



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 11th July 2016

PRESENT : Cllrs. Coole (Chair), Ryall (Vice-Chair), Pearsall (Spokesperson), Hilton, Lewis, Morgan, Wilson, Haigh, Dee, Hampson, H. Norman, Finnegan, Hawthorne, Melvin, Smith

Others in Attendance

Cllr. Porter (Cabinet Member for Environment)

Cllr. D. Norman (Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources)

Mr Jon Topping (Head of Finance)

Mr Lloyd Griffiths (Head of Neighbourhood Services)

Mr Malcolm Cox, Operations Manager, Amey

Ms Joanne Styles, Operations Director, Civica

Ms Sadie Neal, Partnership Director, Civica

Mr Deane Greenouff, Director of ITO, Civica

Mr Glenn Morgan, Senior ITO, Civica

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. MINUTES

A Member requested that a figure relating to the Icelandic Bank debt in Minute 8.1 be inserted in the minutes. Subject to that amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no questions from members of the public.

16. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

17. AMEY ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING

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The Chair welcomed Councillor Porter, Cabinet Member for Environment; Mr Malcolm Cox, Operations Manager at Amey; and Mr Lloyd Griffiths, Head of Neighbourhood Services, to the meeting.

Members were presented with the annual performance report for 2015-16 for the Streetcare Strategic Partnership delivered by Amey. The report included key performance indicators (KPIs) and a service delivery plan.

Councillor Porter and Mr Malcolm Cox summarised the headlines in the report and the future challenges facing the partnership before opening up the matter for debate by the Committee.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member commented that it was difficult to correlate the poor quality of street cleaning in his ward with the KPI for this activity. The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed the Member that the Council's Neighbourhood Services Officers had increased their monitoring work and agreed that there was a communication issue with residents. The Member responded that in future the KPI should be cross-referenced with a meaningful description of the quality of the work.
2. A Member stated that service requests reported late in the day or on a Friday afternoon were not actioned until the next day or the following Monday and that this resulted in issues becoming exacerbated by the time they were addressed. The Member reflected on the challenges faced by the partnership in forthcoming years and asked how Amey would balance the need to achieve savings with residents' expectations. Mr Cox acknowledged the Member's comments and added that Amey would have to implement creative measures to meet the savings targets. The Member requested to see a programme of service changes. Councillor Porter advised the Member that savings generators were being explored and that these would be brought back to Overview and Scrutiny, when available.
3. A Member requested that in future, the previous year's performance data be provided alongside the current information. Councillor Porter agreed with this request.
4. A Member referred to page 9 of the report relating to deep cleansing of chewing gum in identified areas of the City Centre and commented that these mainly related to the gate streets and that there was a problem in side streets in the City Centre. The Member noted that this was referenced in the City Plan and asked whether gum removal would be reviewed and improved in the future. Mr Cox responded that due to resources the pressure washer was used for other functions. The Head of Neighbourhood Services added that the contract allowed for the resource to be moved to where it was needed, but that this would be at the expense of other cleansing regimes. The Member suggested that the administration should review the effectiveness of the current contract.

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5. A Member referred to Hillfield Gardens and the fact that this was maintained by operatives who had basic skills and no gardening expertise. The Member said that as a consequence the gardens were not being managed properly and that plants were being removed incorrectly. Councillor Porter agreed that the standard of maintenance at Hillfield Gardens could be improved but there were insufficient resources to employ a full time professional gardener. Councillor Porter commended the efforts of the Friends of Hillfield Gardens and said it was important that their work was not compromised by Amey's operatives.
6. A Member asked why litter picking was not carried out at Parry Field before the grass was mown and stated that the resultant shards of metal from discarded aluminium cans on the football pitch had constituted a serious health hazard. The Member also asked why white lining had been carried out prior to the pitch being mown and not afterwards. Mr Cox apologised to the Member for the metal shards and said normal practice was to send a litter crew in beforehand. Mr Cox added that the pitch was not actually white-lined as the lines had been cut out with a machine to give the appearance of white lining.
7. A Member referred to problems caused by litter on the streets and inconsiderate parking during two concerts held at Kingsholm Stadium and asked how standards would be maintained for rugby days. Another Member commented that the Stadium should have portable toilets outside to reduce public urination. Councillor Porter replied that the rugby club was responsible for all litter and maintenance within the ground on match days and that their licence also included an obligation to collect litter outside the ground on match days. Councillor Porter stated that there was no obligation for the rugby club to liaise with Amey to collect litter outside the ground for concerts, but that following complaints made after the Jess Glynne concert that an arrangement had been made with Amey for litter collection for the Lionel Ritchie concert and that the rugby club had agreed to pay a contribution. Councillor Porter assured the Member that moving forward the Club's licence would be reviewed to ensure this did not happen again.
8. A Member turned to the KPI data on complaints and suggested that it would be useful to have feedback on them and have them grouped by themes. The Member noted that there was no data for waste complaints from December 2015 to May 2016. The Head of Neighbourhood Services advised the Member that data had been collected for the missing period, but that due to an administrator leaving before Christmas it had not been possible to present the information. The Head of Neighbourhood Services further advised the Member that he would review the way information was presented in the KPIs in the future. Councillor Porter commented that it was important for Councillors to know what was going on in their Wards and that he would arrange for revised information to be sent out.
9. Three Members reported issues with the weed spraying regime for pavements and gutters and commented on the lack of information available to Ward Councillors to enable them to deal with residents' queries. Members were advised that gutter maintenance was the responsibility of the County

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Council, but that Amey liaised with the County particularly in relation to deep cleaning. Mr Cox informed Members that pavement spraying was carried out three times a year. Councillor Porter commented that details of the weed spraying regime would be placed on the Council's website along with grass cutting schedules. The Head of Neighbourhood Services added that it was intended to display this information within the next seven to fourteen days.

10. A Member noted the KPI relating to sickness absence and asked how this was being managed and also queried how the shortage of HGV drivers was being addressed. Mr Cox replied that sickness was being monitored and that return to work interviews were now carried out. He added that agency staff had been used in the past, but the practice now was to employ full-time staff.
11. A Member sought clarification on an indexation adjustment of £200K. The Head of Neighbourhood Services clarified the position for the Member.
12. A Member noted that there was no KPI for the removal of dog excrement. Councillor Porter agreed to include this information in the future.
13. A Member noted that the Amey Service Delivery Plan included a reference to tree survey software. Mr Cox indicated this was a modern software tool which would link into the County Council's tree system. The Member asked if Ward Councillors could have advance notice of work being carried out on trees within their Wards so that they could deal with residents' queries. The Head of Neighbourhood Services commented that there was a fine balance in knowing how much information to give Members and agreed to take the Member's request on board.

The Chair thanked Councillor Porter and Mr Cox for their presentation.

RESOLVED – That the Amey Annual Report for the year 2015-16 be noted.

18. CIVICA REVENUES AND BENEFITS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR 2015-16

The Chair welcomed Councillor Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources; Ms Jo Styles, Operations Director, Civica; Ms Sadie Neal, Partnership Director, Civica; and Mr Jon Topping, Head of Finance, Gloucester City Council, to the meeting.

Members were presented with the Gloucester Civica Partnership's Annual Performance report on the Revenues and Benefits service for 2015-16. Ms Neal gave Members a short presentation to complement the report before opening up the matter for debate.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member sought clarification on how the introduction of Real Time Information (RTI) had impacted on overpayments. Ms Styles explained that

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the Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) and RTI meant that changes in circumstances were often notified before the claimant had had time to report them. The Member asked if claimants were dealt with sensitively. Ms Styles stated that a sensitive approach was taken as often claimants were surprised that Civica had received the information so quickly.

2. A Member queried whether unpaid Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) of £43K had been rolled forward. Ms Styles informed the Member that the money had to go back to the DWP. The Member asked whether applicants were potentially losing out because of the way DHP entitlement was assessed. Ms Neal responded that the goal was to spend the money and that Civica worked closely with the Council to increase take-up. She gave an example of liaison with the Homelessness service last year. Another Member queried whether Disability Benefit was taken into account when assessing DHP. Ms Styles replied that it was Gloucester City Council's policy not to discount Disability Benefit when assessing claims. The Member referred to the unpaid DHP grant and said that the previous Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources had given an undertaking regarding unpaid DHP. Councillor Norman agreed to look into this point for the Member.
3. A Member referred to 'matching' of outgoing post and enquired whether email was used when communicating with claimants as this was a convenient and modern way of sending information, particularly when the cost of postage was high. Ms Styles replied that claimants could use email to contact Civica, but that because of confidentiality Civica was unable to use email and had to use Royal Mail. Ms Neal added that Civica was exploring the use of SMS text messaging for non-sensitive information. Councillor Norman acknowledged the Member's comments, but pointed out that not everyone had computer skills. He commented that postage costs were being looked at across the Council as one of the initiatives to make savings.
4. A Member referred to the 'Performance Lowlights' shown in the executive summary to the report and asked what measures were being taken to improve the situation. Ms Styles replied that some of the caseload had been passed to other Revenues and Benefits services in the partnership to minimise the impact on day to day work.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Performance report for 2015-16 for the Civica Revenues and Benefits Partnership be noted.

19. CIVICA ITO ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR 2015-2016

The Chair welcomed Mr Deane Greenouff, Director of ITO, Civica, and Mr Glenn Morgan, Senior ITO, Civica, to the meeting.

Members were presented with the Gloucester Civica Partnership's Annual Performance report on the ITO service for 2015-16. Mr Greenouff and Mr Morgan gave Members a short presentation to complement the report before opening up the matter for debate. Councillor Norman reminded Members of a forthcoming IT

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briefing for Councillors on 14 July 2016 and added that individual IT issues should be referred to that meeting.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member referred to the need for 'substantial work' to be carried out before the next PSNA audit in September 2016 and asked if there was slippage on the work that needed to be done. Mr Morgan advised the Member that this was an annual health check for the service and that he anticipated the September deadline would be met.
2. A Member enquired whether Windows XP was still in use within the Council. Mr Morgan replied that Civica was working on phasing out Windows XP in the outstations and at HKP Warehouses. The Member questioned the security risk arising from the continued use of Windows XP. Mr Morgan informed the Member that Civica had employed a tool released by Microsoft which removed vulnerability from the Windows XP operating system.
3. A Member asked about business continuity and how quickly Civica could get the Council's IT systems restored in the event of an emergency such as a fire. Mr Morgan replied that Civica was working closely with the Council on this and exploring the use of off-site data centres, but that he was not in a position to share a strategy with Members at this time. The Member asked when a report would be available. Mr Morgan referred to workshops which would look at all business continuity issues and not just IT related ones. Councillor Norman commented that the work would form part of a review of the Council's existing Emergency Plan. Councillor Norman referred to the standalone system operated by the Fire and Rescue Service which was independent of the Shire Hall infrastructure. He added that a revised plan might be available in the next three to four months. Another Member requested that the updated business continuity plan should be considered by Overview and Scrutiny.
4. A Member referred to a recent cyber threat posed by a virus. Mr Morgan advised the Member that Civica had inherited an old core infrastructure and operating system which had made it difficult to maintain cyber threat defences. However, firewalls had now been replaced with state-of-the-art technology and there were multiple screening operations should any rogue software infiltrate.
5. A Member commented on the amount of 'spam' emails received. Mr Morgan said it was difficult to balance the Council's historic open policy on emails against the need to filter messages. He added that this could be looked at, but would result in emails being managed more strictly.
6. A Member referred to a recent outage at Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust and the effect it had had on the Trust's viability. Mr Morgan advised the Member that he had regular meetings with the management of the Trust and that there was close liaison with them.

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RESOLVED – That the Annual Performance report for 2015-16 for the Civica ITO Partnership be noted.

SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 6

On the motion of the Chair, and in accordance with the Constitution, the Committee resolved that the meeting be extended beyond two hours.

20. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Chair led a discussion on task and finish group activity for the Committee for the forthcoming year. The following matters were agreed:-

1. That Councillors Haigh, Wilson and Melvin be confirmed as Members of a Task and Finish Group to progress the work identified at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Alcohol Workshop in March 2016. Councillor H. Norman agreed to assist the Task and Finish Group as a witness in her role as the Chair of Licensing and Enforcement Committee.
2. That the outstanding work identified as arising from the Task and Finish Group on Employment and Skills in 2015-16 be concluded by holding a one-off workshop with young people in the autumn of 2016.
3. That ideas for a further Task and Finish Group be sought from Gloucester City Councillors, members of the public and community groups.

21. CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Members examined the latest version of the Cabinet Forward Plan and noted items which had been added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme at the Committee's request following consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Spokesperson.

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

22. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the latest version of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme. The following matters were discussed in connection with the work programme:-

1. A Member requested that the Committee examine the 'Safe and Attractive Streets Policy' which was being presented to Cabinet on 20 July 2016 as a post scrutiny exercise, possibly in October 2016. The Chair thanked the Member for the suggestion and advised him that this would be considered when the lead Scrutiny Members met to review the work programme.

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2. A Member questioned whether the agenda for each meeting should be limited to no more than three substantive items to allow adequate time for debate. The Chair thanked the Member for his comment and informed the Committee that the final agenda for the next meeting on 5 September 2016 would be drawn up during a meeting involving the Chair, Vice-Chair and Spokesperson.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 5 September 2016 at 18.30 hours.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm

Time of conclusion: 8.45 pm

Chair