

Economy Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2013

Present:

Councillor Green – in the Chair
Councillors Barrett, Chappell, Davies, Hackett, Ollerhead, Pritchard, Simcock, Smitheman and Stogia

Councillor Leese, Leader of the Council
Councillor S Murphy, Deputy Leader of the Council
Councillor Smith, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Apologies

Councillors Chamberlain, Karney, Keegan, Richards, Shone and Walters

ESC/13/12 Business Plans

The Committee received a report which presented the Corporate Core Business Plan. The Business Plan set out how the Corporate Core will make necessary savings following the following the local government settlement for 2013/15, whilst continuing to deliver a high quality service.

The Committee sought reassurance that the Council was making plans to accommodate further extensive budget reductions in the future, and was being proactive in its approach to this. The Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) said that the Council was working towards the expectation of further budget reductions from 2015 onwards, with the fundamental goal of reducing the number of people dependent on targeted and specialist service as the optimum way to meet future savings.

A member asked how the Committee could scrutinise the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). The Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) said the papers for all the meetings were publicly available, and the meetings were held in public. He also told the Committee that the minutes for the GMCA are submitted to the Council's Executive meetings. The Leader reassured the Committee that it already was scrutinising the GMCA, though it may not be identified as such, for example at its previous meeting it had scrutinised funding for enterprises at a Greater Manchester level, which was a key part of the GMCA. A member asked whether members could receive the papers for the Skills and Employment Partnership.

A member noted that the aim to increase residents contacting the Council electronically through the Digital Strategy, whilst at the same time it was reducing the number of staff in ICT. The Leader said that whilst there were staffing reductions in ICT as old systems were being replaced by new IT infrastructure, the budget also contained also significant new investment in new IT systems and skills.

The Committee expressed some frustration with the difficulty in effectively

scrutinising the Business Plan. The Committee acknowledged that the Business Plan effectively fulfils a certain purpose for the Council and is a challenging document to write, but members felt it was difficult for the Committee to carry out a useful role in the process, given the format in which it was presented. In particular, the Committee noted that the Business Plan lacked useful targets which were measurable and achievable, most notably under the workforce plan. The Business Planning and Performance Manager took the point of the lack of targets under the workforce plan. He said the difficulty in looking at the Corporate Core Business Plan separately was that its fundamental role was to support the rest of the Council.

The Committee's main concern was the impact that the Business Plan would have on residents, which members felt should underpin all the work in the Council. Members recognised that the Business Plan was a document used to run the directorate, but felt that it should still provide this focus. The Committee was reassured that a great deal of work was going into understanding the outcomes for residents on the ward level as well as the strategic regeneration framework, citywide and sub region levels. The Committee supported the improvements that had been made in monitoring the impact, through tools such as the Real Time Economy Dashboard and the Intelligence Hub, and the use of this information in informing how services are delivered on a ward level.

However, some members had found that this information was not always fed down to ward level. A member gave the example that she had suggested to the ward coordinator that the ward plan include targets for the number of apprenticeships. But the ward coordinator said she did not have the resources to do this. The Deputy Chief Executive (Performance) said this should not be the case and would look in to this particular case. The Deputy Leader confirmed to the Committee that this information should be available for people working on a ward level, including ward coordinators.

The Committee accepted the Corporate Core Business Plan.

Decision

1. To request that Committee members can receive the papers for the Employment and Skills Partnership before its meetings.
2. To support the Corporate Core Business Plan.