

Minutes of: PERFORMANCE TASK GROUP

Date of Meeting: 21 September 2006

PRESENT: Councillor Sandiford (in the Chair)
Councillors Dickinson, Lynskey, Morris

IN ATTENDANCE: Andrew Buckle, Head of Customer Services and e-Government
Anita Tittensor, Manager of the Assurance Team, Rossendale Borough Council
Andrew Ormerod, Contract Manager, Revenue & Benefits, Capita
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer
Councillor Judith Driver, Portfolio Holder for StreetScene and Liveability

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Thorne

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Forshaw, Lamb, Neal, Farquharson and Carole Todd, Head of Street Scene and Liveability who could not attend due to being held in traffic following a major accident.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised under this item.

4. CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting explaining that this was the first of our task groups to meet within the new pilot arrangements and she explained that as with all of the Task Groups, a report would be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee.

She informed members that both the Scrutiny Support Officer and Committee Services Manager had been asked to present the new pilot arrangements to the Improvement Board and that feedback had been very positive.

The Chair then informed Members that she had recently been interviewed by the Audit Commission in relation to BVPIs and there was an indication that they would be looking closely at the scrutiny of these performance indicators.

5. RECYCLED HOUSEHOLD WASTE

The Chair introduced Councillor Driver, Portfolio Holder for Street Scene and Liveability who would explain to members the reason for the under achieving targets BV 82a (i) and (ii), which had been highlighted in the recent Best Value Performance Indicators report presented to the Audit and Performance Management Committee on 30 August 2006.

Councillor Driver informed Members that she had discussed the results with the Head of Street Scene and Liveability and both agreed that the figures were not exactly correct.

She then explained the changes to waste collection rounds and that tracker systems were now in place which enabled the Council to identify where bins had been collected. Some collections had been missed at various properties, those mainly being OAP accommodation.

There had been problems with vehicles breaking down, although the Council had procured money to buy new vehicles which would be available towards the end of the year.

Councillor Morris highlighted an issue which had been raised at the Area Forum meeting in relation to the type of items which could be recycled and the need for up-to-date information being made available to the public.

One Member suggested that information be published in the quarterly newspaper distributed to householders in the Borough, which would have no cost implications to the Council. Another idea was to include this information on the Council's website.

Councillor Driver updated Members on the different methods of recycling. A Member raised concern about the contamination of some recycling bins, although Members were in agreement that the big issue is trying to change the way of working. Councillor Driver indicated that enforcement was being looked at closely by the Council.

The Council were also pursuing a suitable site for a waste transfer station within the valley.

In relation to collection of data for the Covalent system, Councillor Driver agreed to look at whether people were inputting accurate information into the system.

The Chair thanked Councillor Driver for the information she presented to Members and Councillor Driver indicated that improvements were happening and would continue within this service area.

6. COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION

The Head of Customer Services and e-Government informed Members of the reason for the under achieving targets BV 9 collection of Council Tax, which had been highlighted in the recent Best Value Performance Indicators report presented to the Audit and Performance Management Committee on 30 August 2006.

He indicated that the Council would still be accountable for the collection of BVPIs and that the reasons for under achieving targets included resource problems with staff and computer systems which required replacing. The current position was 0.73% down in recovery of Council Tax.

He explained the improvements ongoing for the collection of Council Tax and the contract with Capita.

The Manager of the Service Assurance Team (SAT), informed members that the team had been set up to monitor the contract with Capita, ensuring continuous improvement. The team would also monitor performance of all BVPI's and local indicators, against targets which have been written into the contract, and would be reviewed annually. The SAT would report monthly to an Operational Board made up of elected members and a senior Manager from Rossendale and Capita.

The contract Manager for Revenue and Benefits at Capita informed Members that Capita were committed to put in major improvements including the recruitment of a Visiting Officer.

He explained that the Council had not reviewed some of its systems for 3 years including the 25% single person discount and empty properties. Capita would review the single person discount yearly and empty properties three times per year. A new Inspector would be employed with 95% of time spent walking round identifying empty properties and also newly built homes to ensure that completion notices are served to enable Council Tax to be charged promptly.

The main improvement is the Electronic Document Management System which would scan every item of post and show whether or not it has to been responded to or if is pending, which would speed up processes.

The Head of Customer Services and e-Government informed Members that there would be penalties and incentives within the Capita contract.

He explained to members that a target of 96.4% would be reached against the 98% Annual target.

The Chair thanked everyone for the information.

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented the draft Terms of Reference for the Task Group, indicating that these would need to be presented to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services for agreement before being accepted by the Group.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and finished at 8.45pm