MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

28 JUNE 2012

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Mistry (Chairman), Coles, Dodd, Ms Edwards (substitute for Councillor Mrs O’Rourke), Mrs Kaur, Pacey-Day and Stokes

Other Members:

Councillor Mrs Timms (Economy Development and Culture Portfolio Holder)

Officers:

Andrew Gabbitas (Executive Director); Adam Norburn (Head of Resources); Doug Jones (Head of Business Transformation); Paul Ansell, (Scrutiny Officer); Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer)

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 April and 17 May 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors G Francis, Lowe and Mrs O’Rourke.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

7. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 4) concerning the complaints procedure and statistics.

Members agreed that the formal complaints procedure was appropriate to the task. In discussing how councillors should deal with complaints, the following points were raised:

Easy to resolve issues such as service requests need not be referred through the formal complaints procedure.

Residents may not be aware there is a formal process, or may contact their ward councillor as a last resort.
A formal system would allow members to see the issue followed though but it would be a matter of personal judgement as to when an issue that could not be resolved became a formal complaint, and such issues should be brought to the appropriate officer’s attention in a timely fashion.

Members noted that by following the systems thinking approach the number of complaints received regarding planning issues had reduced because the process is now built around the customer’s needs.

**RESOLVED THAT** – the report be noted.

### 8. PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Committee considered a report (Part 1 - agenda item 5) concerning the Business strategic area and the Economy, Development and Culture portfolio.

Councillor Heather Timms gave the Committee an overview of the progress under the Economy, Development and Culture portfolio. A handout covering the main points was circulated to members of the Committee and is attached at Annex 1 to the minutes.

The following additional points were made:

- As part of the increase in apprenticeships in the borough up to six apprenticeships at the Council were approved by Cabinet. The placements will be made in varying departments including the WSU. An awards presentation for Apprentice of the Year was held at Warwickshire College (Rugby site) which will help raise the profile of the scheme.

- Apprenticeships will be of great value to the economic progress of the town and several local businesses are expressing an interest in the scheme.

- Sponsorship for an apprentice at the Manufacturing Technology Centre, Ansty was now in place.

- Rugby is performing well in terms of employment statistics and compares favourably to national levels.

- Work is ongoing to drive growth in the town, particularly around independent shops. A new website has been set up promoting businesses and shops in the Rugby BID area.

- The free parking pilot scheme is being extended to September. This will also support the Rugby Festival of Culture which begins on 2 July.

During discussion the following points and questions were raised:

- Members requested further statistics on unemployment, particularly in relation to the proportion of under 25s. Councillor Heather Timms agreed to provide this information to members and informed the Committee that the County has performed well on NEETS (not in education or employment) and the figure for Rugby was lower than last year.

- The new Play Development Officer was now in post.
• Members commented that it was important to address the underlying issues surrounding unemployment and suggested a long term strategy was needed. The Committee were informed it is anticipated apprenticeships will work well and are supported by local businesses. Around 30-40 businesses have expressed an interest. Youth unemployment is a national problem but it was important to set an example as a local sector employer and make improvements that can be built into a continuous programme. Young people make a significant contribution to the workplace and will bring a diverse range of experience, skills and thinking to local authorities. Apprenticeships also send a message to young people that there are other options and routes into employment than further education.

• The NHS and other public bodies are also looking at investing in recruiting trainees with a view to retaining these in full employment.

The Committee reviewed the headline progress of priorities in the Business strategic area. During discussion the following points were made:

Members requested additional information on several points and a response to these was prepared by the Head of Business Transformation and circulated separately to Members of the Committee.

Members noted there were no overdue actions.

*Support training in new technologies and promote apprenticeship opportunities*

The status was shown at 0%. Members noted that work had been carried out on this action and this figure was already out of date.

*Actively encourage parish councils and community bodies in neighbourhood development planning*

The status was shown at 55%. Members questioned this figure and were advised that the Council was waiting for responses from Parish Councils.

This action relates to parishes being invited to take the initiative to develop neighbourhood plans, with guidance or assistance, and refers to those that have responded. It was recognised that parishes vary in size and shape and their requirements and responses will differ.

Parish plans can be turned into neighbourhood plans which will carry more weight with planning issues and can help shape and influence development and land use in local communities.

The Committee were informed that the figures shown on page 2 of appendix 1 were cumulative figures and there were a number of supporting actions sitting below these which influence the overall result.

*Establish an environment that will attract new businesses into the borough and enable existing businesses to flourish.*

The status for this action was shown at 26%. Members requested information on how this figure had been arrived at and what work was taking place to meet this action.
The Corporate Strategy 2012/16

Members questioned how this could be scrutinised as a whole. Members were invited to view Covalent between meetings and raise issues with officers or through future committee meetings. There was scope in the work programme for an annual review of the Corporate Strategy and it was agreed this should be added to the work programme for April 2013.

The strategy was at an early stage and it will be possible to test this more effectively as it progresses.

Economy, Development and Culture headlines and risks

Members were informed that the data shown in the reports was correct at the time of going to print. If Members had any queries in relation to Covalent officers would be happy to assist.

There were five performance indicators at red. Indicators at red are automatically reported to Cabinet. Members were informed that there are two levels of risk. At an operational level there can be many hundreds of risks managed at officer level. The higher level strategic risks are the serious issues that would have repercussions for the Borough.

Members discussed the level of detail appropriate to the report. In particular, the usefulness of LI 020 on permission to work on protected trees was questioned, as was LI 050, increase attendance at supervised Wild Play Programme by 15%, which was now out of date and should be removed from Covalent. The Head of Business Transformation undertook to report on these.

Risk PR3.1 Continued existence of wards suffering multiple deprivation

Statistics from the outcomes of the national Census and figures from the Warwickshire Observatory are due shortly meaning some areas will be reassessed. This local deprivation is a mix of issues but the shift and the change will be monitored. This data will also be used by the Local Strategic Partnership.

There was a need to be aware of the changing picture in relation to the Council’s grant giving functions.

Census data and demographic change would have an affect on grants from central Government. Poor census returns could have further impact on grants and housing. Ward boundaries are now looked at as super output areas.

Risk PR3.2 Risk of over-reliance on narrow range of economic activity

A question was raised as to why this was shown as amber in Appendix 2 but red in Appendix 3. The Head of Business Transformation undertook to investigate this.

PR3.3 Impact of recession

Members questioned why this does not reflect the national situation. In explanation, the committee was informed that the fact that the dot was far into the red area indicated that the risk was high. There were mitigating actions that the council could take but, despite the fact that these had been carried out, overall risk would not shift in the current climate because the main factors were outside the council’s control.
RESOLVED THAT –

(1) Councillor Mrs Timms be thanked for her informative presentation;

(2) an annual review of the Corporate Strategy be added to the work programme for April 2013; and

(3) Performance indicator LI 050, increased attendance at supervised Wild Play Programme by 15%, should be removed from future monitoring reports.

9. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2011/12 QUARTER 4

The Committee considered a report (Part 1 - agenda item 6) concerning an overview of the Council’s spending and performance position concentrating on indicators that have underperformed as at the end of 2011/12.

Members commented on the number of reasons for underperformance that were due to resource issues and also the impact on frontline services due to budget cuts. Questions were raised as to how these areas were being addressed.

One particular example was in relation to indicator LI 201 – property maintenance. Members were informed that two fixed term appointments for Housing Maintenance Officers had recently been made. In addition to this an end-to-end review was commencing in July and this would further address the issue of void properties arising from repair work or other reasons. The Customer and Partnerships Committee is also due to look at the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Review at its meeting in September.

It is difficult to maintain performance with reduced resources when demand increases. As a result of the Planning Services end-to-end review and the revised measures now in place additional planning officers were recruited to meet increased demand. This was done because there was confidence that the anticipated additional demand would increase planning fee income to cover the additional resource costs whilst not negatively impacting the bottom line figure.

There has been a significant increase in demand for change of circumstance benefit claims. Whilst this was not forecast deadlines must still be met and a number of steps have been taken to maintain or improve performance with reduced staff levels.

Sickness absence data appears high due to the amount of long term sickness. When fully staffed the Council can maintain capacity levels and cover sickness and staff turnover, but whilst running at maximum capacity there is little slack available and absence must be effectively managed.

Members commented that less personally sensitive detail should be contained in reports about long term sickness. Members noted that absence figures need to be reported but requested that confidentiality be maintained. The Committee were informed that the additional level of information covering the nature of the sickness absence is offered to assist in understanding the statistics though officers agreed to review the way data was presented in future.

Members reviewed the financial performance data and asked about the variance of £252,000 for Planning Services. The overspend resulted mainly from a shortfall in planning fees that were forecast, but did not come in until the end of the financial year, and were transferred into the current year.
The fees for large scale developments, which come in at an early stage when the planning application is made, are significant amounts. This transferred figure has meant that this year has got off to a particularly good financial start.

**RESOLVED THAT** –

(1) officers review the way personal sickness data is presented in future; and

(2) the report be noted.

10. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLANS**

The Committee considered a report (Part 1 - agenda item 7) concerning scrutiny review action plans that fall under its remit.

**RESOLVED THAT** –

(1) the Committee noted the scrutiny review action plans; and

(2) the completed action plans be removed to leave the outstanding items only.

11. **REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE WELLBEING – INTERIM REVIEW REPORT**

The Committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 8) concerning an interim report for the Review of Employee Wellbeing.

The task group decided in March 2012 that there was no further work required at that time and prepared an interim review report detailing the initial findings and conclusions of the review.

One of the key evidence sources was the results of the employee attitude survey which is currently being undertaken. The task group had set an increased return rate of 55% for this. Managers were still working hard to achieve this.

The task group concluded that a follow-up exercise be conducted in autumn 2012 to review the outcomes of the staff survey, scrutinise the resulting action plan, assess the impact of the measurers being introduced and concerns around absence management, and to monitor progress against the measurable outcomes detailed in the review report. The Committee agreed that the task group should be reconvened to complete its work.

Members asked how long it took to complete the survey and were informed that it would take employees around 15 minutes. The Committee agreed that managers should ensure employees were given time during their working day to complete the survey and arrange cover if necessary.

The current return rate was around 45-50%.

A suggestion was made that trade unions be asked to encourage employees to complete the survey.

Members drew attention to the fact that Warwickshire County Council had not been consulted, particularly as they now hold the public health contract, and requested this be passed on to the task group.
RESOLVED THAT –

(1) the interim review report be considered by Cabinet on 20 August 2012; and

(2) the Employee Wellbeing Task Group be reconvened in autumn 2012 to complete its work.

12. REVIEW OF LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT AND BENEFITS REFORM

The Committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 9) concerning the one page strategy for the review.

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee it had become clear from early briefings that it would not be possible for the task group to drive the whole of this scheme. Officers have had to commence work on the first phase so the draft scheme can be considered by Cabinet on 20 August. As part of this preparatory work political groups have been consulted for their views.

The second phase will be consultation with the public and stakeholders and it was suggested the task group should focus on this process. Other areas that could be covered include ensuring consultation responses are properly considered and also equality and diversity aspects.

It has been difficult to find dates for meetings, which may be due to member commitment and the impact the reduction in the number of councillors has had. There are two other reviews commencing work in the near future, and so far, not many members have come forward for these. This review has nine interested members and it was suggested some may wish to switch to one of the other review groups.

It was agreed that the inaugural meeting of the task group should be held in approximately four weeks time, when the Benefits Manager will have returned from annual leave, but prior to Cabinet on 20 August.

RESOLVED THAT –

(1) the draft one page strategy be re-drafted in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, as minuted above, and circulated to members;

(2) a date be set for the inaugural meeting of the task group to be held prior to 20 August 2012; and

(3) in the event of it not being possible to find a date that is suitable for all members, the meeting go ahead anyway and substitutes be allowed.

13. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 10) concerning the progress of task group reviews within its remit and the forward work programme.

The Committee noted the progress of task group reviews under its remit.

The Committee agreed the advance work programme for 2012/13. It was noted that Audit Committee will have completed its work reviewing the IT audits in time for the light touch review scheduled for the committee meeting on 13 September.
It was agreed that additional members should not be recruited to the Procurement Task Group or the Leisure Centre Task Group and these should continue their work with the remaining memberships.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

CHAIRMAN
Corporate Strategy

- New corporate strategy – early in both this year and plan period to 2016
- Increased apprenticeships both within the council and in Rugby
  + raising the profile of apprenticeships through award schemes
- Recognised as front runners with our Core Strategy for development and increasing how we process planning applications
- Front runner in Neighbourhood Plans at Coton Park
- CIL – publication of first stage in August 2012

Impact of Recession in Rugby

- Employment at May 2012
  2.6% JSA Claimants
  West Midlands 4.8%
  National Average of 3.9%
- Job Centre plus vacancies
  Rugby 131 per 10,000 population
  Nationally 78 per 10,000 population
- Town Centre retail vacancies at mid May 2012
  6.45% advertised
  1.61% non advertised
  National Average of 14.6%
Town Centre Actions

- Second Mary Portas bid being prepared for match funding to support new start ups particularly in the independent sector
- Working with Rugby Bid, with landlords, to promote innovative practice ie new start ups and "win a shop" competitions, web sites etc
- Moving in grants to maximise retail offer in town centre
- Second Rugby Festival of Culture to begin on 2 July, bringing events within the town together

Play

- Union Street completed
- Started consultation to update Freemantle Street
- Pavilions residents association successful in securing funding for a new play area to be built next month
- Wild play – was funded until March 2011 but has ceased. New play ranger service from 1 July in Caldecott Park and at GEC every Sunday until October, including elements of wild play such as den building etc