

Minutes of: PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 15 September 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Sandiford (Chair)
Councillors L Barnes, Lamb, Neal, Stansfield,
Thorne and Unsworth (substituting for Crawforth)

IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Sugarman, Executive Director – Business (Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Buckle, Head of Customer Services and ICT
Lee Birkett, Project & Performance Improvement Officer
Emma Hussain, Principal Policy Officer
Jenni Cook, Committee Services Officer
Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources
1 member of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Bernard Divine (Co-opted Member), Councillor Crawforth and Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder, Customer Services.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for discussion.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public raised a question about the PA system at a recent Development Control Committee. The comments were noted.

5. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER

Resolved:

That Mr Bernard Divine would be confirmed as an Independent Co-opted member of Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a further 2 years, subject to the protocols contained within the Council's Constitution.

6. CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Stuart Sugarman the Director of Business, to his first Overview and Scrutiny Meeting.

Following the O & S Training in June, we have now asked the IDeA to arrange a further session free of charge for January 2010. This would be based mainly on Cabinet / scrutiny relationships, task group reporting, councillor call for action and scrutiny of partnerships.

The Chair informed the Committee that at the next O & S Management Committee on 28th September 2009 there will be a presentation from the PCT on the progress of the new health build for Rossendale. Also at that meeting the Chair of the LSP Health and Wellbeing Theme group would be delivering a presentation to outline the work of the theme group and what they hope to deliver this year.

She indicated that the final report of the Dental Health Task and Finish group would also be presented at that meeting. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services would be presenting his response to the Grass Cutting Task and Finish Group recommendations. She encouraged Members to attend.

7. OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER/GENERAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

The Director of Business presented a report which highlighted the improvements contained within with Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the year ended 31st March 2009 and the annual update on activities within the Complaints and Feedback Process.

Concerns were expressed by Members in respect of the decline in response times to Ombudsman complaints and the disappointing comments about the Planning Department in the Ombudsman's annual letter. It was noted that improvements had been put in place to ensure departmental compliance with deadlines, and compliance would be monitored closely. In addition, the Planning Unit Manager and/or the Business Unit Manager would be attending complaint handling training in view of the Local Government Ombudsman's report.

The Head of Customer Services and ICT informed Members that work would shortly be carried out to ensure the Customer Services Standards were being complied with.

Discussion took place on the increase in compliments received by the Council, and the Committee requested further information on the large number of compliments received about the Elections Office.

Resolved:

1. That Members note the content of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009.
2. That the Planning Unit Manager be asked to provide a report to Performance Scrutiny on the process for responses to Ombudsman Complaints.

8. CAPITA PERFORMANCE

The Head of Customer Services and ICT gave a brief overview of the Capita contract and performance for the current financial year to date.

The Service Assurance Team continuously monitors performance for Revenues, Benefits, Fraud and Customer Services by measuring service delivery against agreed targets based on local and National Indicators. The Committee received detailed information on the Performance targets and it was noted that the current rate of collection of council tax was one of the highest rates in East Lancashire.

In relation to Housing and Council Tax Benefits 3 year caseload, Rossendale had increased 10.18% since 2007 (6171 in May 2007 to 6799 in May 2009).

The Head of Customer Services and ICT outlined some of the future plans for Customer Services and discussion took place on proposals to increase the opening hours on the One Stop Shop. Consultation would shortly take place on this matter.

The Chair allowed a member of the public to raise a question about offering council tax payments over 12 months, rather than 10 months. The reasons for 10 monthly payments were discussed, however the comments were noted.

The Committee asked that their thanks to the Head of Customer Services and ICT for their hard work in reaching and exceeding targets be placed on record.

Resolved:

That Members note the contents of the report and the improvement in performance of these services and endorse the Service Assurance Team in their work in striving for continuous improvement.

9. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 1

The Principal Policy Officer and the Project and Performance Improvement Officer presented the Quarter 1 Integrated Performance Report for April –June 2009.

The report highlighted the following information:-

- Current performance against the Council's priorities
- Current performance against Local Performance Indicators and national Indicators including the associated action plans
- Position of identified risks
- Complaints
- Compliments

Currently 84% of actions identified within the Corporate Plan were on track to be delivered. The two performance indicators that were not meeting their targets were as follows:

1. LI – 12 working days lost due to sickness absence
2. LI 156 buildings accessible to people with a disability

Members understood and accepted the reasons for not meeting targets, which in relation to L1 -12 working days lost due to sickness was because of a small number of long term sickness cases plus a number of swine flu cases. In relation to L1 -156 buildings accessible to people with a disability, it was noted that the delay was due to a decision on the Marl Pitts Pavilion site.

Discussion took place on DC targets which related to the Planning Department, in particular DC3, DC4, DC6 and DC7 and although these targets were amber, the Committee noted that monitoring should take place in order to prevent slippage. The Director of Business and Planning Unit Manager would be asked to attend the next meeting to update the Committee on progress in achieving these targets.

It was noted that an improvement had been achieved in relation to LI64 (No. of private sector vacant dwellings that are turned into occupation or demolished) and the Head of Service would be asked to attend the next meeting to update the Committee on how this had been achieved.

The Chair allowed a member of the public to ask a question in relation to Financial Monitoring, particularly the reason for an apparent deficit in relation to tipping fees for glass, cans and plastics and onward

transportation of glass, cans and plastics from September. This query would be passed onto the Head of Financial Services for clarification and a response would be given to the member of the public and the Chair.

The Committee noted their disappointment at the slight slippage of invoice payment rates and these comments would be passed on to the Head of Financial Services.

After discussion with the Project and Performance Improvement Officer, the Committee were pleased to learn that the ease with which data was collected in a timely manner from Officers was improving.

Resolved:

1. That levels of performance detailed in the report be noted.
2. That the performance of under-achieving targets continue to be closely monitored and the comments of the Committee be passed to the relevant service area.
3. That the Officers identified above be asked to attend the next meeting of the Committee in order to provide clarification on Member's queries.

10. PROPOSAL FROM PRINCIPAL POLICY OFFICER

The Principal Policy Officer outlined a proposal to Members which would see additional information presented with the Integrated Performance Report. In addition to the report, an update on one or two key projects which were also being monitored by the Programme Board would be provided.

Resolved:

That this proposal be accepted.

The meeting commenced at 6.35pm at finished at 8.30pm

Signed:
(Chair)

Date: