

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

4.30 P.M.

13TH MARCH 2007

PRESENT: Councillors Keith Budden (Chairman), Jim Blakely, John Day, Tony Johnson, Roger Mace and John Whitelegg

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Tina Clifford, Mike Greenall and Roger Sherlock

Officers in attendance:

Roger Muckle	Corporate Director (Finance & Performance)
Liz Stokes	Corporate Performance Manager
Elaine Frecknall (part)	Human Resources Manager
Sheelagh O'Brien (part)	Housing Policy Manager
Liz Bateson	Senior Democratic Support Officer
Jon Stark	Democratic Support Officer

48 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Day declared a personal interest in Item 5 of the Agenda as he was the Treasurer of Morecambe Homeless Action. Councillor Budden declared a personal interest in Item 10 as a Director of Lune Valley Transport. Councillor Johnson declared a personal interest in Item 10 as a Director of the Williamson's Park Board.

49 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 13th February 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

50 REVIEW OF HOMELESS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

Sheelagh O'Brien, the City Council's Housing Policy Officer, delivered a report detailing a review of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between Strategic Housing and voluntary agencies. The report proposed action to be taken to ensure value for money was secured from the agreements that would continue into 2007/08, at which point new agreements would be drafted.

It was reported that the SLAs required each organisation to provide an annual report detailing the work they had carried out and how they sought to meet the aims of the Council. The Panel was advised that a multi-agency monitoring form had been introduced for all agencies in 2006 in order to gain more reliable figures through elimination of repetition in recording of service users.

Members of the Panel were advised that the monitoring form had been developed from a good practice example distributed nationally by Shelter and this had been the blueprint adopted by a number of authorities. It was reported that the form had been difficult to implement and it was suggested that subsequently its use should be made a requirement in the SLAs.

The multi-agency monitoring form was circulated amongst Members for their consideration. It was suggested that the Chief Executive write to all agencies being funded by the Council and request them to use the form immediately and stipulate that this would become a condition of their funding.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Chief Executive sends a letter to all Homeless Agencies funded by the City Council requesting they use the new monitoring form with immediate effect and advise that this will become a mandatory requirement of future Service Level Agreements for continued funding.
- 2) That the effectiveness of the monitoring form be reviewed in 12 months' time.

51 HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

The Human Resources Manager delivered a report to inform Members of the Panel of progress and development with the Council's Human Resources Strategy, with particular regard to its relationship with the Value for Money (Efficiency) Strategy.

Members queried if the Business Travel Plan was part of the Human Resources Strategy. It was reported that Human Resources was responsible for some aspects of the Business Travel Plan, however, the Plan spanned a number of strategies such as the Access to Services Review and the work of the Joint Consultative Committee.

Members questioned the Human Resources Manager on progress with the Home Working pilot project. It was reported that the pilot was ongoing despite a number of difficulties although a report detailing the results had not been given a submission date. It was agreed that an interim report should be submitted to the Budget and Performance Panel at its meeting scheduled for 17th July 2007.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That an interim report of the Home Working Pilot Scheme be submitted for the Budget and Performance Panel's consideration at its meeting scheduled for 17th July 2007.

52 BVPI COMPARISON EXETER BENCHMARKING GROUP

The Corporate Performance Manager presented a report to provide Members with a comparison of the Council's performance against statutory Performance Indicators in relation to a number of similar authorities. Members were informed that due to the time consuming task of data collection the figures illustrated in the performance graphs represented information from approximately 12 months previous.

It was reported that each area within which the City Council was performing to a level of 1-3 stars had been targeted for improvement and the details of these were being investigated by the Performance Management Group and had been incorporated into the 2007/08 Corporate Plan.

Members expressed concern that some of the statistics were difficult to interpret due to the way they were displayed in the bar chart format. It was agreed that the figures with quartile information should be summarised in a simpler visual format and this should then be circulated amongst Members for further consideration. Members were advised that quartile information could be misleading when represented graphically and this should be taken into account when they evaluated the data.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a simpler presentation of the comparison data for Exeter Benchmarking authorities be summarised and circulated amongst Members of the Panel for those categories that include quartile information.

53 AUDIT COMMISSION QUALITY OF LIFE AREA PROFILES

The Corporate Performance Manager guided Members of the Panel around a website designed by the Audit Commission that contained quality of life profiles and local services for each area of the country. The website gave profiles under 10 quality of life themes including People and Places, Community involvement and cohesion, Economic well-being, Housing, Environment, Transport and access, Community safety, Health and social well-being, Education and lifelong learning and Culture and leisure.

Members were advised that there was also area profile data on Lancashire County Council's website that provided information on their individual wards. It was reported that Corporate Strategy would provide support and training to Members for assessing the data and links to the websites would be circulated to the Panel. Members were also informed that training on the Escendency system would be completed in late 2007.

The Corporate Performance Manager was thanked by the Panel for delivering the presentation.

Resolved:

- 1) That Members of the Panel be circulated website links to the area quality profiles both nationally and across Lancashire.

54 CONSULTATION STRATEGY REVIEW UPDATE

The Corporate Performance Manager presented a report to advise Members of progress to date with regard to the Council's corporate approach to consultation. It was reported that a virtual Citizens Panel had been established to canvass the views of members of the public and Consultation Finder software, a web based consultation management system, had been purchased enabling citizens and stakeholders to:

- i) Find out what consultations have happened, are happening or are about to happen within their area
- ii) Register for, be alerted to and participate in consultation
- iii) Obtain information on eventual outcomes and effects on policy decisions
- iv) Search for consultation by area, ward, topic etc.

Members of the Panel were advised that Corporate Strategy were in the process of appointing a Consultation Officer and this would make the Council's consultation services a great deal more efficient and effective. It was reported that a consultation champions had been appointed within each service that would be responsible for feeding back details of a consultation relevant to their service.

Resolved:

That Members note the progress to date in developing the Council's corporate approach to its consultation activity and the actions put in place to improve capacity in this area.

55 FUNDING TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Corporate Director presented a report to provide Members with details of funding to outside bodies and for the Panel to consider how to effectively monitor this funding. It was reported that this work overlapped the remit of the ongoing Grants Task Group. It was agreed that this was an area that should come under the scrutiny of the Panel, beginning with the bodies that received the most significant funding from the Council.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That Members note that funding to Williamson Park will be scrutinised at the next meeting but agree to defer consideration of scrutinising other outside bodies until the Grants Task Group reports to Cabinet, in order to take account of recommendations with regard to monitoring of funding to outside bodies.

56 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Senior Democratic Support Officer presented a report to provide Members with an update of the Work Programme. Attached to the report was a draft section relating to the Budget and Performance Panel that would be included in the Annual Scrutiny Report. Members agreed to its inclusion in the final report without any amendments.

The Panel were advised that the monitoring of Service Level Agreements had been delegated to Democratic Services in consultation with the Chairman. It was reported that satisfactory monitoring information had been received from all associated organisations and analysis of the data was in progress.

Resolved:

- 1) That Members approve the Budget and Performance Panel section of the Annual Scrutiny Report.
- 2) That Members note progress with regard to the monitoring of the Service Level Agreements.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 5.56 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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