

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT REVIEW

NOTE OF MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2015

Present:

Councillor Ben Stokes (review coordinator)
Councillor Sylvia Bennett
Councillor Peter Marchington

Councillor Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Cabinet Member for Finance
Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact
Alan Turner, Contracts and Procurement Manager

Bob Pullen, Policy and Performance Officer

Introduction

1. The purpose of the meeting was to enable the Contracts and Procurement Scrutiny Review Team to share some of their findings from their work with the Cabinet Member and lead officers and help them come to a decision on whether the review warranted a formal report and set of recommendations.

Review findings

2. Cllr Stokes outlined the key findings of the review and invited the views of the Cabinet Member and lead officers.

3. Dave Thomas said that as part of the Council's reform of its procurement processes, a central contracts management team had been established to ensure that large contracts were professionally monitored and managed. The team members were able to go out into the borough and respond to any problems that residents or others raised whether it be waste collection, cleansing, grounds maintenance, leisure centres or public conveniences. The team also provided a central source of information and advice for other services who let smaller contracts relating to individual service areas (eg. Property Services, Environmental Response Team, Economic Development Team etc).

4. Cllr Stokes said the review team had spotted that some contracts still included references to certain community facilities being maintained, even though those assets had been transferred. Dave Thomas responded that the general policy was to take account of any benefits a community organisation derived from an existing council contract as part of the terms of the transfer.

5. Cllr Bennett raised an issue regarding grounds maintenance in her constituency which Alan Turner agreed to follow up separately and provide Alan Turner with specifics.

6. Cllr Marchington questioned the extent to which the Council used standard terms and conditions in its contracts. Alan Turner confirmed that all recently procured Council's contracts used standard terms and conditions.

7. Cllr Marchington asked how local businesses could find out about tendering for council contracts. Alan Turner said that the Council's Economic Development Unit alerted Swale businesses through alerts generated by the South East Business Portal. Councillor Dewar-Whalley said that it was important local businesses had the opportunity to bid for council contracts and that the council publicised the opportunities regularly through the Business e-Bulletin and Inside Swale.

Conclusion

8. Cllr Stokes thanked the Cabinet Member and lead officers for attending.

9. Cllr Stokes would consider with the review team whether the review findings justified a formal report and/or recommendations and to put this before the Scrutiny Committee.