

Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee - 6 June 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 6 June 2024 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Wayne (Chair), Khondoker (Vice-Chair), Chowdhury, Clarke, Jackson, Ozdemir, Hyde, Ibrahim, Jegorovas-Armstrong, Pandor, Staff and Weekes

Also Present: **Councillors:** Bell-Bradford and Ward

Councillor Nick Wayne in the Chair

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

None.

2 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)

None.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)

None.

4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee be noted.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, the first of the new Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair reported that he had held a number of meetings with officers and Executive Members over the past week to discuss the work of the committee. The Chair noted that the remit of the new committee was different to the previous Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee, commenting that the new remit would allow for an increased focus on budget and performance matters, as well as matters related to the local economy and equalities issues.

The Chair reminded the committee that the meeting was being held in the pre-election period ahead of the General Election and that members should avoid any comments that could be perceived as party political.

6 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A6)

None.

7 TERMS OF REFERENCE, MEMBERSHIP AND DATES OF MEETINGS (Item D1)

The Chair advised that the date of the July meeting was to be revised; a new date would be sought following consultation with the Chair.

RESOLVED:

That the terms of reference, membership and dates of meetings in 2024/25 be noted.

8 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP - 12 MONTH REPORT BACK (Item D2)

Julie Foy, Director of Human Resources, and Astrid Keogh, Organisational Development Manager, introduced the report which summarised the progress made in implementing the council's new staff performance management process.

The following main points were raised in the discussion:

- “Check Ins” had replaced the previous regime titled “Quality Conversations”. The new Check Ins scheme provided that all employees had a monthly performance meeting with their line manager, with a status awarded every four months. The Check Ins process had been implemented in April 2023 with a staff communication an engagement campaign, which included workshops for managers, information sessions for staff, and online resources.
- Data from the recent colleague survey identified that 73% of staff said that managers dealt with inappropriate behaviour effectively, and 68% of staff agreed that managers deal with poor performance effectively. This was an improvement on the results of the previous staff survey in 2021.
- A member queried the process for staff to challenge their performance status. Officers advised that a process had been agreed in consultation with the trade unions that allowed for a reconsideration meeting to be held. It was reported that only 20 staff had received a “red” status, and no requests for a reconsideration meeting had been received to date.
- Check in data was reported to the Corporate Management Team to allow for strategic oversight on a directorate basis. Data was also reviewed for moderation purposes and to identify any potential equality issues. For example, it had been identified that staff in some frontline roles were more likely to receive “amber” statuses, particularly in roles where staff were more likely to be Black and Male. The council had since held sessions with those staff to discuss this issue and how they can be supported in their roles.
- The Committee commented on the need for effective processes for staff to raise concerns about bullying and harassment in the workplace. It was important to create a culture where people feel confident in speaking up and see that concerns are acted upon. Officers commented on the council's existing processes, and how these were being reviewed alongside best practice and examples from other organisations.
- Officers commented on the importance of developing managers; sessions had been held on how to give constructive feedback on performance issues.
- A member expressed disappointment that the council's work to address inequalities in the workplace had not progressed further, given that these issues had been discussed for a long time.
- Following a question on agency staff, it was advised that agency workers were not subject to the check in process, however it was expected that managers would have regular conversations with agency staff about performance, objectives and standards. If an agency worker did not meet the standards required for the role then their contract would end.

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- It was requested that a further update be submitted to the committee in 12 months' time. It was asked that this consider how to monitor the performance of long-term agency staff.
- It was also requested that the committee receive an update on staff equalities issues, including the BAME pay gap, noting the recommendations of the previous member working group on equalities.
- It was commented that the Annual Workforce Report would be submitted to the Committee in November.

The Committee thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in implementing the new Performance Development process be noted, taking account of the recommendations to Executive that followed the Scrutiny Working Group.

9

SELECTION OF SCRUTINY TOPIC 2024-25 (Item D3)

The Chair agreed to consider Items 9 and 10 together, jointly considering the Scrutiny Topic for 2024-25 and the Committee's work plan.

The Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees commented on the reviews planned for their committee. While these were yet to be formally agreed, the following topics were suggested:

- **Children and Young People Scrutiny** – the committee wished to consider mental health in young people and persistent absence in secondary schools. Members had also expressed an interest in the universal youth offer and the council's support to those under special guardianship orders;
- **Homes and Communities Scrutiny** – the committee intended to review delivery in community centres. It was commented that there was a particular interest in ensuring that community assets were used to their maximum potential;
- **Environment, Climate and Transport Scrutiny** – the topic was to be decided, however suggestions included street cleansing and greening streets;
- **Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny** – it was suggested that the committee may wish to consider the financial challenge facing the care sector and related issues, including the delivery of savings. It was also suggested that the committee may consider the shortage of care home provision locally. While the Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee had responsibility for budget monitoring, it was suggested that a deep dive into the financial challenge faced by Adult Social Care, and the actions taken to address this, may be helpful.

The Committee was supportive of the above suggestions.

For the Corporate Resources and Economy Scrutiny Committee, members agreed to a scrutiny topic focused on how the council uses its resources to enhance social capital, considering issues such as best value in procurement, social value, how this can be used to deliver on council priorities including the provision of apprenticeships and affordable workspaces, how to tackle inequalities through procurement, and how to ensure that outcomes are monitored accurately.

The Committee also expressed an interest in the council's equalities work, commenting that addressing inequalities was a key mission of the council. It was asked that the Executive Member be invited to the committee in the autumn to provide an interim update.

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The Committee discussed the performance reporting arrangements to the committee and asked that a small working group be formed to consider this with officers, establishing which performance indicators be received and how they should be received. The Committee nominated Cllrs Khondoker, Hyde, Jegorovas-Armstrong and Wayne to the working group.

A member raised concerns about customer service issues and responses to member enquiries. The Executive Member for Finance and Performance advised that there was work under way to make improvements in this area and was happy to discuss individual concerns outside of the meeting.

It was advised that a scrutiny initiation document and further iteration of the work plan would be submitted to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

CHAIR