

## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REVIEW WORKING PARTY**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2015 at 3.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.**

**Present:** Councillor Campbell (Chairman); Councillors I Gregory, K Gregory, Grove and Matterface

**In Attendance:** Ian Lowrie

### **151. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Members unanimously agreed that Councillor Campbell chaired the meeting.

Councillor Campbell in the Chair.

### **152. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Gideon, substituted by Councillor K. Gregory.

### **153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **154. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Grove proposed, Councillor Matterface seconded and Members agreed the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Performance Review Working Party held on 29 January 2015.

### **155. UPDATE ON TDC'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PRESENTATION BY IMPROVEMENT BOARD CHAIRMAN**

Mr Ian Lowrie, Chairman of the (Peer Review) Improvement Board led discussion on the subject. He gave a brief background to the establishment of the Board and that it was set up as result of the Peer Review Report that advised on how Thanet District council could move forward in the direction of improving its corporate performance in delivering services to residents. Mr Lowrie observed that the Council was experiencing challenging times and events as well as challenging Member behaviour.

Mr Lowrie noted that there were some 'big issues' on the Council agenda that included the future of the Manston Airport, Dreamland and Regeneration of Thanet. He gave credit to TDC for sourcing for external support to improve the way Council operated and hence improve its reputation. The Improvement Board has helped with further sourcing of the contacts and resources. Mr Lowrie said that cross-party working in the Board was encouraging. He said that the Board was setting up the foundation for a future Council that operated under a new culture, post-May Elections. The Improvement Board and LGA were happy to continue providing support for the foreseeable future as long as it was needed by TDC.

Mr Lowrie acknowledged that the Council had sought institutional support from other sources providing mixed economy support to the improvement effort by Council. There was less negative behaviour by Members and the Board noted that Council had drawn up a Member Induction Training Programme. Peer Members were fully engaged and supportive of the improvement work that is on-going.

Members expressed concerns about the current format of standards arrangements for local Council, which they viewed as being not effective in deterring Members from engaging in 'toxic behaviour.' Members encouraged an induction approach post May elections that would see more experienced councillors being mentors or buddies to the newly elected Members who were new to the role of a councillor.

The Chairman of the sub-group thanked Mr Lowrie for coming to the meeting to share views with the sub-group and Members noted the report by the Board Chairman.

**156. PROGRESS UPDATE ON TDC'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND FUTURE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

Mr Paul Cook, Director of Corporate Resources suggested the principles for reviewing the improvement work by the working party. He said that at each working party meeting, Members would receive an improvement plan implementation update report and the current 'action points' updates. Madeline Homer, Acting CEx also suggested that Peer Members of the Board could be invited to come and share views and ideas with the sub-group. Mr Cook reported that a review of the Member/Officer Protocol was currently underway and a report would be considered by the board on 10 April 2015 and Members were going to be involved in the review of the TDC Constitution.

Member of the working party suggested that Council could adopt a protocol for officer response timeframe to Member queries as well as the escalation framework for such queries. They said that there were some services that were perceived by the public as important to them and therefore responses to queries for such services should have quicker turn-around response times. Madeline Homer agreed to consider the suggestion.

Members also suggested that one way of improving the Council's credibility with the public would be to communicate in an open and honest manner what Council can and cannot do as part of setting up its key priorities. Mr Cook agreed to take forward the comments as part of reviewing the corporate Communications Strategy. He also said that the LGA was providing technical support to Council the following projects:

- a. IT arrangement support;
- b. Project management support;
- c. Asset management support.

The improvement process for some of those issues would be longer timeframe than for the others. Heads of Services group had been set up to play a project management role for some of the corporate projects. Mr Cook advised the meeting that Council had received a good response to the advertisements for senior posts. It was suggested that the filling of senior posts should be completed before the May Elections in order to avoid creating uncertainty in a political environment that might be fragile if it turns out to be that there is no overall control after the elections. Madeline Homer advised that the appointments would be made before the May Elections. Members said that Council had to do more to retain staff.

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor K. Gregory seconded and agreed the following recommendations:

1. To note the report;
2. That future monitoring arrangements by the working party would be that at each of the sub-group meetings, the latest update on the Improvement Action Plan is received.

157. **EK SERVICES PERFORMANCE, EMERGING VISION AND THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE**

Mr Dominic Whelan, Director of EK Services led discussion on the item through a power-point presentation. He said that he had been in post for about three months and was going to share his vision and thoughts about Shared Services moving forward. Mr Whelan said that there was a willingness to share best practices across the shared services partnership. There was a need to re-invigorate the three way meetings to deal with blockages that were being experienced further down the partnership chain.

**Governance Arrangements**

Mr Whelan said that the governance agreement was being reviewed and the new delegations had been approved. His role now included an unpaid role of Director of Collaborative Services that involved managing the EK Human Resources. He was now working on a three year functionality plan with the three CEx for the partner local Authorities; (Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council and Thanet District council).

**Performance – Finance Headlines**

Members indicated that more services were likely to be outsourced but the council ought to be mindful of managing the 'profit motive' in service delivery.

**Performance - Service Area**

Performance for service areas was reported month to Mr Cook. Mr Whelan reported that the collection of Council tax and business rates was slightly under target and his team had increased resources to this service in order to improve the collection rate. With regards to call rate and calls coming through the call centre, the shared services team was achieving set targets and they were also trying out new ideas to reduce calls. This included making face to face appointments for customers to come into the gateway. Dominic Whelan reported that the TDC telephone system was now too old (10-15 years old); and needed replacing.

Members were concerned that a number of calls were dropped by the call centre and they suggested that officers should set up voice messaging to avoid dropped calls. Madeline Homer and David Whelan agreed to take this back to officers. Members also suggested that the performance data should include actual figures in addition to the percentages indicated in the report.

**Initiatives & Key Issues – Digital/ICT**

Dominic Whelan advised the meeting that telephony system replacement project was on cards and this was a good news story. Information governance was currently increasing in demand. Paul Cook was the lead officer on the project. EK Services were working on an in-house single payment system that would include HR, Housing and R& B.

Madeline Homer said that now that Members had been issued with tablets to access council documents, the intention was a phased removal of paper copies over time. Other Members sought clarification on the implication of regular use of tablets in relation to paying for eyesight checks that were mandatory for all regular users of computer screens. Madeline Homer was going to look into the issue of 'free eye checks' for Members.

**Initiatives & Key Issues – Customer Services**

David Whelan said that there was a need to set up a working party for a three way partnership Councils to monitor and see how Shepway District Council implements the Universal Credit Scheme. Madeline Homer would chair the working party.

**Room for Improvement**

Dominic Whelan said that there was a need to look at the business model going forward and find new ways of delivering the service. He said that there was room to realise more

efficiencies and EK Services will draw up a 7-11 year plan and that will include trying to get procurement under the shared services partnership.

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 4.30 pm