

Minutes of: PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 28 August 2007

PRESENT: Councillor Sandiford (Chair)
Councillors L. Barnes, Dickinson, Forshaw,
Lamb, Morris and Neal

IN ATTENDANCE: Gary Parson, Housing Research and Strategy Officer
Ilona Snow Miller, Head of Community and Partnerships
Lesley Noble, Head of Policy and Performance
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder, A Well Managed
Council
Councillor Graham, Portfolio Holder, Health and Well
Being
Councillor Pilling
3 Members of the public

MINUTES SILENCE

The meeting observed a minutes silence as a mark of respect for Councillor Peter Gill.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Challinor, Portfolio Holder for Regenerating and Promoting Rossendale.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2007 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised under this item.

5. CHAIRS UPDATE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting indicating that the Scrutiny Support Officer had tabled the responses from both Green Vale Homes and Capita, in relation to Members' questions raised at the last meeting.

A further issue raised at the last meeting was in relation to a Member query and the need for written consent for members to make enquiries on behalf of constituents to take up an issue with the One-Stop Shop.

Concern was raised at the delays by Green Vale Homes to Member's enquiries and indicated that there should be a special telephone number for members to contact staff. The Chair indicated that it would be appropriate to send Green Vale Homes a copy of the legal advice regarding Member enquiries on behalf of constituents.

The Interim Legal and Democratic Services Manager provided Members with advice which had been tabled at the meeting.

Councillor Essex suggested that the information should also be included in the next Member's Bulletin so that all Members are aware of the procedure.

The Chair gave an update on the forthcoming Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee meeting which was scheduled to be held on 25 September, indicating that an invite had been sent to the Principal of Accrington and Rossendale College, together with David Ingham, Chair of the LSP and Governor of the College. The purpose of the invite was for the Council to be informed of what impact, if any, the closure has had on the number of students applying this year from the Rossendale area.

Councillor Driver and the Head of Street Scene and Liveability would also be attending to give an update of the allocation of new litter bins the Borough. They would also be discussing the results of the recent questionnaire which had been sent to all Members.

The Chair informed the Committee that a small response group had been set up to respond to the consultation on the changes to social care for adults, as a response had been needed by 31 August. The Chief Executive would look at the response and sign on behalf of the Council.

6. HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Housing Research and Strategy Officer presented an update report on the targets/outputs and achievements of the Housing Strategy Action Plan over the last year. He indicated that this was the

second report within the Strategy and the last report would be presented in 12 months, before a new Strategy was produced.

Since the last report, 11 additional actions had been completed within the Strategy and the number of targets not yet started yet or not yet achieved target had been reduced from 8 down to 3.

One of the targets not yet achieved related to temporary accommodation and the need to place people in Bed and Breakfast accommodation or hostel accommodation, as there were no properties available.

One of the key targets achieved within the second year of review had been the development of the Affordable Housing Strategy and the development of the Empty Homes Strategy, which would help drive forward the need for affordable housing in the Borough.

It was envisaged that those targets not yet achieved would be achieved by the end of the final year and that overall there was a positive direction of travel.

Both Members of the public and Councillors asked a number of questions in relation to the following:

- The number of affordable housing within the Borough
- Social Housing
- Private Sector Housing
- Temporary Accommodation
- Letting Policy
- Empty Homes Strategy

The Housing Research and Strategy Officer responded to the questions.

As the Housing Research and Strategy Officer was leaving the Council to take up a new position, Members thanked him for his work over the years with the Council.

Resolved:

That the report and achievements to date be noted

7. GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The Head of Community and Partnerships presented the results of the general household survey 2006/07 and the actions being taken by the Council to ensure quality services are delivered to our customers.

It was a Government requirement that the survey should be undertaken every three years and the results had to be verified by the Audit Commission.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Well Being indicated that the Council had received a good response to the survey, indicating that for the survey to be valid the Council had to receive 1100 completed surveys and they had actually received 1411 surveys.

As a result of the findings all Heads of Service had been asked to demonstrate within the report, how they were reacting to the survey results in order to achieve service improvements.

35% of people indicated that they were satisfied with Council services, which was an improvement to three years ago when the result was 27%. Nationally there was a 2% decrease in overall satisfaction.

A number of questions were raised by both the public and Council members, mainly in relation to litter around the Borough, waste collections, recycling and services for young people.

The Chair indicated that Heads of Service and Portfolio Holders should take ownership of comments within the survey and initiate improvements where needed.

Resolved

That Heads of Service and their Portfolio Holders should be asked to attend future meetings of the Performance Scrutiny Committee in order to inform Members of plans to ensure that any area identified as need for improvement within the survey so this could be looked at by the Committee in more detail.

8. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER 1

Councillor Essex, Portfolio Holder for a Well Managed Council, presented the report of the Head of Policy and Performance which detailed those indicators not achieving their targeted levels of performance at the end of Quarter 1 together with the progress of the Council's performance in relation to all other BVPIs and Local Area Agreement measures. Councillor Essex also provided details of the Review on Data Quality which was being undertaken by the Audit Commission in September 2007. He asked Members for comments on how they could improve the way that reports were currently presented.

The Portfolio Holder commented that to be able to scrutinise appropriately there was a need to receive concise and relevant information.

In terms of the targets, those BVPIs which show as a % are easy to understand, but other targets are more difficult and it was suggested that some targets need to be more descriptive. It was commented that the note sections of the report, although brief are essential, as they provide the relevant information that Councillors require.

The Head of Policy and Change Management informed members that the agreed policy was that all performance information be input into Covalent by the 10th of each month to ensure timescales were met. Heads of Service had asked that before the final report was published, they would have sight of this to be able to comment on the notes being included in the report. The Portfolio Holder indicated that this process could add a further layer of administration into the procedure. The Head of Policy and Performance agreed that she would discuss this issue further with Heads of Service and that a strict time-table and procedure would have to be agreed with them as regards any requested changes.

The Head of Policy and Performance reported that focus had been on improving the publication of performance information, both internally and externally, to help enable understanding of the Council's performance.. Good progress had been made in getting more performance information out to both Members and staff, together with articles in Rossendale Alive for residents. Discussions had taken place with the Communications Manager and the Web Developer, with a view to developing a dedicated area devoted to the Council's performance within the Council's internet site. The Head of Policy and Performance reported that any further ideas from Members in relation to this would be welcomed.

The Head of Policy and Performance presented a brief summary of the report, indicating that in respect of BV79a (accuracy of processing new Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit claims), this target had not been achieved. The Committee raised concern that as the target only allows for errors on two cases from a selected 500 cases and three cases were found to be in error on the first quarter, the annual target was no longer achievable.

It was requested that the Portfolio Holder, the Head of Customer Services and e Government, the Manager of Capita and the Manager of the Service Assurance Team attend the next meeting to provide an explanation on how this had occurred and what they are doing to ensure improvements could be made.

In relation to BV8 (invoices paid on time), it was noted that although this was only slightly below target, it was agreed that it should continue to be monitored as this had been an issue the same time last year. Councillor Essex, as Portfolio Holder for A Well Managed Council explained the processes put in place and indicated that improvements should start to show.

The BV82a (i) % of Household Waste Recycled was also below target and it was agreed to monitor this within the next Quarter report.

In relation to the target for BV 183b (length of stay in temporary accommodation) and taking into consideration the fact that people had to be placed in temporary accommodation outside of the Borough, Members indicated that this would be a piece of work that could be taken up through a Task and Finish Group, if possible later in the year.

The Head of Policy and Performance presented an update on the Performance Management and Data Quality Action Plan at August 2007, indicating that there would be an inspection by the Audit Commission in September to monitor how the action plan was performing.

An area that had not been achieved was the adoption of a 'data sharing protocol'. Councillor Essex indicated that the Council had contributed to the development of the Data Sharing Policy for the Lancashire Local Area Agreement, which covered all major partners, but this was still to be finalised.

In line with good practice the Head of Policy and Performance had reviewed the strategy and action plan and suggested that it be amended to include the following proposals to further strengthen the Council's approach to performance management.

Proposed improvements for 2007/8 onwards:

- More transparent monitoring of Business Plans – suggestion for Portfolio Holders & Heads of Service to report to Performance Scrutiny on an annual basis
- Tighten up current procedures for existing local performance indicators
- Undertake a complete review of all performance indicators by March 2008 in preparation for deletion of most BVPI's
- Performance of our Partners - review the existing arrangements for reporting the performance of the Council's partners and their arrangements for securing high quality data
- Increase the public's access to information on how the Council was performing, work has commenced, but any further ideas would be welcomed
- Improve the implementation of internal data quality assurance mechanisms throughout the Council

Members supported these proposals and consideration was given by Members as to how Performance Scrutiny should monitor the Business Plans of each service area.

Resolved:

1. That the Performance Scrutiny Committee notes the levels of performance detailed in the report.
2. That the Performance Scrutiny Committee continues to monitor performance of BV 79a and BV 8 which were both under-achieving targeted levels of performance
3. That the Portfolio Holder, the Head of Customer Services and e Government, the Manager of Capita and the Manager of the Service Assurance Team be requested to attend the next meeting to provide an explanation on how improvements could be made.
4. That the Policy and Performance Team continue to use the same content, style and format for their reports and that they ask the Heads of Service to ensure they check the notes section of the service area before it is input onto the covalent system.
5. That Members support the proposals put forward by the Portfolio Holder and Head of Policy and Performance, in particular, that each Portfolio Holder and Head of Service be invited to future meetings of the Performance Scrutiny Committee to report progress on the implementation of their Business Plan

9. FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNGER PEOPLE'S CHAMPION

Councillor Essex reported that he was appointed as Children and Younger People's Champion at Annual Council in May 2006, which coincided with the introduction of a duty on District Councils to contribute to the Every Children Matters (ECM) agenda.

He indicated that Rossendale was good in terms of the ECM agenda, indicating that all the High Schools in the Borough, including Tor View had produced results well above the national average.

Every single section of each service area Business Plan includes ECM and Rossendale Leisure Trust and Green Vale Homes were looking at what they could do for young people.

Councillor Essex explained that Democratic Services were working on Local Democracy Week and had invited High Schools within the Borough to nominate 2 representatives to make up a Youth Cabinet.

A member asked how it would be possible to retain young people in the Borough and Councillor Essex indicated that the Local Strategic Partnership was working to re-establish Higher Education in Rossendale and Alder Grange was now linked in with Edge Hill.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.10pm.

Signed.....
(Chair)

Dated