



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester, NN12 6AD on Tuesday 10 May 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Danielle Stone (Chair)
 Councillor Maggie Clubley
 Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
 Councillor Mark Hughes
 Councillor Ian McCord
 Councillor Colin Morgan
 Councillor Ken Pritchard
 Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms

Substitute Councillor Jonathan Harris (For Councillor Sally Beardsworth)
Members:

Also Councillor Mike Hallam (Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services)
Present:

Apologies Councillor Andrew Grant (Vice-Chair)
for Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Absence: Councillor Rupert Frost
 Councillor Koulla Jolley
 Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz

Officers Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer)
 Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services
 Alison Golding, Assistant Director - Human Resources
 Mitchell Thomason, Transformation Project Manager
 James Aldridge, Group Asset Manager
 Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
 Richard Woods, Democratic Services Officer

56. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

57. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

58. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reminded Members that a training session, run by Dr Stephanie Snape, would be taking place remotely via Zoom on Wednesday 15 June at 5:30pm and would focus on the key elements of shaping a successful Overview and Scrutiny Function.

59. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

60. **People Strategy**

The Committee considered a report and presentation from the Executive Director – Corporate Services and the Assistant Director – Human Resources which sought to provide a comprehensive overview of the new People Strategy, the underlying project activity and progress on the delivery of its key commitments. Councillor Mike Hallam, the Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services, was also in attendance to deliver the presentation and answer questions from the Committee.

In introducing the presentation, the Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services explained that fundamental to the People Strategy was the recruitment and retention of quality staff, which underpinned the Council's commitment to the £10 per hour minimum wage uplift and recognition of the post-pandemic cultural shift towards flexible working and the benefits this could bring towards employee satisfaction and productivity.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding the early results that these commitments had yielded, the Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services advised that the results obtained from staff surveys, alongside reviews from the employer review website Glassdoor, suggested that investing in the £10 minimum wage commitment and embracing flexible working had begun to have a positive impact upon how the Council was viewed as an employer.

The Assistant Director – Human Resources explained that a further key priority in the People Strategy was to create high performing teams to drive and reward high performance, and an example of this was the recent implementation of the new Valuing Individual Performance (VIP) conversations to replace conventional methods of annual appraisals between managers and their direct reports, which would ensure that performance would become a continuous, year-round focus in order to foster wellbeing and personal development benefits and provide clarity on goals, objectives and learning and development needs. The Assistant Director – Human Resources also advised that this was a necessary step in order to replace the differing appraisal mechanisms inherited from the previous sovereign Councils.

The Committee received the presentation up to part 2.2 and agreed to hear the remainder of the presentation at the next meeting of the Committee, where six key areas of the People Strategy would be identified for further scrutiny activity.

Resolved

- (1) That Members of the Committee be requested to consider potential areas of scrutiny activity within the People Strategy ahead of receiving the remainder of the presentation at the next meeting of the Committee.

61. **Asset Management**

The Committee received a presentation from the Group Asset Manager which provided a summary of the Council's portfolio of assets, property strategy and estate structure, asset management plan and ongoing estates projects.

In introducing the presentation, the Group Asset Manager advised the Committee that the Council currently had circa 979 assets, 313 of which were investments and 666 of which were operational, with a total portfolio value in excess of £1.5bn.

The Group Asset Manager provided an overview of the current activities within the service area and advised that a root and branch review of the former Northampton Borough Council asset portfolio had been commenced, and that survey and CAD projects were also underway in order to build more accurate record data and assist the development of the new Asset Management Plan.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding the structure of the Property Strategy and Estates function, the Group Asset Manager advised that a recent restructure within the service area had created four new heads of service posts, with other key points being that the Operational and Investments Estates function had been centralised and a single Asset Records Team had been set up to serve the West.

Regarding how the development of the Council's new Asset Management Plan would be supported, the Group Asset Manager explained that the four legacy processes for estate management from the previous sovereign councils would be replaced by a single asset recording system with a target implementation date of April 2024, which would bring about consistency of data reporting and business intelligence, links to the ERP Gold system, and a single set of asset data to support transformation activities.

In considering future areas of scrutiny activity regarding the Asset Management Plan, Members of the Committee requested further information regarding how the various workstreams around Asset Management aligned to the Corporate Plan and the Council's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030. In response to this request, the Group Asset Manager explained that this was a matter under investigation by the Sustainability Working Group, and that Members could request that the Sustainability Working Group report back to the Committee at a future meeting to determine in greater detail how the work aligned with the Corporate Plan and carbon neutrality commitments.

Resolved

- (1) That the Sustainability Working Group be requested to report back to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting regarding the alignment of workstreams around the development of the new Asset Management Plan to the Corporate Plan and the Council's commitment to carbon neutrality.
- (2) That the Assets and Environment Service be requested to maximise opportunities for consultation with Parish and Town Councils regarding the disposal of local assets, with particular consideration to be given towards supporting the development of Community Hubs.

62. **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Chair advised that, owing to the Expenses Policy having now been drafted, scrutiny activity could now begin and as a result, the Expenses Policy Task and Finish Group would be convened later in the summer to begin this work.

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee Work Plan be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.07 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____