

**BUDGET AND  
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**4.30 P.M.**

**25TH OCTOBER 2005**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors John Day (Vice-Chairman), Maggie Chadwick, John Gilbert, Mike Greenall, Tony Johnson, Peter Robinson, Roger Sherlock and John Whitelegg  
Ian Barker (part)

Apologies for Absence

Keith Budden (Chairman)

Officers in attendance:-

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Roger Muckle     | Corporate Director (Central Services)                    |
| Mark Davies      | Head of City Contract Services (part)                    |
| Peter Sandford   | Head of Economic Development and Tourism Services (part) |
| Richard Tulej    | Head of Corporate Strategy                               |
| Elizabeth Stokes | Best Value Officer                                       |
| Katie Dunne      | Principal Personnel Officer (part)                       |
| James Doble      | Principal Democratic Support Officer                     |
| Liz Bateson      | Democratic Support Officer                               |

**17 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2005 were signed by the Vice-Chairman as a correct record.

**18 DEMONSTRATION OF 'LIVE' ESCENDENCY SYSTEM AND PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Best Value Officer provided Members with a 'live' demonstration of the web-based Escendency System together with a progress update. Members were informed that only a small amount of live data relating to CCS and the Museum Service was currently available and whilst this could not provide a full picture, it did provide a useful indication of the system's potential.

The system used Pie charts and a simple traffic light to reflect Performance Indicators and identify which PI's were not being met. In addition, a graph indicated current performance with historic performance targets providing a comparison of performance over the last three years. The Best Value Officer suggested that the system was still being developed and that the next version would include a narrative to explain reasons for under-performance.

It was noted that this was a sophisticated system with a vast number of reporting options and it was anticipated that an 18-month roll out period was required in order for every Council Service to implement the system. Economic Development, Planning and Council Housing were currently working on this implementation and it was expected that work would begin with Revenues and Benefits shortly.

The Best Value Officer confirmed that there was currently some confusion regarding the meaning of similar colours within the system but this was being addressed with the software people. The Head of Corporate Strategy endorsed the traffic light system and provided Members with an indication of how the software would benefit the Budget and Performance Panel (B&P). It was reported that when sufficient data had been collected it would be possible to present local PI's that had been developed and provide data on the Council's performance. Through spending half an hour or so every quarter looking at this information, it would no longer be necessary to call in Service Heads to B&P meetings.

In addition, the Head of Corporate Strategy informed Members that the system was flexible and that the information could be individualised, for example, for Executive Members. The possibility of extending this to partnerships was discussed. However, it was suggested that the initial focus should be on getting it right for the Council. Evidently there was clear potential to extend the system by putting permissions on it. The question was raised as to whether it should be available to members of the public as it was a good opportunity to improve accountability. It was noted that as the system would be web-based there was no technical reason why it could not be publicly available.

On a more general note, the Principal Democratic Support Officer reported that there had been positive moves with regard to performance management in the last few months and there was a lot of work taking place behind the scenes to bring about real improvements in the information that Members would receive.

***Resolved:***

That the Best Value Officer be thanked for the presentation and that the report be noted.

## **19 STAR CHAMBER PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Leader of the Council introduced the Star Chamber reports which had been circulated with regard to Phases II and III of the process. It was reported that the Star Chamber was going through each Cabinet Member's portfolio and looking at the services for which they were responsible in order to seek savings of 2.5% or any other non-cashable efficiencies. It was noted that a financial savings target of approximately £1.5m over a two years period had been set in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to keep annual Council Tax increases below 5%. These targets were in line with the Gershon efficiency targets that had been set for the Council by Government.

The Leader of the Council further reported that Star Chamber Phase III was still in its early stages but steady progress was being made. However, even at this stage, it was becoming clear that the most difficult task would be identifying sufficient savings in the second year of the MTFs rather than next year, in 2006/07. Star Chamber was however, not complacent in its approach to pursuing savings for 2006/07 as these would contribute positively to the two year position overall. The Leader of the Council was keen to emphasise that each Cabinet member, including himself, and existing service delivery methods, were being robustly challenged during this process.

Questions were asked as to whether any savings had been identified and it was reported that a number of areas had been identified which could contribute savings or

efficiencies and that in some cases, further work was required. The key areas considered so far were set out in the appendices of the report. Once the process was completed, it would allow the Cabinet to prepare their budget and policy framework proposals which would be presented to Council in February.

Concern was expressed with regard to the timescale for considering if open access software could generate savings and efficiencies, and in particular, the delay in providing budgetary information with regard to what was currently being spent on non-open software. The Corporate Director (Central Services) informed the panel that following consideration of the matter at this Panel, the matter had been referred to the E Government Cabinet Liaison Group. The Group had requested officers to prepare a report on the current position but acknowledged that this piece of work was not in the Information Service Business Plan. However, officers were due to report back to the Group in December on this matter with a view to scoping a project on Open Source Software that could be fully resourced in 2006/07. It was reported that the E Government Group was fully aware that other Councils and public organisations had made savings in this area but until the facts were available it was impossible to anticipate what, if any, savings could be generated. It was acknowledged that any migration away from existing systems and applications was not a short term issue and one that could impact on every aspect of how the Council delivered its services to the public. Councillor Whitelegg requested that it be formally noted that he was not happy at the slow progress being made on this subject and requested that any progress report should as a minimum, include details of how much Lancaster City Council spent on non-open access software in the last twelve month period. Members were further advised that the report presented to the E Government Group would be available to members of this Panel.

Moving on, the meeting heard how much of the Star Chamber process was about reviewing existing spending patterns and methods of providing services. Star Chamber was however, not the only mechanism that was working towards identifying improvements in value for money and the delivery of cost effective services. The Corporate Director (Central Services) outlined a range of initiatives that were contributing to this process and advised that he was in the process of preparing a Value for Money/Efficiency Strategy that pulled all these together into one framework document. The Corporate Director offered to report back to the Panel once this strategy had been prepared.

Finally, in answer to a specific question regarding the idea of Councils selling derelict land for a nominal fee of £1, the Leader of the Council confirmed that he was aware of a proposal to transfer assets to community organisations for less than capital value if Councils felt it was appropriate but they were under no obligation to do so.

***Resolved:***

That the Leader of the Council be thanked for his attendance at the meeting and that the report be noted.

**20 ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE WORKFORCE**

The Principal HR Officer introduced a report on Ethnic Minority Representation in the Workforce, which had been prepared in response to a request from the B&P panel. Members were advised that the report aimed to provide clarification regarding BPI's and

how the City Council performed compared with other authorities. It was noted that BPI 17a related to the percentage of ethnic minority staff whilst BPI 17b related to the percentage of ethnic minorities in the workforce. The figures had been obtained from the 2001 census data. The Principal Democratic Support Officer pointed out that when the report was requested there was some concern that 17a was being seen in isolation and that the two figures needed to be viewed together. The report therefore answered those concerns.

However, the Principal HR Officer suggested that the figures indicated that Lancaster was in the bottom quartile when compared with comparable authorities like Exeter. It was reported that HR were in regular contact with colleagues in Lancashire but there were clearly some authorities where comparisons could not be easily made, e.g. Blackburn and Burnley. It was important to produce an action plan. Members were informed that HR had become more involved with the Equal Beyond Face Value Project at St Martin's College and were interested in getting out into the community and influencing training sessions in an attempt to identify those who felt there were barriers to working for Lancaster City Council. It was anticipated that improvements would be noticed next year.

***Resolved:***

That the report be noted.

**21 DISCUSSIONS WITH MARK DAVIES, HEAD OF CITY CONTRACT SERVICES REGARDING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Head of City Contract Services attended the meeting to answer questions relating to Performance Indicators. A Briefing Note had been issued to Panel Members with the Agenda, which identified the relevant BPI's. It was noted that BV 199 related to cleanliness indicators within the district based on a survey and was a complicated indicator to describe. The Audit Commission took the view that there had been slippage between the seasonal periods and it was pointed out that there were different types of land use in some of the wards. Internal audit had looked at the compilation of indicator and published a set of recommendations and those had been taken into account. The Panel was advised that the information gathered would be used proactively to inform and improve service delivery.

With regard to BV82a/b Members were informed that the first part related to the percentage of household waste recycled with the second part relating to composted waste and that a target of 18% had been set for the end of this financial year. As the Government tended to be interested in the combined total they were not normally shown separately. 11% was the figure at the end of the last financial year but this would have increased with the introduction of a new recycling round. With regard to BV 84; the weight of household waste collected per head of population, it was suggested that in the last two years the City Council was in the top quartile for this indicator. It was considered more important to minimise waste since even recycling required resources. In addition, it was reported that a new local PI had been introduced, 82 a(1) and 82 b(1) which would record actual tonnage but this was not in user format yet.

Discussion arose as to whether there were plans for composting centre and Members were informed that there would be an indicator relating to food waste. Preston was undertaking a trial collecting food waste and had introduced a door-to-door collection.

The scheme was proving successful in areas where people cooked from raw materials.

The Head of CCS informed Members that Lancashire County Council had commissioned a survey to look at people's rubbish and that the City Council were now aware of the tonnage of bottles, paper and textiles collected on a regular basis. It was hoped that this information would prove useful in improving disposal facilities in the future.

***Resolved:***

That the report be noted.

**22 DISCUSSIONS WITH PETER SANDFORD, HEAD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM REGARDING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Head of Economic Development and Tourism answered concerns relating to Performance Indicators which had been highlighted at the last meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2005. Members were advised that there had been 4 'double glums' originally but one, with revised figures, had been changed to a 'single' glum. The first two 'double glums' related to customer satisfaction and it was suggested that the Service had been somewhat optimistic aspiring to a figure of 99% when in reality there would always be cases where you could not satisfy people because you could not deliver what they wanted. The Head of Economic Development and Tourism suggested that this figure should more realistically be revised to 90%. However, it was noted that the percentage of customers 'very satisfied' had risen from 52% to 56%.

With regard to the Grant Scheme it was reported that the level of take up had reduced with projects seeking European funding and only 12.5 of the target of 30 jobs had been created. It was hoped that the situation would improve when the Dalton Square office space was completed. Concerns relating to the Best Centres were also addressed. It was reported that targets had been achieved on 3 main contracts last year but there had been some difficulties with the eligibility criteria being changed and therefore a target figure of 80% would be more realistic.

The Head of Economic Development and Tourism explained that the Service was also involved in running regeneration programmes, which also had targets to achieve. These included the SRB programme and specific projects including Dalton Square. One staff member was on a benchmarking group considering economic development figures and the introduction of meaningful indicators to allow authorities to make comparisons. Members asked whether it would be possible to obtain a list of programmes and operations undertaken by the Service and a possible table to illustrate all the City Council's activities relating to job creation, protection and retention. The Service Head agreed that it would not be a problem to produce such a table.

The Best Value Officer reported that she was currently working with the Head of Economic Development and Tourism as it would be one of the first Services to undergo the escendency process. They were currently investigating the usefulness of Audit Commission indicators. It would be possible to use the action planning module in escendency and consistently measure job creation. The Principal Democratic Support Officer maintained that the new system provided the ability to enter data via perspective, e.g. job creation, which would provide an overview on cross-cutting schemes.

Members were informed that the Lancaster SRB was due to finish in March and that most revenue projects would finish this year. Moreover, most projects knew SRB's were coming to an end.

The Corporate Director (Central Services) referred to the reconsideration of base targets and PI's to go into the Best Value Performance Plan, which had been earlier suggested by the Head of Economic Development and Tourism. The Best Value Officer maintained that the Plan was currently reviewed in June but that possibly this should be reviewed quarterly. Concerns were expressed as to whether this could only be changed by Council and that a system needed to be in place whereby changes could be made within the year without returning to Council. The Best Value Officer agreed that in a situation where improvements could not be made it was right that targets could be changed to reflect performance levels in certain circumstances. The Head of Economic Development and Tourism suggested that it was necessary to look more intelligently at the local area and use Escendency to find a framework to enable the regular reporting of meaningful local performance indicators.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Head of Economic Development and Tourism prepare a list to be circulated to Panel members of programmes and operations undertaken by the Service and a table to illustrate all the city council's activities relating to job creation, protection and retention.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 6.15 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
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