

**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 14 AUGUST 2013**

Councillors Councillors Bull (Chair), Winskill (Vice-Chair), Adamou, Newton, Bull (Chair) and Christophides

Apologies Councillor McNamara
Yvonne Denny, Mariatta Ezeji and Evan Reid

Also Present: **Councillors:** Allison, Goldberg and Wilson
Officers: Kevin Bartle (AD, Finance), Stuart Best (Legal), Paul Ellicott (Head of Revenues Benefits & Cust Service), Melanie Ponomarenko (Scrutiny), Andrew Rostom (Super Project Manager), Michael Wood (Head of Procurement), Victoria Wyatt (Legal), Stuart Young (Assistant Chief Executive) and Felicity Parker (Clerk)

**MINUTE
NO.**

SUBJECT/DECISION

OSCO240.	<p>WEBCASTING</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.</p> <p>As the meeting was held in Committee Room 1, it was not webcast.</p>
OSCO241.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor McNamara, Yvonne Denny, Mariatta Ezeji and Evan Reid.</p> <p>Councillor Christophides attended as a substitute for Councillor McNamara.</p> <p>Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Adamou.</p>
OSCO242.	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>It being a special meeting, under Part 4, Section B, Paragraph 17, of the Council's Constitution, there was no urgent business to discuss.</p>
OSCO243.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
OSCO244.	<p>DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS</p> <p>There were no such items.</p>
OSCO245.	<p>CALL-IN OF HSP05 - PROCUREMENT OF A STRATEGIC PARTNER TO SUPPORT THE CUSTOMER SERVICES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME</p> <p>The Chair requested that Members and Officers be mindful of the exempt</p>

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information included in the report, and to keep as much of the discussion in the public domain if possible. If exempt information needed to be discussed, a resolution would be passed to exclude the press and public from proceedings.

The Chair added that he had raised concerns over the high volume of Leader/Cabinet Member signings. There was a fair argument that had this decision been taken at Cabinet, then Members would have had the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions, and the decision may not have been called in. The Chair stated that he was going to discuss this issue with the Leader.

Councillor Wilson introduced the call-in:

- There was an urgent need to improve the interaction with residents – one in three calls to customer services were not answered, and one in six were not answered within the timeframe.
- The decision to spend £1.6m on consultants was a large sum of money to spend, and was not how residents wanted to see money spent. The decision to spend this amount of money was equivalent to appointing several highly paid officers – why spend this money when there were many high level officers already in the authority? The spend could pay for 53 social workers, or to reopen facilities which had been closed as a result of budget cuts.
- The Council's Corporate Committee had already expressed its concerns over appointing consultants.
- An online petition had been launched, with 550 residents signing it over a couple of days. The decision to appoint consultants would not resolve many of the issues experienced by residents and Members. The Council needed to look at improving frontline services, and look at the root cause of problems which would result in fewer people needing to call the Council to complain.

Councillor Wilson added that the report was not understandable, and described it as fitting the definition of 'gobbledegook'. Many residents also did not understand the report. There needed to be a clear scope, with clear expectations and outcomes. Councillor Wilson referred to the budget paper from earlier in the year and stated that it had made no mention of consultants.

Councillor Wilson requested that the report be referred back for a rethink before a decision was taken.

The Chair informed Councillor Wilson that page 11 of the report made it clear that the decision was taken to allocate a maximum spend of £814k and that any other allocation would require a further decision to be taken. He added that he shared some concerns over how the Council engaged with residents and that new ways of working needed to be looked at in terms of dealing with residents. It was also concerning that this budget allocation was not included in the budget scrutiny papers.

In response to questions from the Committee and Councillor Wilson, Councillor Goldberg made the following points:

- It was important that customer services were improved.
- There was a need to accept external challenge in order to make

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improvements.

- Due to budget cuts it had been necessary to close two customer service centres. However it had not been possible to consider the processes behind customer services at the time.
- The contract was a zero hours contract, and any spend would be subject to project board approval of a business case. If the full £800k was spent, it would equate to about £3 per resident. There was a critical need to bring each service closer to the front line – this would enable callers to speak to people who had experience in service areas who can resolve issues quickly and on the first phone call.
- Councillor Goldberg met weekly with the Project Sponsor and the Head of Transformation to ensure that he maintained an oversight of the project.
- Each strand of work for the 12 services would need to make clear savings. The projected savings would have to be clear prior to work commencing.
- Councillor Goldberg added that he was keen to involve members, and would be happy to share project documents with scrutiny.
- The reason for the decision being taken by the Leader was due to the framework ending in the same month – if the decision had waited until the next Cabinet meeting, the opportunity to use the framework would have been lost.
- Councillor Goldberg informed the Committee that he would look into why the item was not on the Forward Plan.

Stuart Young, Assistant Chief Executive, explained the project in more detail. The initial spend on the contract was £0. The consultants would be working through 12 services, and produce a business case for work which would fundamentally change how that service operated. The contract was structured so that each business case must show a return on spend. If it was felt that further work was required then the project would move to stage 3, and a further decision would be taken. He assured the Committee that payment to the consultants was dependent upon proof by them that they would deliver benefits.

The Committee were informed that the projected savings figures did not form part of the report to the Committee as there was a need to be clear on what savings would be made and where. These would form part of the outline business plan.

The Committee raised concerns that the spend had not formed part of the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan which formed the basis of Budget Scrutiny and was informed that the agreement to go ahead with the project had been made following the Draft MTFP being published. The spend was, however, in the final MTFP Cabinet papers which were agreed by Full Council.

The Chair invited Councillor Allison to address the Committee. Her main point raised was that the figures in the report with regards to the procurement did not match the procurement process. The Chair asked Councillor Allison to email the enquiry to Councillor Goldberg and Stuart Young, so that the figures could be explained.

Councillor Winskill suggested that the project should go back to the Leader to allow a month for engagement with Councillors in the project as there were

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	<p>concerns over a lack of member understanding. The Chair responded that concerns had been addressed around the role of members and that any further spend at Stage 3 would be a Cabinet decision.</p> <p>The Chair MOVED that no further action be taken.</p> <p>A vote was taken and CARRIED; 3 in favour and 2 abstentions.</p> <p>AGREED that the outline business case would be shared with the Committee.</p> <p>ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stuart Young would provide the Committee with a list of services which would form part of the project.• Councillor Allison would email Councillor Goldberg and Stuart Young with the queries on the procurement process for a response. <p>RESOLVED that no further action be taken.</p>
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Councillor Gideon Bull
Chair

The meeting ended at 19:00hrs