

## BUDGET & PERFORMANCE PANEL

2.00 P.M.

28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2004

**PRESENT:-** Councillors K. Budden (Chairman), J. Gilbert (Vice-Chairman), M. D. Greenall, A. Johnson, J. Kirkman (part), P. Robinson and J. Whitelegg.

Officers in attendance:

Corporate Director (Central Services)  
Head of City Contract Services – for Minute No. 10  
Chief Revenues Officer – for Minute No. 10  
L. Stokes – Best Value Officer – for Minute No. 10  
A. Clarke – Accountancy Services Manager – for Minute No. 11  
J. Doble – Principal Democratic Support Officer  
L. Ellis – Democratic Support Officer

Apologies for absence:

Councillors T. Clifford and R. J. Sherlock.

### 9 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2004 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 10 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Chairman welcomed Mark Davies, Head of City Contract Services, to the meeting and explained the Panel's role.

The Head of City Contract Services outlined the background to each of the performance indicators identified by the Panel as being below standard. He particularly focussed on performance indicator BV84 in respect of the kilograms of household waste collected per head of population. He explained the difference between a waste collection authority and a waste disposal authority and how this impacted upon the indicator. Members discussed the difficulties being experienced with the prevalence of fly-tipping across the district. The Head of City Contract Services explained that the rolling out of bins for green waste had resulted in an increase in the weight of rubbish collected due to the fact that green waste was particularly heavy. He further explained that whilst the Council was good at recycling, they were not as good at encouraging people to minimise waste. In response to questions from Members, the Head of City Contract Services advised that the green waste collected was being used to cap the top of Salt Ayre landfill site. He also explained the plans in place to deal with waste, once Salt Ayre was closed for landfill. Members requested the Head of City Contract Services to circulate a summary sheet of the litter statistics he had provided at the meeting with the Minutes.

It was proposed by Councillor J. Whitelegg and seconded by Councillor J. Kirkman:

“That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be recommended to establish a Task Group to prepare an anti-litter strategy for the District, which should include a clear definition of its purpose and agreement on acceptable standards of cleanliness.”

On being put to the vote, all Members voted in favour of the proposal, whereupon the Chairman declared the motion to be carried.

It was then proposed by Councillor K. Budden and seconded by Councillor T. Johnson:

“That a letter be sent to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister setting out the Panel’s concerns about performance indicator BV84 and the nationwide problems resulting from excessive packaging of goods.”

On being put to the vote, all Members voted in favour of the proposal, whereupon the Chairman declared the motion to be carried.

In response to questions from Members, Liz Stokes, the Council’s Best Value Officer, explained that in the past a commentary sheet had been circulated with the performance indicators providing a space for explanations of the facts behind the figures. She advised that it had not been well utilised and therefore had not been included this year.

It was proposed by Councillor M. D. Greenall and seconded by Councillor J.. Whitelegg:

“That a commentary form be re-introduced for the 2004/5 performance indicators.”

On being put to the vote, all Members voted in favour of the proposal, whereupon the Chairman declared the motion to be carried.

**(The Head of City Contract Services left the meeting.)**

The Chairman welcomed Richard Mason, Chief Revenues Officer, to the meeting and explained the Panel’s role. He also emphasised that the Panel were working from the 2003/4 figures.

The Chief Revenues Officer explained that the performance indicators were not the only way that the Revenues & Benefits Service had of measuring their performance. He advised that they were also measured against the Performance Standards Framework – consisting of 7 modules including over 670 individual standards. He explained that the Service had been rated as fair - good and that, as no authority had been rated good or excellent, they were therefore in the top band in the country. He explained that the Service was moving towards where the Government wanted them to be. The Chief Revenues Officer explained that following the Council’s commitment of further resources with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003 the Service had steadily improved. However, as the Best Value performance indicators were averaged across the full 12 months of the year, the 2003/4 figures did not accurately reflect the Service’s current position. The Chief Revenues Officer provided Members with examples of the current position on the performance indicators that had been highlighted as under-performing and he was requested to circulate these up-to-date figures with the Minutes of the meeting. Members congratulated the Chief Revenues Officer and his team for their hard work and impressive achievement.

It was proposed by Councillor T. Johnson and seconded by Councillor J. Kirkman:

“That a letter be sent by the Chairman, on behalf of the Budget & Performance Panel, congratulating the Chief Revenues Officer and his team on their hard work and impressive achievement.”

On being put to the vote, all Members voted in favour of the proposal, whereupon the Chairman declared the motion to be carried.

**(The Chief Revenues Officer left the meeting.)**

The Best Value Officer advised the Panel of a new software package that had been purchased on a trial basis to assist with performance management. Members agreed that they would welcome a presentation on the new system at a future meeting.

**(The Best Value Officer left the meeting.)**

James Doble, Principal Democratic Support Officer, advised Members that following requests from Councillors T. Johnson and J. Whitelegg, further information had been provided on a number of performance indicators. Members noted the comments.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Head of City Contract Services be requested to circulate a summary sheet of the litter statistics he had provided at the meeting with the Minutes.
- (2) That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be recommended to establish a Task Group to prepare an anti-litter strategy for the District, which should include a clear definition of its purpose and agreement on acceptable standards of cleanliness.
- (3) That a letter be sent to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister setting out the Panel's concerns about performance indicator BV84 and the nationwide problems resulting from excessive packaging of goods.
- (4) That a commentary form be re-introduced for the 2004/5 performance indicators.
- (5) That the Chief Revenues Officer be requested to circulate up-to-date figures with the Minutes of the meeting.
- (6) That a letter be sent by the Chairman, on behalf of the Budget & Performance Panel, congratulating the Chief Revenues Officer and his team on their hard work and impressive achievement.
- (7) That a presentation on the new software package, purchased to assist with performance management, be brought to a future meeting.
- (8) That the comments on the Best Value Performance Indicators be noted.

**11 CORPORATE MONITORING AND REVENUE OUTFURN**

The Chairman welcomed Andrew Clarke, Accountancy Services Manager, to the meeting. The Accountancy Services Manager explained that, as requested by Members, the Corporate Monitoring report for period 04 and the list of revenue variances for 2003/4 had been circulated with the Agenda. He advised that he was seeking guidance from Members as to whether they wished to undertake further investigation into any of the variances. Members asked a number of questions in respect of staff turnover, street cleansing, homelessness, the Highways Partnership, bad debt provision and grounds maintenance.

**(Councillor J. Kirkman left the meeting.)**

Members questioned the Accountancy Services Manager in respect of the additional insurance provision. He explained that due to the prevalence of 'no win, no fee' offers, the general public were increasingly seeking compensation. He further explained that he would be working with Services to carry out risk assessments to minimise the scope for compensation claims.

**Resolved:**

That the Corporate Monitoring Report for Period 04 and the 2003/4 revenue outturn variance analysis be noted.

**(The Accountancy Services Manager left the meeting.)**

**12 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Principal Democratic Support Officer outlined the items that would be on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Panel. Members agreed that the Head of Health & Strategic Housing should be invited to attend the meeting in respect of her Business Plan.

The Principal Democratic Support Officer advised the Panel of the work that had been carried out in respect of alternative software packages to Microsoft and circulated a document containing examples of other authorities. He explained that the Star Office pilot that had been underway in Information Services had been halted due to lack of resources. He also showed the Panel a list of Microsoft licences that had been provided by Information Services. He advised that a draft report would be brought to the next meeting and Members requested that this include clear financial information.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Head of Health & Strategic Housing be invited to attend the next meeting of the Budget & Performance Panel in respect of her Business Plan.
- (2) That the Principal Democratic Support Officer bring a draft report on alternative software packages, including clear financial information, to the next meeting of the Budget & Performance Panel.
- (3) That the work programme be noted.

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Chairman

(The meeting finished at 4.05 p.m.)

***Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Laura Ellis, Democratic Support Officer, Administration Services,  
on 01524 582047 or alternatively e-mail LEllis@lancaster.gov.uk***