

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00 am, Tuesday, 26 February 2013

Present

Councillors Burns (Convener), Cardownie (Vice-Convener), Burgess, Chapman, Child, Nick Cook, Godzik, Ricky Henderson, Hinds, Lewis, Mowat, Rose and Ross.

1. Deputations

(a) The Welcoming Association (Item 2)

The deputation outlined the services they provided which included a support network, integration and language programmes in 54 languages for migrants to the city. The deputation urged the Council to continue its support in the form of a grant of £25,000 to enable them to secure their budget with other contributors being the Scottish Government and the Robertson Trust in Glasgow. They stressed that this level of support would enable them to keep their budget intact and give assurances to other investors.

(b) Unison (Item 3)

The deputation raised concerns in relation to the responses received to the staff survey. They indicated that many proposed changes from previous surveys had not yet been put in place. The deputation suggested that there had been no improvement in the survey results but acknowledged that there were signs of significant change with the Council's engagement with the unions.

The deputation felt that staff survey results should be a regular item for discussion at Committee and that negative results should be fully investigated.

2. Council Grants to Third Parties 2013/14 – Proposals for Expenditure

The Committee was invited to consider the package of grant investment directed to supporting a range of third sector and cultural and sporting provision across the city during 2013/14.

Decision

- 1) To approve the proposals contained in the report and appendices by the Director of Corporate Governance.
- 2) To note the unprecedented challenges which this grant round had presented and the commitment of the third parties and Council interests in working (co-operatively and under Compact arrangements) to consider and deal with these matters.
- 3) To note the potential for a move to more progressive outcome-based commissioning for grant investment.
- 4) To note the potential for change in future grant management arrangements and the commitment to partnership engagement in taking forward the review of Council grant investment.
- 5) To note that, in regard to the South Edinburgh Healthy Living Initiative and the Welcoming Association, there would be continued constructive exploration of alternative funding from different departmental sources.

(Reference – report by the Director of Corporate Governance, submitted.)

3. Motion by Councillor Chapman – Management and Communications within the Council

The following motion by Councillor Chapman was submitted in terms of Standing Order 16.1:

“Committee:

- 1) Notes that it is nearly 6 months since the publication of the results of the 2012 Ipsos MORI Employee Survey, which Councillors first saw in a report to the former Policy and Strategy Committee on 2nd October 2012, this report indicating that various actions would be taken, including further analysis of the results, consultation with employees about possible improvements, developing departmental action plans, etc.
- 2) Notes some specific results from this survey:
 - only 50% of staff feel involved in decisions that affect their work
 - low levels of staff satisfaction in particular areas
 - 41% do not think they are valued, and only half feel motivated to their full potential
 - 33% think his/her immediate line manager is not open nor honest

- 61% do not have confidence in management decisions
 - 72% think change is poorly managed, and only 22% think the survey will change anything
- 3) Notes that, at tonight's UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch AGM, several motions relating to treatment of Council staff will be discussed: *New Council Code of Conduct, Free expression of concern, Dignity at Work*, for example.
 - 4) Notes the levels of staff sickness absence for stress, depression and other mental health issues recorded over the past few years (8.43% of the workforce from September 2009 to June 2011) as compared with other public sector bodies (1.38% of the Scottish Government workforce).
 - 5) Notes the increase in legal costs to the Council as a result of Employment Tribunals dealing with cases of unfair dismissal, harassment and discrimination (£6,840 per year from 2004 to 2009, and then £98,278 in 2010), and the ongoing costs of staff suspensions (Edinburgh having the highest number of suspensions in Scotland).
 - 6) Believes that, when taken together, these facts indicate a level of disquiet with management and communications within the Council and anxiety within the workforce, and that these might lead to low staff morale, low productivity and poor working relationships; and further believes that Councillors should be concerned about this.
 - 7) Agrees that reports should go to each Executive Committee over the next cycle and should include:
 - a detailed description of relevant departmental and sub-departmental unit (where appropriate) data derived from the staff survey
 - the steps taken by management to address these issues raised and improve staff morale (including but going beyond the actions already identified in the "Managing Attendance Procedure" policy approved 12 months ago)
 - how such changes are being implemented and how their success or otherwise will be monitored over the coming months
 - 8) Further agrees that future staff surveys should include questions that seek to better understand the causes of any staff dissatisfaction and anxiety (such as lack of trust, caution around raising particular concerns, restrictions on activities undertaken in personal capacities, etc.), and asks the Chief Executive to report on how best these concerns can be incorporated."

- moved by Councillor Chapman, seconded by Councillor Burgess

Amendment

- 1) To note the motion proposed by Cllr Chapman and the issues she referenced.
- 2) To note that the recommendations in the report on the Staff Survey to Policy and Strategy Committee on 2 October 2012 were passed without amendment.
- 3) To consider that the indicators in paragraph two presented an unduly negative picture of employee satisfaction
- 4) Whilst accepting that low staff morale, low productivity and poor working relationships should always be issues of concern for an employer with the ambition of the City of Edinburgh Council, queries the basis for the comparative statistics and their robustness in showing a level of disquiet and anxiety with management and communication in the Council.
- 5) To note that following the report on the Employee Survey in October 2012, service specific People Plans had been updated to address the areas for improvement identified.
- 6) To note that a new whistleblowing policy was in development and would shortly be the subject of Trade Union consultation with a view to implementation in May 2013.
- 7) To instruct the Chief Executive to report to the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee within two cycles, on the further analysis that had been undertaken on the survey since October 2012 together with the steps taken by management to deal with the issues raised, how these changes were being implemented and how they would be monitored.

- moved by Councillor Burns, seconded by Councillor Cardownie

Voting

The voting was as follows:

For the Motion	-	2 votes
For the Amendment	-	11 votes

Decision

To approve the amendment by Councillor Burns

4. Minute

Decision

To approve the minute of the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee of 22 January 2013 as a correct record.

5. Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan February to May 2013

The Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan for February to May 2013 was presented.

Decision

To note the Key Decisions Forward Plan for February to May 2013.

(Reference – report by the Director of Corporate Governance, submitted)

6. Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee Business Bulletin 26 February 2013

The Corporate Policy and Strategy Business Bulletin for 26 February 2013 was presented.

Decision

- 1) To note the Business Bulletin.
- 2) To note that the final submission on the business non-domestic rates consultation would be submitted for noting by the Economy Committee on 22 April 2013.

(Reference – report by the Director of Corporate Governance, submitted.)

7. Edinburgh People Survey 2012 Headline Results

A summary of the headline results and priorities for improvement indicated by the most recent Council annual citizen survey, conducted in the autumn 2012, were presented.

Decision

- 1) To note the report by the Director of Corporate Governance and the next steps.
- 2) To note the Council's commitment to address local issues and priorities.

- 3) To note the planned programme of briefings and communications.
- 4) To refer the findings to key stakeholders as detailed in the report.

(Reference – report by the Director of Corporate Governance, submitted.)

8. Social Justice Fund

Details were provided on proposed priorities for the operation of the Council's Social Justice Fund in 2013-14, including targeted resources for advice for people affected by welfare benefit reforms.

Decision

- 1) To note the contributions to Social Justice in Edinburgh in 2011-12 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report by the Director of Health and Social Care.
- 2) To approve the priorities for 2013-14, including additional priority to income maximisation.
- 3) To approve the allocations for 2013/14 to specific initiatives.
- 4) To delegate to the Director of Health and Social Care the allocation of the reserve of approximately 2% of the Fund and any amounts released by project slippage during the year to support applications during the year within the agreed priorities.

(Reference – report by the Director of Health and Social Care, submitted.)

9. Consultation on the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

The Scottish Government had launched a consultation on the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill, seeking views on the detail of the legislation. Details of the proposed Bill were provided.

Decision

- 1) To note the Scottish Government's proposals for the introduction of same sex marriage and religious and belief registration of civil partnership.
- 2) To note that it was open to each political party to submit its own views to Government on the proposed legislation.
- 3) To note that the Government was inviting the Council's views on the detail of the legislation and associated guidance and agree to submit comments on the proposed legislation.

- 4) To approve the responses to the consultation questions as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report by the Director of Services for Communities.
- 5) To note the impact that the proposals might have on the Council's Registration Service.

(Reference – report by the Director of Services for Communities, submitted.)

10. Lay Diversity Advisers Scheme – Arrangements Post April 2013 – Referral from Committee

The Police and Fire Reform Pathfinder Committee had referred a report on the future of the Lay Diversity Adviser's Scheme beyond 1 April 2013 and in particular on the financial implications associated with continued operation of the scheme.

Decision

To agree the financial implications associated with continuation of the scheme.

(References – Police and Fire Reform Pathfinder Committee 25 January 2013 (item 5); report by the Head of Legal, Risk and Compliance, submitted.)

11. Tram – Practical Experience of Operation Visits

Details were provided of proposed visits to current tram operating cities during March and April 2013.

Decision

To approve a visit to current tram operating cities by the Convener and Vice-Convener of the Transport and Environment Committee, opposition Transport Spokespersons, the Tram Media Manager, up to two other appropriate officers and the Tram Manager.

(Reference – report by the Director of Services for Communities, submitted.)

12. Motion by Councillor Burgess – 'No Eviction for Bedroom Tax'

The following motion by Councillor Burgess was submitted in terms of Standing Order 16.1:

"Committee;

- 1) Notes that from 1 April 2013 new restrictions will be introduced by the UK Government affecting working-age households occupying social housing such that reductions will be applied to housing benefit payments where tenants are deemed to be under-occupying their homes. This has been called the "bedroom tax".

- 2) Notes that the restrictions are estimated to affect 6,500 council and housing association tenants in Edinburgh.
- 3) Notes that, on 22 January 2013, Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee noted officers' intention to explore options to provide matched funding for the Discretionary Housing Payments fund which would bring the fund up to an additional £2.021 million and that this is aimed at, among other measures, reducing the detrimental impact of the under-occupancy restrictions.
- 4) Notes that a range of actions to mitigate the under-occupancy restrictions are being looked at, including providing offers of reasonable alternative accommodation but that the supply and turnover of smaller accommodation comes nowhere close to meeting the demand.
- 5) Therefore resolves that, in determining when and whether to initiate and pursue proceedings to recover a tenancy as a consequence of rent arrears, the council will:
 - Calculate the sum by which the household's housing benefit payment has been reduced by under-occupancy restrictions
 - Disregard that sum in relation to action for recovery of the tenancy (eviction)."

Motion

Councillor Burgess, with the approval of his seconder, adjusted his motion as follows:-

- 1) To note that Committee shared the concern about the introduction of the "Bedroom Tax", agree to continue the motion for one cycle and request a report on the implications for the Council's Housing Revenue Account and housing service by adopting a "No Eviction" policy as requested by the motion.
- 2) To further agree that, after consideration by the Committee on 16 April 2013, the report be referred to the Health, Wellbeing and Housing Policy Development and Review Sub Committee on 23 April 2013 with a request that the Sub-Committee discuss recommendations for mitigation measures and support for tenants with a view to preventing evictions.

- moved by Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Chapman

Amendment

That no action be taken on the motion by Councillor Burgess.

- moved by Councillor Rose, seconded by Councillor Mowat

Voting

The voting was as follows:

For the Motion (as adjusted)	-	10 votes
For the Amendment	-	3 votes

Decision

To approve the adjusted motion by Councillor Burgess