

**Minutes of:** **PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date of Meeting:** 19 October 2010

**PRESENT:** Councillor Sandiford (Chair)  
Councillors Cheetham (substituting for Stansfield),  
Crawforth, Kenyon (substituting for Lamb), Morris  
(substituting for L Barnes), Oakes and Thorne

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager  
Andrew Buckle, Head of Customer Services and ICT  
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources  
Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Customer Services

1 Member of the Public

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barnes, Lamb, Stansfield and Irene Divine, co-opted Member.

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items for discussion.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow members of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

## **6. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Customer Services, and provided an update to Members on the following:

- The visit to Accrington and Rossendale College was to be held on 22 November 2010 at 12.30-3pm with lunch provided.
- A further visit to the Rossendale Primary Health Centre to be arranged in November, following ongoing concerns about the glaucoma service, food for rehabilitation patients, the skin clinic and the x-ray department
- A visit was being arranged to Olive House, which was increasing its rehabilitation beds from 6-14
- Discussion on the Council's IT Security systems – the Head of Customer Services and ICT would provide information within his item on the agenda later in the meeting

The Scrutiny Support Officer circulated information requested at the last meeting, providing information on those service areas which were highlighted in the Complaint's report as providing poor communication.

## **7. LENGTH OF POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Committee and Member Services Manager presented a report on proposals to reduce the length of policies, strategies and committee reports.

Members were asked to consider setting a corporate target to reduce the length of all policies, strategies and committee reports by 40% which would reduce the amount of paper being used and productivity savings in time spent by officers and councillors in reading reports. Members agreed that the 40% figure was an aspirational target.

An example was presented to Members of potential savings from the paper used at last Council meeting, which was approximately £66.

A number of cost saving ideas were presented by Members for consideration, which were as follows:

- If a report, policy or strategy was being presented to more than one Committee a note should be attached to the report asking Members to keep their copy for discussion at another meeting and if there are any amendments these should be sent to members as an appendix.
- Transport arrangements on the agenda should include information about using the Lee Mill bus stop and should only be included on agendas being published on the web for members of the public.

The transport information should not be copied and sent to members.

- Front pages of Committee reports should be revised to include basic contact details, instead of being at the end of the report.
- To save on space, the Community Impact information could be reduced by using smaller type and tick boxes

The Committee and Member Services Manager agreed to take the ideas forward where possible, and Members were in agreement that Officers should be aiming for at least a 40% target.

**Resolved:**

1. That Members recommend to Cabinet that a corporate target be set to reduce the length of all existing policies, strategies and committee reports and that existing documents should be reduced by 40% when being revised.
2. That where possible the shortest reports be listed first on the agenda, unless there are items of significant interest requiring prioritising, or at the discretion of the Chair.

**8. CAPITA MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE**

The Head of Customer Services and ICT presented an update on the Capita contract and a review of the performance for the last financial year.

Information was provided on the following:

Benefit Performance - there was an increase in Housing/Council Tax benefit caseload, with a large proportion of the work now focused on change for existing customers, rather than new claims. Caseloads had increased 7.3% from 6746 in April 2009 to 7240 in March 2010.

Benefit Fraud – the Council is working with Capita to constantly improve the service delivery and had recently procured and introduced the new Fraud database for use by Capita staff.

Council Tax Performance – Council tax out turn at the end of 2009/10 was 97.50% which represents an increase for the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year and was up from 97.40% at the end of 2008/09. The rate in Rossendale being well above the national average of 97%.

National Non Domestic Rates – out turn at the end of 2009/10 was 98.3% which was below the target of 98.6%.

Coventry Call Centre – The Service Assurance Team continue to monitor, on a monthly basis, a random selection of calls to the Call

Centre and following concern about operational procedures a visit was undertaken to get a clearer understanding of procedures. An update report would be discussed at the Operations Board, which two Councillors attend.

One Stop Shop – Customer survey for 2009/10 showed that 94.3% of customers were either very satisfied or satisfied with the waiting time they had experienced. 96.2% of customers who responded to the survey agreed that an average waiting time target of 10 minutes or less was reasonable.

RBC Switchboard – The present switchboard has not made it possible to retrieve performance data and therefore a replacement system had been scoped and hardware and software ordered. There was to be a complete upgrade of telephony on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November.

Customer Complaints related to services outsourced to Capita – Whilst overall level of complaints about services by Capita has risen by 11.4% year on year 14 of the 20 complaints were concerned with bailiffs acting on behalf of the Council to recover arrears of Council Tax.

There was also discussion on the following:

- deferred payments to small businesses of 2 year period
- processing of benefit claims which once was over 120 days, was now below 21 days
- Services which could be used by STAN (Services to a Neighbourhood) including
- Supporting residents who are in arrears by giving them the opportunity to engage with the Council at an early stage
- Debt Advice which was governed by the Financial Services Authority, which was legalised and highly structured.

The Head of Customer Services and ICT indicated that as part of the efficiency savings contracts were being re-engineered to meet the needs. There were several initiatives taking place to improve services provided by Capita.

A Member asked for a copy of the letter sent out to residents who were in arrears and timescales for action to be taken. The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services also agreed to send Members a copy of the procedure before bailiffs become involved in recovery of debt.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services indicated that the key thing was that the Council followed the Bailiff Code of Practice strictly and whilst they were robust, the Council identified the need for bailiffs to improve their record keeping.

## **ICT Security within the Council**

As requested at the last meeting, the Head of Customer Services and ICT explained that the Council abide by Standards set to manage restricted data.

Individual service areas were responsible for maintaining their own data.

The Chair thanked the Head of Service and Portfolio Holders for attending the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm at finished at 8.15pm

Signed: .....  
**(Chair)**

Date: .....