

Minutes of: PERFORMANCE TASK GROUP

Date of Meeting: 22 November 2006

PRESENT: Councillor Sandiford (in the Chair)
Councillors Dickinson, Lynskey, Morris, Lamb,
Neal and Forshaw

IN ATTENDANCE: Linda Fisher, Head of Planning, Legal and
Democratic Services
Lesley Noble, Head of Policy Change Management
Liz Murphy, Head of Human Resources
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Starkey
Councillor Janet Graham, Portfolio Holder, Human
Resources and Member Development
Councillor Brian Essex, Portfolio Holder, Policy
and Performance

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised under this item.

4. CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed Members that the Housing Strategy Officer, at the last meeting, indicated that within the Housing Strategy Action Plan 3 targets had not been started, one being homelessness. A seminar was held by Green Vale Homes and initiatives were being put in place to launch the homelessness project.

The Chair received information from the Head of Economic Regeneration and Strategic Housing relating to Haslingden and whether or not they would be eligible for European Funding as Haslingden came under Hyndburn Council in the European Parliamentary Elections. It was confirmed that Haslingden was not eligible for any European Funding.

The Chair asked the Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services to make enquiries on this issue and report back to the Task Group.

In relation to the need for additional staff within the Economic Regeneration service area, which was highlighted at the last meeting, the Chair informed Members that Lancashire County Council had now approved its funding contribution to this team which would include a Project Manager. A formal joint funding bid from the Council and the County Council was due to go to North West Development Agency shortly.

The Chair informed the Task Group that she had met with the Audit Commission during a recent Use of Resources Audit and she presented evidence which confirmed that Overview and Scrutiny functions were being fulfilled by the Council.

The Chair referred to the review of the pilot arrangements and she requested that Members complete the evaluation forms which had been sent out by the Scrutiny Officer as soon as possible to enable a report to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 18 December.

5. EQUALITIES UPDATE

The Head of Human Resources presented the Equalities Update which advised Members on the implications of the Disability Equality Duty and the draft Disability Equality Scheme.

The Head of Human Resources reported that the Disability Equality Duty would come into effect in December 2006 and the Council was required to demonstrate how it had promoted equality and how it had actively engaged with the community. She reported that a 3 year action plan was being developed on measures the Council was going to undertake to promote this activity.

In response to a question about membership of the Equalities Implementation Group the Head of Human Resources reported that this was an officer working group, in addition there was an Equalities Consultation Group attended by Members of the Community. It was noted that Councillor Forshaw expressed an interest in serving on the Equalities Implementation Group and it was agreed that Councillor Steen as Equalities Champion should also be invited to attend

The meeting discussed the Council's Complaints Procedures and the Head of Human Resources indicated that there was an Appointments and Appeals Committee which consists of 3 - 5 Members which are chosen from all Members on a rota basis to deal with Appeals.

It was agreed that all Members should have training on dealing with matters relating to appointments and appeals to enable a wider group of Members being able to serve on the Committee. The Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Member Development agreed to take this to the Member Development Working Group for discussion.

The Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services agreed to look at this through the Constitution Working Group.

Resolved:

1. To note the implications of the Disability Equality Duty and the development of the Disability Equality Scheme.
2. To note progress in relation to the Equality Standard
3. To note the contents of the monitoring report
4. That the Council's Equalities Champion and one other Member be invited to attend the Equalities Implementation Group

6. MANAGEMENT OF ABSENCE

The Head of Human Resources presented a report outlining the current position of absence levels within the Council, indicating that the management of absence would continue and a number of incentives would be considered as part of the reward and retention strategy which would be considered by Cabinet in January 2007.

A system of monthly reporting to the Leader, Portfolio Holder and Senior Management Team had been established, which illustrated that for the last two months no individual employee had hit the target levels of four periods of absence in 12 months.

The Head of Human Resources reported that since the last report to the Group in March 2006 there had been significant improvements in the sickness absence levels, with the current days lost equating to 5.75 days per full time equivalent against a target of 5.95 days.

The Head of Human Resources reported that the Council was proactive in managing long term absences and Managers were being supported by Human Resources in terms of procedures. She highlighted that staff were visited at home and given additional support through medical referrals.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

2. That a further report be presented to the Task Group in six months.

7. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER 2

Councillor Essex informed Members that he had recently taken up the post of Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance and had met regularly with the Head of Policy and Change Management.

He explained that the Covalent training had been extended to Cabinet Members and Officers and there are proposals to extend this to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, followed by the three Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny. The training would then be rolled out to all Members.

The Portfolio Holder then explained that there was a need for all Members to have access to Council policies and an on-line, A – Z Corporate Library was already available on the Council's web-site for publicly available documents. He reported that the intranet would be used for internal documents.

The Head of Policy and Change presented a report informing Members of the BVPIs that were not currently on track to achieve the targets set against them for Quarter 2. She explained that there had not been any significant changes, since the last quarter report.

Three BVPIs which were on target in Quarter 1 and were now marginally below target for quarter 2, which were;-

- BV 79a – Accuracy of processing HB/CTB claims
- BV 12 – Working days lost due to sickness
- BV 109a – Major applications determined within 13 weeks

The Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services informed Members that 100% target of major applications for October had been met and this would be the same for November. She explained that progress was being made within the Planning Department and that they were working to improve communication with the developers through the establishment of a Developers Forum.

There were 10 BVPIs that were marginally below target in Quarter 1 and were still below target in Quarter 2, as shown in the report.

Many of these were the BVPIs that were now with Capita and it was agreed that these should be looked at closely within Quarter 3, as they had only recently transferred services from the Council to Capita and should be given time to start implementing the improvement plans for these BVPI's.

BV 8, Invoices paid on time was still below target and the Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services explained that whilst many improvements had been implemented by the Finance section, there were a number of contributory reasons why this was happening, including invoices being sent to other departments in error and therefore arriving late in Legal and Democratic Services. It was hoped that improvements would show in Quarter 3, as now when invoices arrive within the office they are date stamped to show when they are actually received.

BV 156, buildings accessible to people with a disability, was also under-target, although it had shown considerable improvement from the last quarter and the Council was 93% compliant with priority 1 and 2 work having been undertaken. Priority 3 and 4 work would be picked up on future repairs and maintenance contracts. The Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services reported that the remaining 7% of work required to achieve 100% compliancy would be completed, and the information would be available in the next Quarter 3 report.

The Chair indicated that she was pleased to note that for quarter 2 all relevant information had been submitted on time.

The Head of Policy and Change Management informed Members that the three most improved BVPIs were:

- Buildings accessible to the public
- Tonnes of household waste
- Number of housing benefit claimants being visited

Members asked that the Officers of the above BVPIs be commended for achieving their targets.

Members questioned why more detailed explanations were not included within the notes section of the Housing Benefits and Council Tax Benefit section of the report and the Chair requested that the officers responsible provide more information within the next report.

Thirty nine BVPIs were reported on a quarterly basis and 3 were reported 3 times a year. A member raised the question on the remaining 48 BVPIs which were reported annually and asked how much information had been received on their progress. The Head of Policy and Change Management indicated that whilst these should be picked up in the meetings that took place between the Heads of Service, their Director and Portfolio Holders, she had received no progress on them.

The Chair and the Portfolio Holder for Performance Management asked the Head of Policy and Change Management to request a 6 month progress report on the 48 BVPIs which currently report at the year-end only.

The Head of Policy and Change Management asked Members if they were happy with the style of the reporting. It was agreed that the front cover of future reports should include the recommendations and the supporting information would be attached as appendices. The Scrutiny Support Officer would provide a template for future use. It was also requested that a further column be added to the Covalent report which indicated whether good performance against each BVPI's was a higher or lower figure.

Resolved:

1. That the Task Group note the levels of performance detailed in the report.
2. That in relation to the style of reporting, a new template would be sent to the Head of Policy and Change Management for future use and that the Covalent report be amended as discussed.
3. That the Task Group continues to monitor performance of the under achieving targets and the Scrutiny Officer make contact with the relevant Heads of Service asking them to attend the next meeting of the Task Group to discuss future improvements.
4. That the Head of Policy and Change Management request a 6 month progress report in respect of all BVPIs returned annually.

8. UPDATE ON THE CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Head of Planning, Legal and Democratic Services presented an update on the progress of the Corporate Governance Principles and highlighted specific areas including improvements to the Overview and Scrutiny process.

She informed Members that the Council's Constitution was being revised with assistance from Members serving on the Constitution Working Group.

The Council was looking at Area Forums and whether or not there should be additional Area Forums throughout the Borough.

There was also a great deal of work being undertaken in Performance Management.

The Committee Services Manager was in the process of developing role descriptions for Members and Portfolio packs for Cabinet Members

which would include, Business Plans, budget information, role descriptions and action plans.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and finished at 8.55pm

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date