

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20 April 2016 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Jamie Milne (Chair), Chris Barnham (Vice-Chair), Abdeslam Amrani, Brenda Dacres, Mark Ingleby, Jim Mallory and Crada Onuegbu. Officers: Scrutiny Manager (Emma Aye-Kumi), Head of Financial Services (Selwyn Thompson), Head of Public Services (Ralph Wilkinson), Chief Executive (Barry Quirk CBE).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Amanda De Ryk and Helen Glass (Principal Lawyer)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Simon Hooks

1. Implementation of LFP savings proposal 03 (creating an internal enforcement agency)

Ralph Wilkinson, Head of Public Services presented the report, and referred to the Revenue Service Group Manager who was in attendance in the public gallery.

The committee congratulated officers on the success of the service and on the sensitivity that the service had exhibited when dealing with some very difficult cases.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

2. Confirmation of the Chair and Vice-Chair

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report.

RESOLVED that the Public Accounts Select Committee (PAC) confirm the decision of the Council, taken at the Annual General Meeting on 30 March 2016, to appoint Councillors Jamie Milne and Chris Barnham as Chair and Vice-Chair (respectively) of PAC.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2016

The Chair welcomed new Committee members, Councillors De Ryk and Dacres), and the new Scrutiny Manager, Emma Aye-Kumi.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of Public Accounts Select Committee held on 16 March 2016 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

4. Declarations of interest

There were none.

5. Response from Mayor and Cabinet on the work programme

The Mayoral response was received.

It was noted in discussion that there would be further consultation in the summer on the schools national funding formula.

6. Select Committee work programme

Emma Aye-Kumi, Scrutiny Manager, presented the report.

The following points were noted in discussion:

- Digitisation was suggested as a topic for in-depth review
- There was support for looking at joint ventures (JV) with a focus on asset management and better outcomes, rather than sharing services and cost saving
- The committee would have to take care to avoid overlap between digitisation, the shared IT contract, and Lewisham Future Programme (LFP)
- It was questioned whether it was necessary to do an in-depth review at all
- There were too many standing items on the work plan
- Some of the timings and frequencies on the workplan needed to be reviewed. LFP was cited as an example of a standing item that did not need to be reviewed at every meeting
- Income Generation should be reviewed more frequently than 6 monthly. Tim Smith from Shropshire Council had offered his time and advice free of charge and Members urged officers to take up the offer
- A formal announcement would be made on 22 April 2016 regarding the appointment of a commercial specialist
- Academisation was an issue for Children and Young People's Select Committee but if the Government's academisation plans were to become a reality the PAC would review the work plan to incorporate the financial aspects of academisation
- Voluntary and Community Sector capacity building was more relevant to Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee.

RESOLVED

That no decision regarding an in depth review would be taken yet

That the work plan would be discussed and review outside of the committee and a decision would be taken at the next meeting.

7. Presentation on Shared Services

Barry Quirk, Chief Executive, gave a presentation on the challenges of sharing services.

A discussion followed, in which the followed points were raised:

- When sharing services, it was important to consider both geography and function as the nearest neighbour may not be the most effective or willing partner. Local is a 'nice to have'. Consistent, reliable, quality service is more important than local.
- Child protection is a key area that could benefit from a cross borough agency as movement of social workers is very high between boroughs and the rates of children being taken into care varies greatly. The tri-borough arrangement was assessed by Ofsted as outstanding. On the other hand, child protection services in Birmingham cover an area the equivalent of 4 London boroughs but were assessed as inadequate. The key to delivering an effective service is consistency of control couple with expertise. The pool of people to choose from for high level roles in child protection is very small.
- Sometimes the objective of shared services should be to improve effectiveness and user experience, rather than saving costs. Elections Management was given by way of example
- Unlike the private sector, where customer service means cross-selling additional services, the challenge for the council is to achieve the opposite and decrease the number of services that users need to access
- Digitisation would facilitate demand management
- It was questioned whether cuts to the Early Years budget could have been avoided by sharing service with, for example, Greenwich, and whether more forceful political will could have enabled the council to grab such opportunities. The Chief Executive's view was that the council should share services wherever possible, practical and efficient to do so.
- Demand management and service redesign (fundamental rethinking rather than reshaping) needed looking at.

RESOLVED that the presentation and discussion be noted.

8. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

There were none.

The Chair drew the Committees attention to the actions arising from the last meeting, which were circulated by email ahead of the meeting.

ACTION → Scrutiny Manager to email a copy to Councillor Hilton.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____