

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

4.30 P.M.

11TH SEPTEMBER 2007

PRESENT: Councillors Jim Blakely (Chairman), Tina Clifford, Jean Dent, Keran Farrow, Mike Greenall and Ian McCulloch

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Sarah Fishwick, Tony Johnson and John Whitelegg

Officers in attendance:

Gill Noall	Head of Democratic Services
Elizabeth Stokes	Corporate Performance Manager
Liz Bateson	Senior Democratic Support Officer
Jon Stark	Democratic Support Officer

19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31st July 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

20 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN - CITY COUNCIL MEETING TIMES 2008/09

The Chairman advised that he had agreed to an item of urgent business regarding City Council Meeting Times 2008/09 in accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972. The item was considered as urgent business as a decision was required on the matter prior to the next meeting of the Panel.

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report for the Panel to consider preferred meeting times for the Budget and Performance Panel for the year 2008/09. Members agreed that the meeting time of 4.30pm had worked well for the Panel to date and that this time should be maintained for the year 2008/09.

Resolved:

That the Council Business Committee be advised that the Budget and Performance Panel prefers a commencement time of 4.30pm for its meetings.

21 LEADER'S 1ST QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Corporate Performance Manager presented a report to update the Panel on the 1st Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring. The report detailed 'red traffic light' areas where the Council was not performing to its targets. Members were advised that as the report only reflected the 1st Quarter measures were already in place to tackle many factors resulting in weak performance.

Members requested that a briefing note be circulated explaining the proposed system of

monitoring and recording being introduced by Licensing to improve contact with licensing complainants. Members also agreed a briefing note was required to explain why the delay in obtaining court hearing dates and the £40,000 increase on rent arrears compared to the same period ending June 2006 could not be reduced.

Resolved:

- 1) That a briefing note be circulated to Members explaining the proposed system of monitoring and recording of licensing complaints where contact is made with the complainant within 2 working days.
- 2) That a briefing note be circulated to Members explaining why the delay in obtaining court hearing dates and the £40,000 increase on rent arrears compared to the same period ending June 2006 could not be reduced.

22 STAR CHAMBER PROGRESS REPORTS

The Corporate Performance Manager introduced a report to update Members on the Star Chamber meetings held since the last report to the Budget and Performance Panel on 12th June 2007. Members queried the inclusion of the Market Square Fountain in the Notes and were informed that the Council would be required to fund any future works to the fountain which had been provided initially by Nuclear Electric.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

23 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PERFORMANCE

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report providing information from Democratic Services in relation to the publication of Minutes, as requested by the Panel at its meeting on 12th June 2007, when considering the 4th Performance Review Team Reports.

Members were advised that since the publication of Agenda by a particular date was a legislative requirement it was necessary to ensure that achieving that target took precedence. Furthermore production of Cabinet Minutes and facilitation of the Call-in procedure were given priority and very occasionally this could result in a delay in other Minutes being published.

Nevertheless it was reported that swift action had been taken when the percentage of Minutes published within 5 working days of each meeting had dropped to 50%. The importance of achieving this level of performance had been addressed with individual members of staff through the EDPA process and in the 1st Quarter for 2007/08 performance had already improved to 89%.

Members were advised that Democratic Services were often stretched due to their broad work area and at certain times members of staff were required to support specific individual projects. This could potentially cause a drop in performance with regard to Minute production at any stage although staff in the Service gave their best efforts to prevent this from happening.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

24 FUNDING TO NON-HOUSING VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS WITH SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

The Head of Democratic Services introduced a report to advise Members of the monitoring and renewal process for Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Members were advised that a report went to Cabinet on 24th July 2007 upon the recommendations of the Grants Task Group on the process for dealing with SLAs and it was agreed:

- That Officers draw up a criteria based application form allowing for a process that is rolling and flexible and that includes the following principles: accountability, traceability, transparency, clarity, flexibility and justification with advice from Financial Services to reflect the principles of contract procedures and financial threshold.
- That when new applications are received for Service Level Agreements the relevant Cabinet Member is informed.
- That the Budget and Performance Panel be recommended to consider appointing a panel of three members to review and monitor non-housing organisations with Service Level Agreements. Undertaking site visits to organisations with SLAs exceeding £10,000 per annum.
- That Officers draw up a new application form, taking into account best practice to allow clearer monitoring with outcomes clearly linked to service delivery.
- That the Budget and Performance Panel present their findings to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Service Level Agreement as part of the Performance Review Team process.

It was reported that the timescale for the Panel to determine their findings was very short and it was agreed to appoint a Sub-Panel to carry out this role in accordance with Cabinet's recommendation. Members were also advised that as well as existing organisations with SLAs they were required to evaluate organisations that intended to apply for funding.

Resolved:

- 1) That the decisions of Cabinet in July 2007 be noted.
- 2) That the process for reviewing the current Service Level Agreements and considering any new applications be approved on the lines set out in the report.
- 3) That a Sub-Panel of 4 Members of the Budget and Performance Panel be appointed to review the Service Level Agreements and that authority be delegated to the Head of Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chairman, to agree the Panel's recommendations to Cabinet for its 11th December 2007 meeting upon the renewal of existing Service Level Agreements and proposals for financial support to any new organisations.

- 4) That the Sub-Panel consists of Councillor Blakely (Chairman), Councillor Clifford, Councillor Farrow and Councillor Greenall.

25 PERFORMANCE VARIANCE REPORT

The Corporate Performance Manager introduced a report to provide Members with reasons for performance variations against targets within the Annual Report (BVPP) and to identify how targets for future improvement would be met within service business plans.

Members were advised that the report highlighted those indicators, both statutory and local, where both performance worsened and targets for 06/07 had not been met. In the BVPP these indicators were identified by two sad faces (or 'Double Glums'). It was reported that this was the shortest such report compiled to date which represented a generally positive upturn in the Council's performance.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the report be used as a base line reference document for considering the Council's performance in the coming year and where appropriate to inform the future work programme of the Panel.

26 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Senior Democratic Support Officer introduced a report to update Members with regard to the Work Programme. It was reported that following consideration of the 4th Performance Review Team Reports at the Panel's June meeting both Service Heads requested to attend a meeting had now done so.

It was reported that suggestions for items to be added to the Work Programme had been received, including the Council's procedures and performance regarding the collection of fines, particularly vehicular, and Legal Services had also requested the legal fees charged to tenants for new and renewed leases be considered by the Panel.

It was agreed that both items would be added to the Work Programme and considered at the next meeting of the Budget and Performance Panel. Members were advised that a training session on Local Government Finance had been arranged to be held at 9.30am on Tuesday 18th September 2007 at Lancaster Town Hall.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a report be requested with regard to the collection of Council fines with particular regard to vehicular fines and be brought to the next meeting of the Panel.

- 3) That a report be requested regarding legal fees charged to tenants for new and renewed leases and be brought to the next meeting of the Panel.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 5.07 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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