

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date of Meeting:** 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016

**Present:** Councillor A Lythgoe (Chair)  
Councillors, L Barnes, Bromley, Eaton, Hughes (substituting for McMahon, Kempson, Johnson, Procter (substituting for Kenyon), Roberts, Robertson

**In Attendance:** Clare Law, HR Manager  
Janice Crawford, Finance Manager  
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services  
Alison Wilkins, Housing and Regeneration Project Manager  
Councillor Marriott, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance  
Councillor Oakes, Portfolio Holder for Legal and Democratic Services  
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

2 members of the public

---

---

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Kenyon, McMahon and Zieda Ali (Co-opted Member).

### 2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016 be agreed as a correct record signed by the Chair.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

### 5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the members of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

## **6. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair informed members that the Scrutiny Support Officer had circulated a paper that highlights the changes requested at the last meeting to the HR policies as follows; Recruitment and Selection Policy; Disciplinary Policy, Grievance Procedure and Absence Management Policy. Also circulated were additional changes made to the Training and Development Policy.

The Chair also informed members that with regard to the small group intending to meet to discuss Equality Impact Assessments, no other members other than he, Councillor Essex and Zieda Ali, co-opted Member had expressed an interest in being part of the group, and would welcome other members. The meeting would take place in the New Year.

1. That members note the changes to the HR Policies presented at the last meeting.
2. That any future minor amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

**NB:** The Chair agreed to allow the Head of Finance and Property Services to speak on his item first.

## **7. BUDGET SETTING PROCESS - Linking into the Council's Priorities**

The Head of Finance and Property Services provided an update on the budget setting process. This was requested by the Chair to help members to understand how the process works prior to them receiving the 2017/18 budget reports in February 2017.

He explained that the member training session held on 22nd November commenced the budget process for the medium term financial forecast. Historically the Council set a core budget costs of the day to day business for the Council, on a structure agreed by members. Every time the policy is amended for the budget it is taken to members for approval.

The Council has a good estimate of what the budget would be for the next five years. The Council live off local reserves instead of central reserves given by the Government.

A 1% delay in a Council Tax increase equates to £50k that the council will never recover.

There is soon to be a public consultation to ask for ideas on how to bridge the gap, it is important that as many people as possible engage in the budget consultation.

A number of questions were asked which the Head of Finance and Property Services responded. These included the following:

- Refinancing of the Leisure Trust and ROSSO which would bring money into the organisation long term.
- The Council are working with the Whitaker, but there is a cost of the curator element of the museum.
- Historical reductions of council staff has reduced cost.
- When asked how does member involvement work, it was confirmed that members set the priorities initially through their group meetings, and the subsequent formal Council process.
- The annual training session gives members an opportunity to challenge where the money was coming from.
- The cost share revenue from County will end in March 2018.
- When asked what the costing are for the old town hall, it was confirmed that present costs are approximately £30k for rates and also £1k for insurance costs.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the information be noted.

### **8. HR POLICIES – REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The HR Manager presented a number of HR policies which had been updated and refreshed as part of the Council's policy review cycle in line with best practice Equality Impact Assessments were included for each of the policies.

#### a) Adult Safeguarding Policy

The policy and guidance provides all staff, volunteers and Councillors with a clear understanding of the issues around safeguarding, including their responsibilities, the Council's processes and procedures and what to do to report a safeguarding concern.

The Care Act 2014 became law on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and creates a single law for adult care support, replacing more than a dozen different pieces of legislation. The Act also introduces new duties and requirements of Local Authorities in a number of areas including Safeguarding Adults.

The Council has no direct service relating to young people and adults, but they have a duty to co-operate with Lancashire County Council and any other partners.

A number of questions were raised by Members as follows:

- Could the flowchart and local contact telephone numbers be designated to the beginning of the policy? The HR Manager agreed to do this.

- Are Councillors' Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked? The HR Manager indicated that no Councillors or RBC staff are DBS checked. The reason being is that nobody has any direct contact with children or vulnerable people and the Council does have a safe recruitment and selection process in place.
- A question was raised about what was meant by 'In relation to safeguard training for all employees, volunteers and Councillors at an appropriate level'. The HR Manager indicated that the Council take advice from Social Care in relation to safeguarding training of all Officers in line with the required level 1 training. Safeguarding training is also provided to office based staff and for all Councillors every 3 years. with Prevent training being undertaken through Neighbourhood Forums. This year the Operations Team have undertaken a two hour safeguarding training session and one hour prevent training.
- In relation to types and indicators of abuse and neglect, a member asked if it would be possible to include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage into the Children's and Young People Safeguarding policy. The HR Manager agreed to do this.
- A member asked if the Council hold a list of 'private establishments' and the HR Manager indicated that they did not. It was commented that whilst they may be private establishments, it would be appropriate for the Council to have their details.

The HR Manager informed members that she and the Media and Engagement Officer have been on a 'train the trainer' course in Safeguarding and Prevent.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Safeguarding Adults Policy be noted.
2. That the HR Manager makes the changes to the policy as suggested by members and circulate them to the next meeting in January 2017.
3. That any future minor amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

b) Safeguarding Children and Young People

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The welfare of children and young people is paramount and is always the primary concern of the Council who recognise the need to ensure that all children and young people have a safe, healthy and happy life and get encouragement to do their best.

The Council has a duty to ensure children and young people are protected from abuse, and staff members are encouraged to report abuse should they suspect it is occurring.

There are different types of abuse, Physical abuse; Emotional abuse; Sexual abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation and Neglect.

The HR Manager indicated that if the Council receives any concerns about children and young people they use the 'Continuum of Need' dashboard to decide what level the child was at. Historically, the majority of cases will already be known to Social Care and the Council would ring Lancashire Social Care and they would indicate if the child was known to them.

It was agreed that the flowchart and local contact telephone numbers be designated to the beginning of the policy as was requested in the Adult Safeguarding Policy.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy be noted.
2. That the HR Manager makes the changes to the policy as suggested by members and circulate them to the next meeting in January.
3. That any future minor amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

c) Domestic Violence Policy

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to a multi-agency approach to respond effectively to the issue of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is an issue which affects all sections of society and it is therefore important to have clear and effective responses to help minimise the impact of domestic abuse on our employees.

The policy demonstrates the Council's commitment to, and support for, any employee experiencing domestic abuse.

The HR Manager indicated that council staff are not trained, but ensure there is a tool to enable a person to be signposted to appropriate support mechanisms.

A number of questions were raised by members as follows:

- When asked if the Council has a contact person who would lead on a DV issue over the Christmas period, especially around vulnerability. The HR Manager indicated that she was in the process of circulating a telephone list to include all key numbers to Capita, Housing Options Team. Lancashire Social Care does have a 24 hour helpline and it was agreed to amend the wording in the policy to say '24 hours service'.

- When asked about whether there was an appropriate gender interpreter available, it was indicated that LCC do have interpreters, as do Blackburn with Darwen, but as far as she was aware gender would not necessarily be the correct gender at the other end of the phone. The HR Manager did assure members that the interpreters that provided the service was from a reputable company(Language Line), who were trained staff who speak different languages appropriate to need.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Domestic Violence Policy be noted.
2. That the HR Manager makes the changes to the policy as suggested by members and circulate them to the next meeting in January.
3. That any future minor amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

**9. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS - JOINT WORKING POLICY**

Both the Finance Manager and the Housing and Regeneration Project Manager provided information on the purpose of the above policy.

Post 2010 grants are given to community groups and community interest companies as a cost effective way of getting upgrades to events and keeping community groups going. As a result members were informed of the growing need for operational policies which underpin the joint working between the Council, local community groups and community interest companies in order to safeguard public assets, funds and events.

The two separate, but complementary, policies provide guidance for joint working projects. The policies stipulate the required agreements which should be in place before these projects begin, to ensure good governance arrangements both before and after. They also aim to secure the interests of the Council and the public and ensure value-for-money for the community as a whole.

The Joint Working Policy for grant funded Capital Projects provides guidance to local community groups who wish to develop projects which aim to develop areas of Council land for the benefit of the community as a whole. The Council needs to protect the future of these assets and the public who use them and therefore, the Council should have the final say on the health and safety of equipment being proposed/installed and enter into the contractual relationships with the companies providing the equipment and services.

Approval is a two stage process - initially a decision is given in principle, ensuring that the project meets the Council's overall priorities and strategy for the site before any further costs/effort are expended on developing a grant

bid. Following a design & consultation process the community group can bid for grants to bring the project to fruition. The second approval stage is designed to ensure that all funds and governance arrangements are in place and each party has agreed their respective responsibilities before the works are tendered and contracted.

If a community group bids for a grant and are successful the funds are usually given to them in arrears, once there is proof that the work has been done and contractors have been paid. The Council provides the up-front cash-flow support for the project and can reclaim the VAT to ensure that the grant monies achieve maximum impact. The grants are then passported to the Council once they have been claimed/received by the community group or the community interest company.

The Joint Working Policy for grant funded Revenue Projects sets out the policy and procedures to be followed where the Council is working in partnership with local community groups to apply for external grant funding to deliver a revenue project, such as a service or event.

With both the above policies it is important the group requesting the funding should provide a copy of their constitution to the Council for review, and supply the name of the group member who is responsible for the project on behalf of the group.

Members raised the following questions/comments

- The policies ensure there is extra added protection for everyone
- This policy is necessary as the Council cannot apply for these grants itself and must rely on community groups if it is to attract this investment in the assets used by the community.
- Whilst not making the system easier, it does provide a framework and a process for community groups to follow, thereby building confidence in the application process.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet the approval of the two policies being proposed.

**10. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee noted the information within the Forward Plan and agreed that there were sufficient items on the agenda for the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the information be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

**Signed** .....

**Date:** .....