Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 23 March 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **23 March 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr T G Cutmore (Chairman)
Cllr J Thomass (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr P A Capon   Cllr T Livings
Cllr K A Gibbs   Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn   Cllr C R Morgan

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs J R Lumley.

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Honey	Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
S Fowler	Head of Administrative & Member Services
C Thomas	Emergency Planning & Health & Safety Manager
M Martin	Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

S Paton	Head of Operations, Vivista
B Hall	Eastern Area Contract Manager, Vivista
E Ellis	Rochford Contract Manager, Vivista

143   MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

144   IT CONTRACTOR – PROGRESS REPORT

The Chairman welcomed representatives from Vivista, the Council's IT contractor to the meeting.

Members of the Committee received a presentation from Vivista which focussed on the following key areas:-

Previous Resolutions
Following a meeting of this Committee on 14 October 2003, when it was resolved that evidence of progress in certain key areas be reported back to this meeting, Vivista advised as follows:-

- Development of communication between Vivista/officers – Vivista's Managed Services Director, David Williams, had agreed to attend Operational Management team meetings, thus ensuring regular dialogue with the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, and Heads of Service. Key projects had been identified for 2004-2005.
- A better understanding of the Council's strategic aims and ambitions had been achieved and a technical strategy was being developed in partnership to improve the Council's Information and Communication Technology.
- Maximum use had been made of minimum resources. Reliability and user productivity had been increased by replacing legacy systems.
- A pro-active approach had been adopted in reviewing the benefits to the Council of migrating to the Windows 2003 operating system.
- Work was in progress around identifying objectives over a 3 to 5 year period, which fitted the strategic aims of the Council.
- The results of the Customer Perception Survey had been delivered.

Members were provided with the following progress update:-

Progress on 3 month plan
- Standardisation of Microsoft Desktop Operating Systems – 60 desktops had migrated from Windows 95 to the Windows 2000 operating system. It was anticipated that full migration to the latter operating system would be complete by the end of this calendar year.
- The first phase of replacing key servers had been completed.
- A trial around remote connection to the network from sheltered housing had been completed and roll out was currently in progress and should be complete by the end of May 2004.
- E-government strategy had been reviewed and programmes had been identified. These would underpin the developing technical strategy.

Day to Day Service Delivery
- Call statistics had reduced over the last 3 months, but more time was needed for development and project work.

Technology Status
- At 1 March 2004 there were a total of 12 servers.
- At 1 April 2004 it was projected there would be a total of 225 desktops, made up of a mix of Windows 98 and Window 2000 operating systems.

Customer Survey
A customer survey held in March 2004 had resulted in a 7% response to the questionnaires. Consideration was being given as to how this level of return could be improved upon. Vivista were particularly disappointed at the results in terms of the question around "keeping users informed", where 44%

expressed their level of satisfaction as being "good". However, 50% had responded as "very good".

Strategic Projects
- Vivista were assisting in the procurement and installation of a Document Image Processing system.
- The CAPS Uniform Spatial 7 public access planning module would be installed by June 2004 providing full public access to planning information.
- Improved website software and design was scheduled for completion by April 2004
- Public access to committee minutes on line was scheduled for completion by the end of March 2004.
- A housing rents/repairs system upgrade was currently being installed.
- Server upgrades were being implemented.
- Remote connection to the Council via terminals in sheltered housing schemes was being implemented.

In response to Member questions, the following was noted:-

- Officers would arrange for a demonstration to be made available to Members around the on-line planning application system.
- Council data is backed up each night and stored away from Rochford.
- As a premium Microsoft solution provider, Vivista were confident in their ability to troubleshoot any problems experienced with the Windows operating systems.
- They would work at reducing the level of negative responses to customer surveys and confirmed that a target would be put in place.
- This would involve analysing the types of calls received.
- Targets would be reported back to this Committee in 6 months' time as part of their objectives for the next 3-5 year period.
- Vivista agreed to provide a clearer presentation of statistics at that time.
- Following a management buy-out (MBO) during this financial year, Vivista were ending the year as a new organisation.
- Accountants were happy with their figures and delivery targets were running according to plan for the first year of the MBO.
- It was intended to provide an on-going customer survey via the Council's Intranet and to continue to sample customers on their level of satisfaction in response to calls.

Members agreed that whilst they had seen some improvements in figures since Vivista's last report to the Committee, they would be looking for further improvements in six months' time.

Resolved

That a demonstration of the on-line planning process be made available to Members. (CD(LPA))

145   RISK MANAGEMENT – THE CURRENT POSITION

The Committee received the report of the Chief Executive, which updated Members on the current position of the Risk Management process. Members were concerned about the clarity of the report and noted that further refinements of the Registers were required.   They were reassured that in future reports would provide explanations of abbreviations and avoid the use of "jargon".

Members noted that:-

- some items which currently appeared would be removed and others consolidated. As risk is by its very nature "on-going", registers would remain as "work in progress" rather than a finished product.
- The difficulties associated with the risk matrix had been highlighted and alternative mechanisms would be discussed by the Corporate Risk Group.
- Zurich Municipal were the premium insurer of local authority risk and as such deal with all the Council's claims handling. They were very experienced in risk management and providing consultancy.

Members undertook a page by page analysis of the key risks and the following points of clarification were noted and potential amendments agreed:-

Corporate Risk Register
- 4 – Zurich Municipal would work with the Council to identify risk factors.
- 6 – "back-up's" were lodged externally.
- 8 – a potential risk would exist if tenants ultimately rejected the best choice identified by the option appraisal process.
- 10 – the Workforce Development Plan would address this risk and thereby reduce the current score.
- 16 – where outside workers are concerned, the Council had to ensure that it complied with current Health and Safety legislation and that public liability was in place.
- 19 - it was necessary for the Council to have an established Performance & Development Review (PDR) process in place before it could apply for Investors in People (IIP) status.
- 21 – Business Contingency Plan (BCP)
- 25 – agreed that the score be re-evaluated.
- 26 – levels are monitored via quarterly returns
- 27 – it was necessary to ensure that public consultation did not raise expectations to unachievable levels.

- 36 – a number of strategies could be considered including "home-working".
- 37 – this is a statutory measure and the Council does have a compliant Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) policy.

Revenues and Housing Benefit Risk Register
- 1 – regular fire drills were carried out
- 8 – Members suggested that signs could be displayed indicating that car park machines were emptied regularly.

Planning Services Risk Register
- 2 – Planning professionals would look to the administrative officer should an IT failure occur.
- 5 – the term "buddy" indicated working alongside someone else. The Police would not necessarily be in a position to attend; officers agreed that "self-defence" training was in need of review.
- 9 – these should be reported to the Police.

Corporate Risks Identified
- 3 – a corporate policy now existed.

Legal Services Risk Register
- 1 – Quarterly Performance Report (QPR)

Human Resources Risk Register
- 1 and 2 – agreed to look at as given a particularly high score against its potential likelihood of occurrence.

Housing, Health & Community Care (HHCC) Risk Register
- 5 – consider giving a higher score

Administrative & Members Services Risk Register
- 4 – whilst the Council currently received funding, it would constitute a risk should funding cease.
- 5 – this would include use by a member of staff of their own hardware/software.
- 7 – access to source codes would be needed in order to maintain progress if a software supplier's business failed.
- 18 – the planned new reception facilities at the Rochford site would include the provision of closed circuit television.
- 26 – this could be highlighted as a higher inherent risk value with a low likelihood of occurrence. Members requested confirmation that the current contract identified this risk.

Financial Services Risk Register
- 15 – Members requested that consideration be given to raising the score of the inherent risk value

Corporate Policy Unit (CPU) Risk Register
- 1 – no resilience existed where individuals currently carried out individual roles in isolation from the work of others.

Property Maintenance, Highways, Leisure & Contracted Services Risk Register
- 3 – whilst this would involve a lengthy process carrying a high residual risk value, the Council had a policy of dealing with limited companies with the safeguard of an insurance company behind them.

Resolved

That further consideration be given in the light of the above comments and an updated Risk Register be presented to this Committee in September 2004. (CE)

The meeting closed at 9.44 pm.

Chairman ....

Date ....