

# CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Thursday, 31 March 2016 at the Concorde Room, Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr Jacqui Vosper (Chairman)  
Cllr D.S. Gladstone (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr D.M.T. Bell  
Cllr D.E. Clifford  
Cllr Barbara Hurst  
Cllr B. Jones  
Cllr G.B. Lyon  
Cllr P.F. Rust

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor David Welch.

## **13. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th November, 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

## **14. LAND CHARGES**

The Panel had invited Diane Milton (Legal Services Manager) and David Caldwell (Local Land Charges Manager) to the meeting to provide an overview of the Local Land Charges function. Members noted the definition of Land Charges “obligations, restrictions or prohibition on a parcel of land that were binding on successive owners”. Members had also been provided with a list of the legislation that covered Local Land Charges and a glossary of jargon that could be referred back to.

The Local Land Charges (LLC) register had been made up of twelve parts and was now an electronic database. This had enabled an automatic search facility that included spatial extent, along with unique property reference numbers (UPRN), which allowed all Council systems to communicate without officer intervention.

The Local Land Charges System environment was described to Members and was split into three areas: back office, front office and market. It was noted that the front office’s Official Local Land Charges Search was in direct competition with personal search companies.

The Panel was informed of the different search forms used; LLC1 and CON29(R) and CON29(O). The LLC1 had been the official certificate of search and it was noted that it had been a statutory request for a local authority to search the LLC register for entries affecting a property and to provide a schedule of registrations and

a certificate signed by the 'proper officer' stating how many LLC registrations had affected the land. The CON29(R) Required Enquiries form was a non-statutory form that had consisted of an agreed set of questions, which had been created by the Law Society, to be answered by local authorities. The CON29(O) Optional Enquiries form covered a number of areas including public paths and byways, advertisements and parks and countryside. It was heard that the LLC team had worked with a number of other Council departments during the process of preparing responses.

The Panel was shown search fees that were charged by neighbouring authorities, these ranged between £90 – £171.50 as search fees were unregulated and were set by each local authority on a cost recovery basis. It was heard that the annual net should be placed in the LLC reserve so that over a period of three consecutive financial years the total income from charges and recharges should not exceed the total costs of granting access to property records. Members were shown a graph of the LLC income between 2005 – 2014. It highlighted the competition between personal search companies as there had been a drop in income when these companies had started to carry out searches. However, it was noted that the Council's income had started to increase again.

The Panel was advised that regulations had enabled authorities to charge a fee for personal searches of the LLC Register. However, this had been revoked in August, 2010 as the regulations had been found to be incompatible with the Environmental Information Regulations, 2004. This had resulted in a number of legal actions taking place that had aimed to recover fees paid by personal searchers between 2005-2010. It was noted that the defence had been coordinated through the Local Government Association. The claims had been settled in 2015 by agreement reached through alternative dispute resolution.

It was explained that there were plans for the LLC register to transfer from local authorities to the Land Registry as part of the Infrastructure Act 2015. This would result in the Land Registry providing registration and local search services while local authorities would continue to collect and update information in the register and answer CON29 enquiries. Members noted that preparations for the transfer were underway and this was expected to take effect in late 2017 with the process being completed by 2023.

The Panel **NOTED** the presentation.

## 15. **MAYORAL COSTS**

The Head of Democratic and Customer Services, Andrew Colver, was invited to the Panel to provide the background to the Mayoralty arrangement and an overview of the change in costs over the years. Members were reminded that the Mayor acted as the Queen's representative in the Borough and the mayoralty had been part of civic life in Rushmoor for 42 years. The primary duties of the Mayor were listed, these included attending functions and religious services and undertaking official openings and presentations in the Borough and charring Council meetings. The Panel was informed that the Mayoralty was well supported within the community and the demand for the Mayor's attendance had continued to be high, with the Mayor attending over 300 events per year.

Members were advised that the Mayor's main adviser was the Chief Executive with further support from his Executive Assistant and the Democratic Support Team. The Mayor was also supported by the Deputy Mayor, who deputised for the Mayor at some events. This gave Deputy Mayors a chance to experience the Mayoralty before their Mayoral year.

The Mayoral allowance was used to cover expenses of the role. The Mayor also received a £1,000 allowance for chairing Council meetings. It was noted that this had been a part of the recent review by the Remuneration Panel of the Members Allowances Scheme and the report was expected in the following few weeks.

The Panel was reminded that as part of a service costs review in 2010/11 there had been a restructure of the Mayoral support. It had been seen as important to ensure that the Mayoralty should 'fit for purpose'.

The Panel was informed of the current staffing arrangements, which were provided directly through Democratic and Customer Services and divided between two staff. Their roles had included administrative work, i.e. the Mayor's diary, organising specific events and dealing with the finances. The Macebearer had important ceremonial and security roles to carry out. This post was under review following the retirement of the post holder and this support had a potential to be provided from staff within the Council but in most occasions the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were expected to drive themselves to events and engagements.

The Panel noted that the Council supported four fundraising events each year, and also organised civic events, e.g. Remembrance Sunday. It was heard that these events took substantial resources to put on but supported the Mayor's chosen charities.

Members were provided with some comparative cost data that had been obtained from other similar authorities, which had shown only a few differences between the budgets.

The Panel was informed that a Mayoral Protocol was in the process of being prepared and aimed to outline the Mayor's roles and responsibilities, what the Council would provide and working and financial arrangements. It was noted that the protocol would provide clarity and guidance and would be included in the induction process for the Mayor elect.

It was concluded that the Mayor had played a large part in shaping the Council's public image and the Mayor regularly received positive feedback and repeat requests. The Council was in a challenging financial position but recognised the value of the Mayoralty. The Mayoralty would continue to receive support from volunteers and it was believed that the protocol would help to provide clarity.

Andrew Colver answered questions on a number of issues including the Mayoral Car and condensing support from Members. It was requested that the 'demand' for the Mayor be recorded by staff in the future. It was also agreed that the possibility of providing a Members' badge should be investigated.

The Panel **NOTED** the presentation and requested that the issues raised be examined further.

## 16. **SYSTEMS THINKING**

The Panel welcomed Corporate Director, Ian Harrison, and two members of the Systems Thinking Team, Lorraine Murray and Jo Cohen, who had been invited to the meeting to provide a cost-benefit analysis of systems thinking.

Members were reminded of the purpose and ultimate aim of systems thinking. It was noted that the team had carried out a number of service reviews and had provided coaching support to some managers that had enabled them to support other systems thinking reviews and processes.

The Panel was informed of the current staff structure, which consisted of two permanent FTEs and one seconded part-time FTE as well as allocated time from a Corporate Director. The 2015/16 budget totalled £163,920 which was re-charged across the Council using a combined method of actual assignments and general headcount. Members were guided through an indicative cost analysis of the service, this analysis showed a notional daily rate of £255 compared to consultant day-rates for improvement work of £500- £1,400. It was noted that Vanguard had cost the Council £1,000 per day for an assignment and £1,400 per day on a call-off basis plus expenses.

It was noted that Rushmoor's systems thinking reviews had had a number of positive outcomes with many improvements in service areas. Rushmoor had also had visits from other local authorities and businesses. Reviews had also made a large amount of savings across different service areas, for example, £100-120,000 per annum in Benefits; these savings had been achieved through staffing adjustments but had been recurrent and sustainable.

The Panel was given examples of reviews that had been carried out in Personnel, Channel Shift and Parking.

Members heard that the future options for the Systems Thinking team were to have an on-going commitment to the delivery of the 8-Point Plan, supporting the Organisational Development (OD) Programme and to provide general coaching and support and development to all staff at all levels. There had also been an option for potential developments in the voluntary sector and other bodies supported by the Council.

It was concluded that systems thinking had been in Rushmoor for over ten years and had made significant sustainable service improvements during that time. The Council's own internal team had been established for over five years and this team had been integral to the delivery of elements of both the 8-Point Plan and OD Programme.

The Panel **NOTED** the presentation.

## 17. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel **NOTED** the current Work Programme and **AGREED** to hold a workshop at the beginning of the next Municipal Year to create a programme of work for 2016/17.

The meeting closed at 9.47 pm.

CLLR JACQUI VOSPER (CHAIRMAN)

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