MINUTES OF PROCUREMENT TASK GROUP

19 OCTOBER 2011

PRESENT:

Members of the Group: Councillors Mrs Kaur (Chairman), Mrs Bragg, Cranham, Roodhouse and Srivastava

Officers: Paul Ansell, Scrutiny Officer; Linn Enticott, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2011 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

25. APOLOGIES

There were none.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

27. DRAFT REVIEW REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

The task group considered the draft review report and agreed the following changes:

Recommendations

The third recommendation in relation to the use of Covalent should be more inclusive and be expanded to read “Covalent to be used by all departments as the Council’s contracts database.”

4.4.3 Other benefits of using Covalent

The first paragraph to be moved to the end of 4.4.1. subject to care being taken to balance transparency with the need to observe commercial confidentiality.

The final paragraph be moved to form the new first paragraph and the eleventh paragraph be moved to form the new second paragraph.

4.4.4 End user views on the use of Covalent as a contracts database

Members requested that the third paragraph be expanded to include some verbal evidence.

It was difficult to measure exactly how many existing contracts there were in total and members agreed the final paragraph should be amended to read: “Finding all of the existing contracts would also present a challenge. Currently, 80% of contracts in terms of value have been detected. However, this is believed to equate to a minority in terms of quantity of contracts.”
4.5 Collaboration

The member authorities of the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Procurement Group (WWPG) should be listed in full.

Conclusions

The final word of the first paragraph on page 16 should be changed to “control”.

The task group reviewed the Contracts Standing Orders at appendix 1 to the report.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the group that the current version of the Contracts Standing Orders did not contain a decision previously agreed by the task group whereby standing orders could be waived providing, among other things, an options appraisal had been carried out. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to incorporate this during the current review of the constitution prior to its submission to Council in April 2012.

The task group reviewed the Procurement Strategy 2012-2016 and revised action plan and raised the following points:

At its last meeting the task group identified that the action plan did not link into the strategy and that it needed to be more detailed. The action plan had since been re-drafted to include lower level actions to help establish clear linkages between action and expected outcome as detailed in the strategy.

Members commented that the action plan needed to have more specific timescales. Some of the planned dates of 2012 or 2013 would not allow ongoing supervision of the actions and checkpoints should be put in place on a quarterly or half yearly basis. Members also commented that start dates should be included.

At its last meeting the task group had agreed to suspend its work until a new Procurement Officer had been appointed and work could commence on the toolkit. The group acknowledged that the Procurement Officer had worked to a tight timescale to complete the work on the re-drafted documents and had since left the Council. The group agreed that the timescales for the action plan should be reviewed again when the new Procurement Officer had had time to settle into the post.

Members commented that the procurement toolkit should include a flow chart which would be useful for users and should include the different processes for different contract values. It was agreed that a sub-section be included in the review report in relation to this.

It was noted that the existing procurement toolkit was lengthy and out of date and could be slimmed down to reflect the changes to the way of working, in particular that full use of procurement and legal guidance and expertise was now commonplace.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the group that the Resources and Corporate Governance Portfolio Holder had been consulted but no comments had been received. The Scrutiny Officer will liaise with the Chairman regarding the Foreword and, subject to the changes minuted above, the revised draft review report will be considered by Corporate Performance Committee on 10 November.
The group also agreed to recommend to Corporate Performance Committee that the task group re-convene at a later date to review the procurement toolkit and revised action plans.

The task group placed on record their thanks to the procurement officers for their hard work during the course of the review.

CHAIRMAN