

AGENDA ITEM **3**

ECONOMY AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 June 2010

MINUTES

(18.00 – 19:30)

PRESENT: Councillors Garth Barnes, Tim Cooper, Wendy Flynn, Paul Massey, Paul McLain, Malcolm Stennett (chair), Lloyd Surgenor, Pat Thornton, Andrew Wall and Simon Wheeler.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Steve Jordan - Leader

Councillor Colin Hay – Cabinet Member Corporate Services

1.	APOLOGIES
	None
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
	None declared.
3.	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2010
	RESOLVED THAT: the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2010 be approved as a correct record.
4.	PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS
	None received.
5.	MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE
	No matters referred to Committee.
6.	BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS
	<p>Leader</p> <p>He informed members of the launch of the Inward Investment task force which had been set up in response to two major companies deciding to close down their head offices in Cheltenham. The aim of the task force was to encourage new organisations to move to Cheltenham and to understand what facilities existing companies would need in the town to allow them to grow and expand. The task force would also be trying to influence the movement of Kraft out of the town and to assist the staff to find new employment, though this aspect would largely be managed by Gloucestershire First.</p> <p>He advised members of an announcement from the new coalition government that the local authority business growth incentive (LABGI) was to be abolished. The Local Area Agreement was also undergoing major change and the reward funding for authorities meeting their targets was to be cut by 50%.</p> <p>In response to a question from a member about the potential impact of budget cuts on the Civic Pride project, he advised that the external funding secured from the Regional</p>

	<p>Development Agency for the next two years was pump priming only and was a relatively small amount. In his view this was a signed commitment. It was important that the project remained flexible and the Advisory Board were currently undertaking a review. In response to a question regarding the Regulation of Investigatory Powers, the Leader advised that this was a power which would be activated very sparingly by the council and predominately in potential fraud cases. This was within the remit of the Cabinet Member Corporate Services and would be reported at the next meeting.</p> <p>Cabinet Member Corporate Services</p> <p>He updated members on the Shared Services programme. With regret he reported that the G07 project had now become G05 as both Gloucester City and Tewkesbury borough councils had withdrawn from the project. This had invalidated the procurement process for selecting the ERP platform and a new process was due to be started. Inevitably this had incurred delays, which was disappointing. As Tewkesbury would no longer be sharing ICT systems with Cheltenham, shared ICT and HR services would not be practical or achieve the economies of scale and therefore both these projects had been shelved. He advised the committee that he intended to bring a full update back to their July meeting.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>MONITORING OF THE CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2009 – 2010</p>
	<p>The Policy and Partnerships Manager introduced the paper and explained that each year the council published a business plan, which sets out the performance measures by which it would be assessed.</p> <p>He then touched on some of the performance highlights, milestones and performance indicators. Referring to the government’s announcement that there would be less external inspection, he emphasised that the onus would be on elected members and effective internal processes to monitor performance.</p> <p>The chair said that the emphasis for this committee should be on the business plan aim to promote a strong and sustainable economy. With that in mind he asked whether all the actions in the corporate plan for 2009/10 to support this aim had been achieved.</p> <p>The Assistant Chief Executive advised that some programmes had been rolled on and Cabinet had received reports on any deviations from the plan.</p> <p>The chair said that this committee must have the detailed information necessary for them to carry out an effective scrutiny role and asked for a full summary of all the actions relating to the economy to be circulated to members of the committee and brought back to the next meeting if required by the Chair.</p> <p>A member suggested that there needed to be more explanation on why milestones had been missed and gave the examples of the delay in the marketing and tourism strategy.</p> <p>The Assistant Chief Executive explained that the reports were put together on the basis of information supplied by managers across the council. She made a commitment to raise this at the Senior Leadership Team and request managers to enter more explanatory information in the performance management system which could then be incorporated in these reports. The chair requested that this was formerly raised as a request to Cabinet.</p> <p>Another member raised concerns that the profile of sustainability may be diminished in the current economic climate by combining it with “being an excellent, efficient and sustainable council “. He commented that some performance indicators had missed by a very wide margin, for example the percentage of commercial waste recycled, and</p>

	<p>asked whether the target was being reviewed and if it was not feasible would it be reset?</p> <p>The chair said that he would expect this committee to focus on the economy and as sustainability fell within the remit of the Environment O&S committee it should be left to them to review those targets.</p> <p>The Policy and Partnership Manager responded that reduced carbon emissions did feature in the new strategy and acknowledged that he had not included the sustainability targets in this report. He stressed the overarching role of this committee in relation to the whole business plan and suggested that he meet with the chair and vice-chair ahead of future meetings to discuss the information they required.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i) The committee recommends to Cabinet that they ensure there is sufficient information in future monitoring reports of the Corporate Business Plan to enable effective scrutinyii) The Assistant Chief Executive be requested to raise the issue with the Senior Leadership Team and request managers to include more explanatory information, particularly on any missed targets. <p>The Chairman thanked the Policy and Partnerships Manager for his time.</p>
8.	ICT STRATEGY <p>The ICT Business Support Manager, Rachel McKinnon, supported by Paul Woolcock, ICT Infrastructure Manager, gave a presentation on the proposed ICT strategy. The report set out an updated ICT strategy for the next 5 years taking into account the council's key initiatives and priorities and the Council's medium term financial strategy.</p> <p>In response to questions from members, officers from ICT made the following responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The items listed in appendix B as desirable would enable the council to make better use of the existing resources that they had. It would be necessary for the service area concerned to put up a business case to support any expenditure.▪ Video-conferencing was not used to any great extent in the council and expenditure would be required to install the necessary technology to enable this at the appropriate level of quality. Again a business case would be required to justify this expenditure on an invest to save basis. <p>Several members commented that the document did not present a fully thought out strategy. A strategy should be a long-term document but the plans set out in the report did not go beyond 2012. The fact that it was already out of date suggested that it was not at a sufficiently high enough level to cope with change that would inevitably occur and it needed to be more flexible. The strategy contained a good analysis of the costs but this was not balanced by a equally detailed analysis of the benefits. It was suggested that the strategy should be based on what the council can afford to do and then what's left can be allocated to fund improvements. Instead the projected expenditure in appendix B highlighted an annual funding shortfall of £318,735 which was clearly not sustainable. It did not address the more fundamental question of whether ICT facilities should be managed off-site by a 3rd party. The strategy emphasised the importance of partnership working with other authorities but in practice ICT had not been an enabler for the joint working with Tewkesbury borough council. The strategy should also include a section on renewals of ICT equipment and there was no mention of sustainability targets.</p>

	<p>The risk analysis in appendix E seemed to focus on some of the lower level risks and ignore some of the major ones. For example was this council too small for some of the aspects of the strategy to be enabled or will this strategy deliver the benefits to justify the investment. The risk referred to the ICT staff not keeping their skills up to date but did not relate this risk to the organisation as a whole. Some of the risks appeared to have quite high scores and it was questioned why these had been accepted.</p> <p>Members raised the issue of their own access to ICT which was not mentioned in any detail in the strategy. In response the ICT Business Support Manager advised that they were currently recalling all council laptops and once the new security was installed all these laptops could be used by members to support flexible working i.e outlook and Intranet access. Flexible working could not be offered on non-council equipment because of the security restrictions required by Government Connect. She advised that there were currently 27 laptops issued to councillors and the remaining 13 councillors had opted to access Outlook Web access on their own machines. The Cabinet Member Corporate Services said that it had been made clear to all councillors that any councillor requiring a council laptop could have one. He was personally disappointed that the council could not offer flexible working on members own equipment nor could members install any peripheral equipment on the council lap tops but this was a restriction imposed on the council by Government Connect.</p> <p>Members questioned some of the statements of report. For example would revenue in public buildings be increased by the implementation of a public WiFi network?</p> <p>The ICT Business Support Manager stressed that the lot of the desirables in the strategy has come from service departments and were not necessarily what ICT thought the council should be doing in every case.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member Corporate Services acknowledged that there were areas of the strategy where more work was needed and the strategy would have to be brought back before members. He acknowledged that some of the high-level risks needed to be picked up and there needed to be a more robust renewal policy in place. Any investment would need to be supported by an invest to save business case. He agreed that sustainable targets should be included in the ICT strategy. He thanked members for their comments and agreed to raise them at Cabinet when it was discussed the following day.</p> <p>The Chair thanked officers for an informative presentation and asked the Cabinet Member to take the committee's comments into consideration when considering the strategy.</p>
9.	FUTURE WORK PROGRAM
	The committee reviewed the work plan.
10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
	The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 19 July 2010.
	Councillor Malcolm Stennett
	Chairman