

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY, 10TH MARCH, 2022

MEMBERS: Lee David-Sanders (Deputy Leader of the Opposition), Birsen Demirel, Ayten Guzel, James Hockney and Tim Leaver

Officers: Fay Hammond (Executive Director Resources), Sue Nelson (Director of Customer Experience), James Newman (Director of Finance Corporate), Lee Shelsher (Head of Customer Solutions), Melissa Williamson (Finance Transformation Manager), Josh Somma (Web Manager), Suzanne Connolly (Governance Officer)

Also Attending: Mark Williams (CIPFA)

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Cllr Birsen Demirel (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Panel Members and Officers to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mary Maguire (Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement), Cllr Mahym Bedekova and Cllr Yasemin Brett.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest registered in respect of any items on the agenda.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous formal meeting held on 14 September 2021 and the notes of the informal meeting held on 6 January 2022 were agreed.

4. CIPFA FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT UPDATE

James Newman, Director of Finance Corporate, introduced the report and provided an explanation of the CIPFA new financial management code which was introduced in October 2019.

Melissa Williamson, Finance Transformation Manager, talked through the stages that had taken place to date. First there was a “light touch” review and now they had commissioned an external review by CIPFA. The emerging findings were shown in the report provided.

Mark Williams, CIPFA, provided an overview to the panel about the review currently taking place and detailed the emerging key findings which were

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generally positive. Feedback was being gathered from staff interviews and an online survey. There had been positive feedback about the finance team, although some issues around systems, for example SAP. A report and action plan would be produced once the review was fully completed.

The panel thanked officers for their work on this and commented as follows:

1. Cllr Demirel asked officers if they were prepared to address the issues raised. Fay Hammond, Executive Director Resources, said the review had proved to be very helpful and allowed them to focus on strengths and areas for improvement. The finance team had recently been restructured with new directors brought in. Fay felt the team had achieved a great deal and the review gives a good foundation and framework to focus on.
2. It was asked if the reviews were standard practice – officers commented that almost 400 bodies have had a CIPFA review including many local authorities. It was not compulsory but noted as best practice.
3. Cllr David-Sanders asked about the restructure and how it was going to future proof this ownership. Fay responded highlighting that there were now clear role definitions around what the team do and services provided. The team also worked closely with the Finance Improvement Board.
4. Cllr Leaver questioned if the Finance Improvement Board was temporary or ongoing. Melissa advised that it would continue throughout the Enterprise Resources Planning (ERP) implementation. The scope may change and evolve to fit requirements.
5. Cllr Leaver also asked about the audit and closure of accounts. Mark responded advising that many local authorities were experiencing similar issues. Staff appeared to be welcoming of the proposed improvements and plans.
6. Cllr Hockney enquired about the revised CIPFA code and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Fay stated that independent treasury advisors had reviewed and confirmed it was appropriate. Fay confirmed that capital receipts were not used in the revenue budget for MRP. **ACTION:** Cllr Hockey and Fay would look at this further outside of this meeting.

5. FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE - CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Sue Nelson, Director of Customer Experience, introduced the item which was to provide the panel with an update on performance of face to face, telephony, webchat and website elements of customer experience. Background and details were included in the report provided.

Josh Somma, Web Manager, delivered a demonstration of the new council website which would be launching soon. The following points were highlighted:

1. It had been designed for use on mobile phones which was how most users currently access it.

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2. Form completion had been reduced to improve the customer experience, for example reporting of fly tipping.
3. Tools were available to look at analytics, such as pages viewed and the customer journey, which will be used to make improvements.
4. An application called Hotjar shows where generic users click on the page. It was noted user privacy was extremely important and users could opt out of cookies if they prefer.
5. Accessibility for users with disabilities had been independently reviewed and tested. Issues identified were being rectified.

Members thanked officers and commented as follows:

1. Cllr Demirel extended thanks to all involved, as well as the work of the libraries and community line during the pandemic.
2. Cllr Hockney asked about the feedback provided by the Shaw Trust around accessibility. Josh advised that a variety of disabilities had been considered when developing the website, as well as testing by individuals with disabilities. A re-test would be taking place in June 2022.
3. Cllr Guzel asked if face to face support would be available and officers confirmed this would take place in the libraries. The web chat function was live during office hours. Lee Shelsher, Head of Customer Solutions, was looking to improve awareness and usage of this tool.
4. Lee confirmed that the issues around missed telephone calls and logging was being monitored and a call back system was now in place. New training was being provided for staff.
5. It was noted that there was no catchment area for the food pantry but was by referral only. A second pantry would be opening soon in Enfield Town.
6. Cllr Leaver queried about the logistics of the new website launch. Officers advised that it would be closely monitored on a daily basis and customer feedback was essential in order to improve.
7. Cllr Hockney raised concerns about the call centre. Officers confirmed that telephony functionality improvements were underway with a planned launch in 2023.

6. FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

Fay Hammond, Executive Director Resources, gave an overview of the item stating that work was being completed with General Purposes Committee alongside support from the Financial Improvement Board. Actions and improvements were tracked closely, and the team had high aspirations to improve and provide the best service possible.

It was noted that this item was also covered in the previous meeting.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22 - UPDATED

This was the last meeting of the municipal year and the work programme was now completed.

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Fay Hammond asked about themes for the next work programme and it was suggested these be put forward to the new panel once it was established.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was the last meeting of the municipal year.

The Chair extended thanks to Officers, Members, Cabinet and the Governance Team for their work and assistance over the year.