

RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL**10 February 2011****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Henry (Chairman) (P)

Achwal (P)
Huxstep (P)
Higgins (P)
McLean (P)Mitchell (P)
Power (P)
Verney
Wright (P)**Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:**

Councillor Learney (Leader with responsibility for Transformation and Resources)

1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor Learney declared a personal and prejudicial interest, due to her involvement as a Cabinet Member in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

However, the Panel requested that Councillor Learney remain in the meeting, in her capacities as Leader with responsibility for Transformation and Resources, under the provisions of Section 21(13) (a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that she could provide additional information to the Panel and/or answer questions.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 22 November 2010 be approved and adopted.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No statements were made or questions asked.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked Mr Wood, Customer Services Manager, for an informative tour of the Customer Service Team area prior to the meeting.

4. **EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE COUNCIL OUTCOME – QUARTER 3
2010/11 PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE (EXCEPTIONS ONLY)**
(Report RE98 refers)

In reply to questions, Councillor Learney stated that under the heading of Customer Services (Appendix 1 of the Report), little progress had been made with the development and implementation of a change of details (Life Events) process and investigating its link with the national 'Tell us Once' project. However, there had recently been increased interest from the County Council for its introduction. It was agreed therefore to leave a six month period to establish whether progress could be made, otherwise the project should be ended.

Under Appendix 1 – Estates, an update was given on Avalon House. A client was interested in taking a long lease on the building but was requesting significant works to their own specification and favourable lease terms, which were being given consideration. In addition, the Silver Hill development would be progressed now that a new development partner had been identified to progress the scheme.

The Head of Legal Services informed the Panel that the River Park Leisure Centre contract with DC Leisure would be signed shortly after final checking.

In respect of the identified Audit control weakness of fraudulent payments being made (Appendix 2 of the Report), the Panel was assured by Councillor Learney that the risks had arisen from officers not following procedures, rather than through fraudulent action and that the new Financials system had introduced improved controls of financial procedures. Additional information on the identified risks had been provided to the Principal Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Learney stated that she would establish with the Head of Estates the latest position in respect of the bar coding of electrical equipment safety tests.

The Head of IMT stated that investigation was continuing in order to supply the correct computer hardware to support the required upgrades to the Selima payroll system. The Head of IMT added that there was good synergy in joint working with Test Valley Borough Council and that opportunities existed to make significant service improvements.

The Panel debated the Customer Service Report Card as set out in Appendix 3 of the Report. Particular consideration was given to the Grade of Service where the target was for 80% of calls to be answered within 20 seconds. The Customer Services Manager reported that, following a reduction in staff and periods of staff absence, this standard had not been achieved. However, as evidenced through customer satisfaction surveys, a positive feedback from customers on the quality of service had been received, with 92% being highly satisfied with the speed of call answering. In answer to questions, the Customer Services Manager explained that calls relating to planning and housing repairs took the longest time to answer due to their complexity and the need to undertake research. The Panel noted the situation and commented

that consideration should also be given to the occupancy of staff when their time was not being used to answer calls.

In respect of the Void properties detailed in Appendix 5, Councillor Learney stated that she would follow up with the Head of Landlord Services the reasons for the delays in the conversion of Compton Stores to two new units of accommodation and why they were in the Housing Revenue Account. She also confirmed that the budget was sufficient to make Abbey Mill structurally secure. The preparation of an Asset Management Plan would commence in April 2011.

Councillor Learney stated that following works to improve the Guildhall, consideration was being given to the refurbishment of the Guildhall toilets and the redecoration of the Walton Suite. It was also agreed that the Profit and Loss Accounts for the refurbished café be provided to the Panel at its next meeting.

In respect of the Benefits Service Report Card in Appendix 6, Councillor Learney stated that she would contact the Head of Benefits to establish whether the benefits caseload was being dealt with effectively, as the weighted case load per Full Time Equivalent was below both the comparator and all authorities' average.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the comments set out in the preamble to the minute, the Exceptions Monitoring Report and report cards, together with the progress being made against the high risk agreed audit actions, be noted.

5. FINAL REPORT OF PERSONNEL COMMITTEE'S TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT INFORMAL MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP

(Report PER181 refers)

Councillor Learney explained that at a national level the terms and conditions of the local authority pension scheme were being considered for revision. At a local level, certain terms and conditions were worthy of further investigation to see if improvements could be made, including those relating to how staff sickness was dealt with. However, when considering changes to terms and conditions, the City Council would wish to retain its reputation as a good employer.

By way of personal example, the Customer Services Manager explained the measures taken within his Section to deal with staff sickness levels. These included a monthly statement on sickness levels to be shared with staff, the redeployment of staff to more appropriate duties (such as handling emails rather than voice work for those with sore throats), and the opportunity to work from home. The reported incidence of average sick leave also appeared to be disproportionately greater when in a small Section such as his, a number of staff were on long term sick leave. All appropriate health and safety advice

had been taken into consideration when the Customer Service Section was designed.

Following debate, the Panel noted that the issues arising in the Report would be taken forward by the Principal Scrutiny Committee. It was also agreed to recommend to Personnel Committee that consideration be given to providing the opportunity for all staff to receive seasonal influenza vaccinations.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted and that Personnel Committee be requested to give consideration to providing the opportunity for all staff to have seasonal influenza vaccinations.

6. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT PS435 REFERS) AND MATTERS ARISING.

The Panel noted that the Asset Management Plan would be dealt with under the new scrutiny arrangements in the next Municipal Year.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS 435, be noted.

7. EXEMPT BUSINESS

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Expiry of the Council's long leases.) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)

8. **EXPIRY OF THE COUNCIL'S LONG LEASES**
(Report RE99 refers)

The Panel gave consideration to the Report on the Council's long leases. Councillor Learney provided details on the lease which related to 68 St Georges Street, which was presently occupied by a number of voluntary organisations. The support of these organisations had been separately considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 February 2011 (Report CAB2126 - Voluntary Sector Accommodation refers).

RESOLVED:

That, subject to compliance with the Council's Scheme of Delegated powers, the Head of Estates continue to monitor the Council's long leases and take any required action as and when such lease reach their termination dates.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.10pm

Chairman