

**POLICY AND CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**Monday 17th July 2023**

**PRESENT** – Councillor Tony Humphrys (in the Chair) Councillors Connor, Liddle, Fielding, Taylor, Hussain S, Slater N and Floyd.

**ALSO PRESENT** – Executive Member for Digital & Customer Services – Mahfooz Hussain, Executive Member for Finance & Governance – Vicky McGurk. Officers – Simon Ross, Tony Watson, Jill Redfern, Shelagh Lyth and Phil Llewellyn.

**RESOLUTIONS**

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillor Tasleem Fazal.

**2. Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were submitted for approval.

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

**3. Declarations of interest**

No Declarations of interest were submitted.

**4. Update on RIPA Activity, Procedural Guide and RIPA Inspection**

Members received an update on recommendations made by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (ICPO) at the last inspection on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022.

The Inspector who inspected the Council's processes in November 2022 was pleased with the Council's progress and noted that the recommendations made in 2019 had been adopted mainly around training and updating the Council's RIPA Procedure and Guidance.

He did however recommend some amendments to the new 2022 Procedure and Guidance which was adopted by the Council formally in July 2022. The amendments he recommended related to data security and documents retention. He also recommended additional oversight and risk assessment by the Council's RIPA Co-ordinator of departments that undertook social media research or monitoring for the purposes of intelligence gathering and low level investigations. He recommended this in order to prevent unintentional straying

into covert surveillance of individuals and to ensure that in border-line cases a manager's oversight was required.

Monitoring of RIPA activity – departments have reported to 6 monthly meetings with the RIPA officers' Group with representatives from all departments and no covert surveillance has been undertaken and there have been no uses of covert human intelligence sources since the last IPCO inspection requiring RIPA authorisation. Reports were also made of social media activity 6 monthly but in future such reports would be made to the RIPA Co-ordinator quarterly.

The training of officers was ongoing, including the desk-top exercises recommended by the IPCO.

Following a query from Councillor Neil Slater, Shelia Lyth advised that the regime for RIPA and Political Groups guidance on Social Media were unrelated.

## **RESOLVED -**

That the report be noted and submitted to the Executive Board to adopt the amendments required of the new RIPA procedure and guidance as required by the IPCO for approval.

## **5. Work Programme 2023/24**

The Committee received a presentation from Cllr Mahfooz Hussain on the main priorities and portfolio objectives for Digital & Customer Services, which were highlighted as:

- IT Infrastructure & Security –Embedding efficient, modern standards and practices using modern technology to transform delivery and increase productivity. Replacement of infrastructure and improving the network is key to ensure system is up to date and our security systems are secure and robust in terms of any cyber security risks.
- Digital By Choice (Taking account of digital inclusion & exclusion) - Delivery of the Improvement & Efficiency (Transformation) Programme, how we approach designing digital – our support to major projects, service design programmes and organisational design work / reviews.
- Customer Service and Corporate Complaints – developing customer experience strategy, looking at standards, feedback and how data can inform. Joined up approach with complaints team.

Members of the Committee made a number of comments relating to the presentation, in particular the importance of ensuring that IT was secure from cyber attacks, which involved staff having up to date laptops and technology, recruitment and retention of staff, which involved ensuring flexible working arrangements being available, and also digital exclusion was a big concern, particularly ensuring residents issues were not getting lost in the system.

Cllr Vicky McGurk then presented on the main priorities and portfolio objectives for Finance & Governance, which were highlighted under three main areas as:

- Budget Challenge/Medium Term Financial Plan
- Retention, Recruitment and Reward
- Enabling departments/portfolios to meet their targets and business and service demands

Members discussed the presentation, with Councillor Neil Slater requesting information on the sale of Council Assets, which Simon Ross agreed to provide and would write to the Chair.

As with Digital & Customer Services, Members were concerned about recruitment and retention of staff, and Jill Redfern gave details of work by HR to look at the reasons why staff left, and what they needed, which wasn't always about money, but often was about improved flexibility around hours and home working. Members also felt that early retirement and Covid had significant impacts, and that post Covid recovery was still underway.

Members also discussed the need for regular Job Evaluation and the importance of retaining apprentices when their apprenticeships came to an end, to ensure continuity and retention of local people.

Members also discussed sickness levels, with Jill Redfern advising of ongoing activity including surveys and dashboards and new technology such as Power Bi.

The Committee discussed its Work Programme for 2023/24, and agreed that one key issue would be focussed on each meeting as follows:

- 11<sup>th</sup> September - **Sickness Absence** – approach being taken within the Council to manage sickness absence, a review of sickness absence statistics, including financial cost for the last 5 years and best practice being applied in this Council and other Council providers.
- 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 -**Update on Finance** – budgetary spend versus budget allocation across portfolios for 2023/4, including emerging pressures; issues relating to income collection as a result of residents and businesses facing increased cost of living issues, and also the cost of officers time in trying to collect money that the Government expected Councils to collect to support its budget.
- 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 -**Digital Management** – How best to help residents who are digitally excluded receive Council information. Also, a review of the introduction of new IT systems within the Council over the last 3 years and what lessons have been learnt for future procurement.

**RESOLVED** – That Work Programme for 2023/24 be agreed.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
at which the minutes were confirmed