

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 23 APRIL 2013

### Present

G Butland (Vice-Chairman)	J Pike
W J C Dick	I Pummell
A Hedley	J Roberts
M Mackrory (Chairman)	Mrs A Turrell
Mrs V Metcalfe	R Walters (substitute)
G Mitchinson	B Wood

Councillor M Lager was also in attendance.

The following officers were present in support of the meeting:

Robert Fox	Governance Officer
Graham Hughes	Committee Officer

### 1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported apologies for absence from Councillors N Edey (for whom Councillor R Walters substituted), S Mayzes, M Page and J Young.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

No other declarations of interest were made.

### 3. Minutes and Matters Arising

#### (a) Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### (b) Matter Arising - Localism

A further report (ES/13/13) on Localism from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning responding to issues raised at the previous meeting was received and noted.

#### (c) Matter Arising – Coroner’s Service

A further report (ES/14/13) from Alex Hallam, Assistant County Solicitor – People, comprising a copy of the County Council’s response to the current Government consultation on amalgamating some jurisdictions, was received. Councillor David Finch, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, and Margaret Lee, Executive Director of Finance, respectively the Cabinet Member and Executive Director with responsibility for the Coroner’s Service, were in attendance during discussion of this matter.

One of the questions included in the consultation had been whether new coroner's rules should include a target date for completing inquests. Whilst this might be achievable for routine cases the County Council had opined that it may impinge unfavourably on the quality of inquests, particularly those that were more complex. It had also been felt that it might be unworkable when considered alongside the proposed time requirement for notifying interested persons of the arrangements for an inquest hearing outlined in another part of the consultation.

Some Members encouraged that stronger representations should be made to align all elements of accountability, cost, control and responsibility for the service with the Ministry of Justice. The Cabinet Member agreed to raise the matter at a future meeting of the Local Government Association as any such representations to Government would need to have wider support.

It was also highlighted that there were proposals to transfer the responsibility for the Medical Examiner to county councils in October 2014.

The consultation had been targeted at both Coroners and those responsible for providing local Coroners Services, with specific questions in the consultation document targeted for each. Some Members suggested that it would have been useful information to have had this distinction more clearly indicated on the questionnaire and/or in the report submitted to the Committee.

The report was **noted**. Margaret Lee was thanked for her attendance and then she left the meeting.

#### 4. Transformation II

The Committee considered a report (ES/15/13) on Transformation II from Councillor David Finch, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme, and Keir Lynch, Executive Director for Transformation, who were both in attendance.

During discussion the following were highlighted and/or discussed:

- (a) The County Council in future would be more agile, flexible, slimmer and more commercially aware. It would need to be proactive rather than reactive in planning for changes in demand for, and expectations of, its services. However, a balance would need to be drawn between trying to meet all customer demands and expectations and the provision of affordable and effective customer services.
- (b) Some Members were concerned that there could be an increased risk of reputational damage as the level of commissioned services from outside providers increased. It was confirmed that existing contracts for services already included reporting and quality indicators, together with penalty clauses, and that, to date, these had proved to be successful in maintaining satisfactory contract performance. However, it was acknowledged that monitoring processes for procurement would need to remain under review and it was possible that these may need to be further enhanced as the County Council evolved further into being a commissioning organisation;

- (c) It was stressed that, in future, there would be less emphasis on prescriptive and rigid performance metrics as the organisation would need to be able to quickly react and adapt to changes in the business and service environment.
- (d) Regular communications on Transformation II were being sent to employees. Tier 2 appointments had been announced and these appointees were operating in shadow form.
- (e) Transformation II was forecast to save £200m which had been predicated on three factors: the anticipated increase in demand for services, inflationary pressures and anticipated changes in funding. Councillor Finch was confident that the savings target would be achieved.

The report was **noted**. Councillor Finch and Keir Lynch were both thanked for their attendance and then left the meeting.

#### **5. Date of Next Meeting**

A schedule of meeting dates for the 2013/14 municipal year would be agreed with the Committee Chairman after the County Council elections in May 2013.

#### **6. Chairman's Concluding Remarks**

As this was the last meeting before the County Council elections, the Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman and committee members for their contribution to the deliberations of the Committee during the time of his Chairmanship. Thanks were also extended to the supporting officers.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 10.38 am.

Chairman