

SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 10th November 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Kirsty Darwent (Chair), Andy Campbell, Peter Convery, Allan Dorans, Hugh Hunter, Mary Kilpatrick, Nan McFarlane and Brian McGinley.

Also present: Councillors Bill Grant, Bill McIntosh and Margaret Toner, Portfolio Holders.

Attending: V. Andrews, Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation; L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; D. Hutchison, Director of Educational Services; M. Baker, Head of Policy and Performance; C. Monaghan, Head of Communities; K. O'Hagan, Head of Employee and Customer Services; J. Bradley, OD and Customer Services Manager; E. Brown, Quality Improvement Manager; G. Quirk, Integrated Children's Services Officer; and A. Gibson, Committee Services Officer.

1. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. Minutes of previous meetings.

The minutes of [1st September](#) and [29th September 2015](#) (issued) were submitted and approved. The Panel intimated that they were pleased with the quality and detail of the Minutes that were being provided for this Panel.

3. Action Log and Work Programme.

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme for this Panel ([issued](#)).

Decided: with regard to:-

- (1) the Action Log, to note various updates; and
- (2) the Work Programme, to note the current position.

4. Service and Improvement Plans – Six Month Performance Update to 30th September 2015.

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 3rd November 2015 by the Head of Policy and Performance updating Members on the performance of services over the six month period to 30th September 2015 against the 2015-18 Service and Improvement Plans (SIPs).

Comments and observations from members of the Panel and responses from officers are set out below:-

Policy and Performance:-

Overview - An update was requested on the South Ayrshire 1000 since the 2014 Quality of Life Survey. The Head of Policy and Performance advised that a refresh was taking place of its membership. It was queried whether they had been utilised in the Balancing the Budget consultation exercise. It was explained that the exercise had received 256 responses, which had included an invitation to South Ayrshire 1000 participants. It was queried whether they could have been more specifically targeted. The Head of Policy and Performance agreed to confirm the extent of their involvement.

It was questioned what measures were being taken to improve levels of engagement. The Head of Policy and Performance referred to the recent Communications Strategy approved by the Leadership Panel that sought to achieve this, particularly through the increased use of social media.

Further information was requested over the approach and work of the new Business Improvement Team. The Head of Policy and Performance confirmed that updates had been provided through two Member Information Bulletins. He outlined that following training, an initial three projects had been progressed, which had now been added to by a further nine projects following approval by CMT. The basis for how projects are identified was discussed and it was agreed that a future source could be from the Scrutiny Panel process. The extent of discussion with front line staff over the projects was queried, and it was explained that the Team work closely with them, to help identify how improvements can be made.

Educational Services:-

Overview - The Director of Educational Services gave an overview with regard to progress against the Educational Services SIP, outlining that:

- (1) attainment by pupils had been very strong with very good Higher results;
- (2) work led by head teachers had been undertaken through the each of the school clusters to identify in more detail what learners should be achieving at the end of each year of the broad general education. The intention is to improve pace and challenge, and to help clarify who needs additional support;
- (3) one of the biggest challenges was recruitment of teaching staff to fill temporary vacancies;
- (4) closing the attainment gap remains a major focus, with bids having been made to Scottish Government in relation to three schools, with particular attention to raising the attainment of pupils within the areas of greatest deprivation.

The problems around adequate staffing were queried, in terms of whether the Council contributed to discussions over the numbers of people trained as teachers locally and whether the availability of supply teachers was now harder to due to a changes in their terms and conditions. The Director of Educational Services advised the changes to terms had impacted at the time. He explained that numbers of teachers being trained was determined by Scottish Government. Areas where recruitment has proved to be difficult, specifically within secondary schools in the fields of science and mathematics, are currently being targeted in a recruitment drive by the Scottish Government. Alongside this the Council has been in discussion with the University of the West of Scotland over a 'Grow Your Own' approach to recruitment, which could help improve recruitment of teachers in South Ayrshire.

In relation to closing the attainment gap, it was queried whether there was a specific action plan for looked after children. It was reported that the required drive for improvement will be delivered through the Integrated Children's Services Planning Group. Attainment data is being tracked throughout their whole time at school and there is now a greater focus on collaborative working to ensure looked after children get the support they need.

The level of the current staffing problems with 36 unfilled temporary vacancies was further queried, particularly as to why there were so many teachers absent. The Director of Educational Services set this figure into context by explaining that 1200 teachers were employed, and that supply teachers were required not only to cover staff on maternity leave and sick leave but were also required for staff who were acting-up to more senior posts and to cover for vacancies.

Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment:-

Overview - The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment gave a brief update on the areas of work she was responsible for as follows:-

- (1) Communities – outlining the work of the Signposting Project, to support those impacted by Welfare Reform;
- (2) Enterprise, Development and Leisure – confirming that work of the Business Gateway was now being undertaken in house from 1 October 2015 and that whilst business start-ups rates are good, there is an intention to focus on companies who have the potential for growth;
- (3) Housing and Facilities – explaining that there was now no bed and breakfast usage for homeless people in South Ayrshire; and that voids and property repair times had significantly improved, with the Property Maintenance service being put forward into the UK final of the Association of Public Service Excellence for the most improved service.
- (4) Neighbourhood Services – outlined that there had been a sharp increase in building regulation applications and that progress was being made on the development of "E-Building Standards".

Communities:

In relation to the Ayrshire Leader rural development programme, assurances were requested over the share of the funding that South Ayrshire would receive, based on the levels of deprivation identified in the Hutton Report. The Head of Communities advised that there whilst the Council administers the scheme, the Local Action Group are responsible for the allocation of funding. This would be done by reference to the strategic framework, with applications being targeted to addressing its themes. It was noted the new Leader programme was not up and running yet, due to waiting for a Government on line application process being completed. Concern was expressed regarding organisations who were well versed in applying for grants, whilst others were not aware of the process. The Head of Communities advised that the current Review of Grants that was being undertaken should help to address this concern.

The current position of the investigation of the potential for a Leisure Trust was queried. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that work was continuing to achieve the £330,000 saving agreed by the Council through the implementation of a Leisure Trust and that an update would be provided to Members within the next few months that would outline the approach rather than giving proposals for individual facilities.

Enterprise, Development and Leisure:

The provision of free wi-fi in libraries was welcomed and it was queried whether this would also be provided in other areas such as community centres, schools and sports centres. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that this matter was currently being considered as part of a wider Scottish Government initiative and the Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation agreed to provide an update through the Action Log.

It was queried why the Council was providing a Business Support Programme when this did not fall directly under the remit of the Council. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that this was a Council priority in terms of the current Council Plan and Ambition funding and there were clear rules over the size of companies this Council supported and those that Scottish Enterprise supported. Councillor Grant, Portfolio Holder briefed the Panel on the Ambition Programme which had awarded 158 grants which had both created and safeguarded jobs within South Ayrshire

Housing and Facilities:

After congratulating the service for no longer using bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people, a briefing note was requested on the current levels of homeless presentations within South Ayrshire.

Neighbourhood Services:

Following on from the reporting that seaside awards had been gained for the beaches at Ayr and Maidens, it was queried whether there were plans to improve the beaches elsewhere in South Ayrshire. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that an update would be provided to Members via a briefing note.

Resources, Governance and Organisation :-

Overview - The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation advised of major areas of focus within the Directorate, namely the ICT Review, office accommodation and Records Management. She also advised that the ongoing service reviews within her Directorate had been challenging, involving a wide range of staff both directly, and staff teams were also heavily involved in supporting roles for reviews across the Council.

Reflecting that a number of due dates within the SIPs had been exceeded, it was queried whether they had been 'unrealistic'. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation advised that the SIPs were still under development in many areas and it was not always clear in the way that some actions were expressed as to when they could be judged as being completed. This aspect will be looked at again in the next refresh of the SIPs.

Employee and Customer Services:

Concern was expressed that timescales for the Youth Employment Initiative and European Social Fund had not been finalised. The Head of Employee and Customer Services advised that delays had arisen due to the Scottish Government not finalising the terms of the funding for many months. There was a commitment now from Government to have the funding in place for the Youth Employment Initiative by December, using a simplified model, and that the Council was just awaiting final confirmation over the ESF scheme.

Further detail was requested over what the Graduate Internship Programme had achieved. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation reported that the programme had been very successful, each graduate undertaking a project based on bids from directorates. These covered a wide range of topics, delivered savings and had generated very good feedback from all involved. It was agreed that a briefing note be sent to Members on the Programme.

Finance and ICT:

No issues raised.

Legal and Democratic Services:

An update was requested regarding the Scottish Local Family History Centre at Ayr Town Hall. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation reported that the key issue had been staff pressures, but that following completion of the current recruitment process, it should be possible to have the Centre up and running by the early part of 2016. It was agreed that a briefing note on progress be provided to Members before the summer recess.

The likely completion date for the service review of Democratic Support Services was queried. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation reported that it would not be finalised before the end of this year, as there had been some difficult issues to address.

Property and Risk:

In relation to the review of leased premises, it was queried whether leases were currently being effectively managed. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation outlined recent developments and gave an assurance that the service was now on top of this matter.

Decided: to agree that there were no concerns that the Panel wished to draw to the attention of the Leadership Panel.

5. Service Review of Additional Support Needs.

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 29th October 2015 seeking approval of the findings and recommendations of the Review of Additional Support Needs Services, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Quality Improvement Manager gave an introduction to the Review which was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service. There followed a number of issues raised by Members, including the deletion of posts, the crisis surrounding those leaving schools who were illiterate and have no numeracy skills, the named person to support those who require support, speech and language therapy, homelink workers, training of staff and consultation on the proposals.

Decided: to advise the Leadership Panel that this Panel supports the outcomes from the Review of Additional Support Needs, and, while potential savings of 5%, 10% and 25% have been identified, agrees that no further savings are made in the service at the present time, as recommended in the report at Appendix 1, page 14, paragraph 9.2.3.

6. Service Review – Out of School Care.

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 2nd November 2015 by the Director of Educational Services in relation to the finding and recommendations of the Service Review of Out of School Care, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Integrated Children's Services Officer gave an introduction to the Review. There followed a number of issues raised by Members, including the broader issue of child care requiring to be addressed, holiday provision, wrap-around care, consultation and advertising.

Decided: to advise the Leadership Panel that although this Panel supported the recommendations of the Review of Out of School Care, consideration should be given to undertaking a wider review of South Ayrshire's provision of childcare, including childcare provided before school by Breakfast Clubs, taking account of the recommendations of the Report of the Commission for Childcare Reform, June 2015, with particular reference to deprivation and costings.

The meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.