

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 7 June 2016

Present:-

Councillors Dewhirst, Haines, Prowse, Dent, Jung and Musgrave

Also Present

Chief Operating Officer, Manager Programmes and Resources, Director with responsibility for Finance, Strategic Lead for Human Resources, Strategic Lead Finance, Teignbridge Strata Director and Democratic Services Officer (Committees)

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APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Councillor Dent of East Devon District Council was elected as Chair for the next 12 months.

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APOLOGIES

These were received from Councillors Chapman, Leadbetter, Lyons and Sheldon.

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES

Councillor Phil Wright from Sidmouth Town Council reported that the Manor Pavilion Theatre accounts showed a recharge of £13,500 for PC support and asked how this figure was calculated as it seemed high for the number of PCs at the theatre.

The Strategic Lead Finance reported that the Strata recharge for the theatre would include costs for print and design as well as for ICT which it was believed involved five PCs that were used at the theatre and would include hardware and software support and supply. The recharge was based on these costs and was considered to be reasonable.

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QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES

None.

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ACCESS TO BOARD MINUTES

Members noted that the Strata Board had met and considered the JSC's request for access to Board minutes. The Board fully understood the need for scrutiny members to have sufficient information to undertake the role and was committed to providing appropriate information.

The level of information in Board minutes was operational and related to the day to day management of the company and as such was not appropriate for general release. The Board had reviewed the information currently provided to both the Joint Scrutiny Committee and Joint Executive Committee to assist Councillors to both monitor and develop business.

Members were concerned that they could not fulfil their scrutiny role adequately and ensure the provision of value for money for the public without access to the minutes of the Board. In cases where there was sensitive personal information contained within them, these could be redacted.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee:-

- (1) noted the report; and
- (2) requested that Board minutes be made available in Part B of the agenda to both the Strata Joint Scrutiny and Executive Committees

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STRATA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT

The report of the Chief Operating Officer was submitted advising Members on the progress of Strata implementation during 2015/16, including a project outturn assessment against the savings set out in the Business Plan.

Implementing the new IT infrastructure to provide the Global Desktop for all Councils continued to be a central theme within Strata and there were now 569 users of the system within Exeter City Council. There had been good feedback from Exeter City about the installation of Global Desktop. It was now planned to begin the roll out within East Devon District Council. However, there were two software bugs that needed to be fixed before the roll out. It was anticipated that the supplier would be fixing these on the 16 June. The main risk at present was to the telephony project where the key resource was off sick. Strata may need to buy in external resource to ensure this objective was met.

Councillor Prowse reported on the IT problem experienced by Teignbridge DC at the Police Commissioner election count and asked what actions were being taken to overcome these problems. The Chief Operating Officer reported that this had been caused by a mixture of problems which had now all been tested and dealt with and should not reoccur for the EU Referendum count.

The Chief Operating Officer provided details of a number of security attacks on the systems which were being defended but emphasised the importance of not being complacent. He reported on his concerns that Strata may need additional assistance in dealing with future attacks as they were getting more sophisticated and questioned whether there was sufficient in-house expertise to deal with these in the future.

The revenue costs had come in better than forecast with £230,000 saved against and original target of £262,000. Members requested that a traffic light system for issues contained in the report be reinstated for the next meeting. It was noted that there would also be a more detailed report on convergence and other business systems at the next meeting.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

STRATA BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 4 : 2015/16

The report of the Director with responsibility for Finance was submitted advising Members on the financial progress of Strata during 2015/16, including the refund reflecting the savings made in the year.

Strata was looking to refund a total of £230,000 back to the three Councils, having been given a total of £5.752 million to run IT services in 2015/16 along with funding for various capital projects. The Company also maintained an account for additional purchases throughout the year, which is invoiced to each Council based on actual purchases made. It was noted that turnover now was £6.5 million.

The Director with responsibility for Finance reported that there had been a significant improvement in reducing the pension fund liabilities to Strata which was a benefit to the business. The Committee wished to congratulate Strata and its staff on the work undertaken so far and wished the progress made to be maintained.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

STRATA BOARD ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The report of the Strata Board Annual Work Plan 2016/17 was submitted and the Committee Members accepted the benefits of seeing the work plan.

A Member of the Committee asked whether there had been any interest from other local authorities in Devon in joining Strata. It was noted that there had been some interest expressed and the Committee Members noted the need to look at joining mechanisms for the future and the financial terms.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part I, Schedule 12A of the Act.

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE REPORT

The Alternate Director (HR & OD Lead) presented the Human Resources update report. Members noted that from the outset, the Human Resources strategy, advice, consultation with the Board, UNISON, employee representatives and staff had been consistent. They also noted that the company would need to determine the structure before new terms were offered and that individuals would not be forced to take Strata terms unless they were being offered new roles in that structure.

Additionally, from the outset, the HR strategy and advice to Strata was that although harmonisation of terms was the ultimate aim, new terms needed to be offered for existing roles where it was affordable and suited the needs of the business. Agreement to the restructure proposals was given to the Board by the JEC in October 2015. Delivery of the restructure had been delayed to date due to the delay in providing job descriptions and job evaluation forms to HR.

The results of the Staff engagement survey had been published and were available on the Strata internet. It had been recommended that the Strata management team draw up an action plan on feedback received from the survey and help improving towards the attainment of Investors in People.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the progress of the Human Resources report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.50 pm)

Chair