduct topic reviews into:**
 - **the electoral cycle including the electoral registration system**
 - **Benefits and Exchequer Services with particular regard to the likely impact of the Welfare Reform Act**
 - **the relationship between the council and voluntary services**
 - **Procurement processes**
- 2) prioritise its workload.**

06/12 Review of the Electoral Cycle

A report of the Strategic Director of Resources examining the proposed review of the electoral cycle was considered. The report explained that the review had been proposed following a resolution by Council.

A list of criteria was proposed for consideration. Members felt that it was necessary for the views of political groups to be sought as part of the review as, ultimately, political will was required to implement change. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that two thirds of members would be required to vote in favour of a change to the electoral cycle if that was the outcome of the review. Following questions from members, it was explained that the proposed list of criteria should not be considered to be in priority order.

Resolved that the criteria to guide the review of the electoral cycle would include, but not be restricted to:

- **cost comparison between election-by-thirds and four-yearly elections**
- **impact on administration of elections**
- **impact on long-term policy decisions of the council**
- **voter participation**
- **impact on political parties and candidates**
- **impact on the well being of the city**
- **experience of authorities that have made the change.**

07/12 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

A copy of relevant items within the July Forward Plan were considered alongside an updated version of the August Forward Plan.

Resolved to note the report.

MINUTES END