

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Lee Mason, at his meeting held on Thursday, 16 July 2015 at 10.00 am at the Conference Room A - Civic Offices

### **Present**

Councillor Lee Mason (in the chair)

Councillor Colin Galloway  
Councillor Hugh Mason

### **Officers Present**

Louise Wilders, Director of Community and Communication  
Jon Bell, Director of HR, Legal and Procurement  
Nick May, Head of Information Solutions  
Sue Page, Finance Manager

#### **7. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Ken Ferrett, Labour Opposition Spokesperson.

#### **8. Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **9. Customer and Communications Business Plan (AI 3)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Louise Wilders, Director of Customer and Communication, introduced the report and explained that its purpose is to put forward a business plan that relates to the situation the directorate is currently facing. She advised that it was not possible in the current climate to look too far ahead and so the Plan is concentrating on current key issues.

The Director of Customer and Communication explained that Channel Shift is a piece of work that is looking at ways of coping with reducing budgets more than developing services. PCC is already working in partnership with other local authorities in order to deliver efficiencies and as an organisation PCC is moving towards cheaper options wherever possible including looking at providing electronic alternatives such as tablets for members and making

better use of IT generally. With regard to the recent restructure, Revenues and Benefits have moved into this directorate and this has brought new challenges.

There is a clear need to change the way the Council has traditionally carried out its business in order to adapt to the new constraints.

In response to queries the following matters were clarified

- With regard to the staff from Solent NHS transferring to PCC, at first this will simply be a co-location exercise, but then there will be a complete review to look at where savings and efficiencies can be made.
- With regard to the period of uncertainty surrounding issues on moving Housing Benefit to Universal Credit, various meetings have been taking place with Revenues and Benefits staff in relation to the level of sickness absence and the potential opportunities across the combined directorate. In addition, there have been tentative informal meetings about possible potential for taking on work from other authorities. However PCC's systems have to be fit for purpose before this can progress.
- With regard to a query on collecting customer feedback, the Director of Customer and Communication advised that there are numerous ways in which information is collected - such as through market research, analysis of data from the website, and telephony data. There is also a Residents Panel that is used to provide feedback. Last year there was a review of the Helpdesk leading to a reduction in staff and core handling capacity reduced as a result. However, although there was a reduction in the number of phone calls dealt with, there was an increase in the number of people carrying out transactions on line so overall efficiency improved.

**DECISION:**

**That the Cabinet Member for Resources approved the main objectives set out in this business plan.**

**10. Channel Shift Verbal Update from the Director of Customer and Communication (AI 6)**

(TAKE IN HANDOUT)

(The portfolio holder, Councillor Lee Mason allowed a variation to the order of items on the agenda to hear agenda item 6 next as the Director presenting the report had another urgent meeting to attend.)

Louise Wilders, Director of Customer and Communication, introduced the item and explained that it was for information only. A briefing note was circulated to members (attached) which outlined the aim of the Channel Shift programme which is within three years, to save £500,000 each year on customer service.

19 work streams have been established (as detailed on the Handout) to deliver this programme, including improving methods of communication with PCC's customers, businesses and landlords, the City Helpdesk offer and the telephone system.

In answer to a query raised about the security of the IT systems, Nick May, Head of Information Solutions, confirmed that this was very robust and conformed to central government's very strict requirements.

**The update was noted.**

#### **11. HR, Legal and Performance Business Plan Priorities 2015-16 (AI 4)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Director of HR, Legal and Performance, Mr Jon Bell, introduced the report which provided a summary of the priorities, risks and future vision of the HR, Legal & Procurement Directorate. He explained that the 2013/16 business plan had previously been agreed by the Cabinet Member for Resources and that this had been reviewed following the recent senior management restructure.

He explained that there was a need to retain certain specialisms in house to mitigate against risk and these included Legal, HR, Strategy, Audit and Procurement. He said that the strategy was to target external organisations and charge for the services PCC could provide in these areas. Improving skills and expertise and building capacity was therefore being prioritised and already this was paying dividends.

Appendix A shows the statement of priorities for the directorate.

In response to a query on page 4 of Appendix A relating to driving better value from contracts across the council, Mr Bell confirmed that historically much effort has been put in to the procurement process and the council has a good record. However, although some contracts have been consistently good, others need to be re-negotiated.

**DECISION: That the Cabinet Member for Resources noted the contents of the summary and agreed to receive regular updates on progress being made to deliver the identified priorities.**

#### **12. Super-connected cities update report (AI 5)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Nick May, Head of Information Solutions introduced the report which updated the Cabinet Member on progress on the Super Connected Cities Programme and the potential opportunities afforded by the new WiFi infrastructure deployed in the City. The initiative is a Government sponsored scheme to transform broadband across the UK to improve access and speed.

He explained that progress to date is set out in section 5 of the report and the impact of the programme is set out in section 6.

In response to a query, Mr May confirmed that initially there was slow take-up for the scheme, but following changes made by the Government, this improved and the City Council has significantly exceeded the targets set by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

**DECISION:**

That

- 1) the content of this report be noted.
- 2) the completion of the WiFi to Public Buildings stage of the project be approved and the installation of access points at 79 sites versus the original agreement of 49 sites be noted
- 3) the potential opportunities afforded by My City WiFi for sensory applications with the express objective of providing efficiency savings for the Council and its public sector partners be investigated

**13. Budget Outturn 2014/15 - Revenue Cash Limits and Capital Programme (AI 8)**

(TAKE IN REPORT and Appendices A and B)

Sue Page, Finance Manager, introduced the report which informs the Cabinet Member and Opposition Spokespersons of the forecast revenue expenditure for the year (Appendix A) compared with the cash limited budget and the 2014/15 outturn capital expenditure (Appendix B) against the revised capital programme for the Resources portfolio.

The Finance Manager explained that Paragraph 6.3 sets out the approvals that have been met from the reserve specified in 6.2. Paragraph 6.4 shows the further approved commitments of £461,000 against the reserve in 2015/16. After taking these into account, the uncommitted balance remaining on the portfolio reserve is £936,600.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- With regard to 5.8 and 5.9 of the report (Housing Benefit overspend and Benefits Administration underspend), more detail was requested as the two entries did not appear to be logical. The Finance Manager agreed to speak to the Director of Customer and Communication with a view to providing clarity for members.
- Members were pleased to note under the Capital Monitoring Statement that the relocation of Merefield House and Dame Judith Professional Centre had both been completed under budget.

**The information in the report was noted by the Cabinet Member.**

**14. Twinning Advisory Group (TAG) Verbal Update from the Cabinet Member for Resources (AI 7)**

The Cabinet Member for Resources said that it would be useful to hold a meeting to include all representatives from the various twinned cities, sister cities and friendship cities.

He reported that

- Caen was currently the most active of the three twin cities committees
- He had met with the Japanese Embassy to invite a representative to attend the VJ Day remembrance event at Portsmouth..
- Links with Chinese cities are being promoted by Mr A Choi

- He had been in touch with Portsmouth Rhode Island but there was nothing formal to report as yet.

The meeting concluded at 11.35am.

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Councillor Lee Mason  
Cabinet Member for Resources