



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Wednesday, 16 November 2011

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Barnby, Bent, Butt, Darling (Vice-Chair), Kingscote, Parrott, Pentney and Pountney

(Also in attendance: Councillors Cowell, Davies, Lewis, Scouler, Thomas (D) and Tyerman, plus Mayor Gordon Oliver)

370 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 26 October 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

371 Performance Overview and Monitoring: Quarter 2 2011/2012

The Board considered reports which summarised the performance of the performance indicators and projects in the Council's strategic scorecard, the Council's approved capital programme for the second quarter of 2011/12, and the Council's revenue budget for the same period.

With reference to personal knowledge of projects informing the performance indicators, members questioned the accuracy of some performance information presented in the report. With reference to indicators on the strategic scorecard, Board members questioned the apparent dip in performance since Quarter One, 2011/12.

In response to questions, the Deputy Mayor and Executive Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Housing, and Energy indicated that recycling rates in the Bay would achieve the 2020 target by the end of 2012. In reply to questions, the Deputy Mayor and Executive Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Housing, and Energy advised the meeting of the Mayor's strategic priorities.

With reference to adults safeguarding, Board members questioned the timeliness of social care assessments and why Devon Partnership NHS Trust was performing below target. A representative of Devon Partnership NHS Trust addressed the meeting and explained the mental health pathways and referral points. He indicated that the Trust's priority was to ensure the most urgent cases received treatment in a timely manner and that the current target could be improved. The Chief Executive Officer, Torbay Care Trust, indicated agreement that the performance measurement should be re-examined prior to agreement of next year's Annual Strategic Agreement between the Care Trust and Torbay Council.

Board members questioned the increase in employee total costs in all Commissioning areas across the council apart from Adults and Operations

Commissioning. The Board was advised that seasonal variations could be a factor and an explanation would be provided.

With reference to a recent Serious Case Review, Board members asked for clarification concerning the improvements to children's safeguarding. The Executive Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families and the Acting Director of Children's Services indicated that initial assessments suggested safeguarding was improving.

Board members questioned whether the impact on performance of in-year cuts and savings was discernible. In response, the Board was advised that any impact from cuts would be within performance data for Quarters Three and Four of 2011/12 rather than Quarter Two. Board members requested details of the in-year savings proposals and were advised by the Executive Head of Finance that the relevant document would be provided.

With reference to the Council's strategic scorecard, Board members questioned the number of entities without data or targets and requested a written explanation.

Board members questioned the Empty Homes Scheme, particularly the need to borrow £0.5 million. In response the Board was advised of the anticipated benefits.

With reference to the identification of the contingency fund for the capital programme as a significant risk, the Board questioned the amount allocated. In reply, the Board was advised that each project within the programme had a contingency fund in addition to the fund for the programme as a whole.

Members questioned the identification of the New Homes Bonus as uncommitted income and were advised the intention was to use other monies to meet the projected overspend and the use of the New Homes Bonus was illustrative of uncommitted monies.

In response to questions, the Executive Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families suggested that slippage in capital projects was due to the need to consult. Members suggested that consultation should be viewed as integral to project planning.

Members suggested that the Capital Budget Monitoring report submitted to Council in December 2011 should include a fuller explanation and detail, particularly of the invest to save scheme to bring empty homes back into use from funding from the New Homes Grant. The Chief Accountant, Financial Services, indicated that more detail concerning the invest to save schemes would be added to the report presented to Council.

Members questioned the use of reserves prior to the three year period for which their use was planned. In reply the Executive Lead Member for Finance and Audit indicated that the reserves had been used for activities to benefit the Bay.

With reference to the revenue budget, Board members queried the use £0.5 million from revenue rather than capital. In response, the Board was advised that an estimated £0.5 million had arose from the redesign of the Office Accommodation Review. The Board requested a detailed breakdown of the costs and an explanation why the amount had not been identified in previous updates about the Office Accommodation Review.

Members asked if there was a correlation between vacancies being unfilled and failing performance. The Executive Head of Finance indicated that such an association was possible but he could not comment on specific areas.

Replying to questions, the Executive Lead Member for Children, Schools and Families advised that Children's Services spending for 2011/12 would be over-budget. The Executive Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Older People stated that adult social care costs would be over budget for 2011/12.

With reference to community safety, Members asked for details of the impact of underspends on services and were advised that such information could be provided by the Executive Head for Community Safety. Members requested clarification of all underspends.

The Executive Lead Member for Finance and Audit indicated that he was not aware of any officers saying they were under undue pressure to make savings.

In reply to questions, the Chief Executive Officer, Torbay Care Trust, indicated that he would provide further information concerning Dunboyne Court, Torquay. He indicated that the outcomes of recent judicial reviews would not affect the budget for 2011/12 but might do so for 2012/13.

A member of the public raised a question concerning the amount spent by TOR2 in agency fees. The Board was advised that a response had been requested from TOR2.

Resolved: that the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the latest position on performance and the latest position on the capital programme and the revenue budget, and makes the following recommendations to the Mayor:

- that Council be provided with an explanation of the use of reserves prior to the three year period for which their use was planned;
- that Council be provided with further detail behind invest to save schemes;
- that Council be provided with a full breakdown of £0.5m costs arising from the Office Accommodation Review;
- that Council be provided with an explanation of the increase in employee total costs in all Commissioning areas across the Council apart from Adults and Operation Commissioning;

- that Council be provided with clarification of the identification of the use of the New Homes Budget as uncommitted income;
- that Council be provided with an explanation of the continuing slippage in capital projects; and
- that the Mayor confirm that underspends are not adversely affecting service delivery.

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 371, Councillor Kingscote declared a personal interest due to his work for Devon Partnership NHS Trust community mental health team Torbay.)

372 Overview and Scrutiny Review Monitoring: Key Stage 2

The Board considered a report providing a position statement on the recommendations and actions arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Key Stage 2 review. The report also included information concerning the Torbay's Schools Improvement Partnership and how education services within the Bay had developed over the previous twelve months.

In reply to questioning, the Board was advised that all partnership schools apart from two primary school academies were using School Improvement Partners.

Members asked for an update on the development of an expert governor role for Key Stage 2 education. In response the Board was advised that officers were investigating methods to identify leading governors.

373 Update on current Overview and Scrutiny Review Panels

Overview and Scrutiny review chairs provided verbal updates on the progress of their respective reviews; namely, Anti-social Behaviour and Private Sector Housing; Youth Employment; and Safeguarding.