

**BUDGET AND  
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**4.30 P.M.**

**27TH NOVEMBER 2007**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Tony Johnson (Vice-Chairman), Tina Clifford, Keran Farrow, Sarah Fishwick, Mike Greenall, Ian McCulloch, Chris Coates (substitute for John Whitelegg) and Roger Plumb (substitute for Jean Dent)

Apologies for absence:-

Councillors Jim Blakely (Chairman), Jean Dent and John Whitelegg

Officers in attendance:-

Roger Muckle	Corporate Director (Finance and Performance)
Andrew Clarke	Accountancy Services Manager
Liz Stokes	Corporate Performance Manager
Peter Sandford (part)	Head of Economic Development and Tourism
Graham Cox (part)	Head of Property Services
David Hopwood (part)	Parking and Administration Manager
Liz Bateson	Senior Democratic Support Officer
Jon Stark	Democratic Support Officer

**35 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**36 LEADER'S 2ND QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The Corporate Director (Finance and Performance) introduced a report to provide the Panel with an update on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring in the absence of the Leader of the Council. It was reported that in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter there had been a total of 24 Performance Review Team meetings to discuss Service Business Plans and the Council's Corporate Plan targets.

The Panel was advised that the Leader of the Council had requested additional information on six areas that were performing below their targets, including graffiti, Kg of household waste per head of population, and educational swimming in rural areas. It was reported that the details of this requested information would be provided to them at a future meeting as part of the PRT Quarter 3 reporting process.

Members were advised that within the Corporate Financial Monitoring Report the General Fund Summary position showed a net underspend at the end of September of £95,000. It was anticipated that this figure would increase to £137,000 by the end of the financial year. It was noted that the Leader had agreed a further nine recommended actions in respect of factors that had not performed sufficiently financially.

In response to Members' questions it was reported that an overspend had occurred in Waste Collection and Recycling due to the outright purchase of vehicles, funded by additional unsupported borrowing, as this was proven to be more economical than

leasing. The Panel was also advised that the figure of 61.32% for the collection of business rates appeared low as it related to the collection rate to date in the financial year and this level was higher than at the same point in 2006/07.

The Panel was advised that an outstanding debt of over £13,000 owed to Planning was now being dealt with by Legal Services.

***Resolved:-***

That the report be noted.

**37 STAR CHAMBER PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Corporate Director (Finance and Performance) presented a report to provide an update on the Star Chamber meetings held since the last report to the Budget and Performance Panel on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2007. It was reported that Cabinet was currently researching issues relating to the Budget and Policy Framework and the results of that work would be presented to the Panel by the Leader of the Council at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

***Resolved:-***

That the report be noted.

**38 UPDATE ON THE STOREY INSTITUTE PROJECT**

The Head of Economic Development and Tourism presented a report in the absence of the Corporate Director (Regeneration) to provide Members with an update on the current position with the Storey Project. It was noted that the information report covered the three areas that had driven Members concerns, namely the increased costs, inclusion of the project in the Forward Plan, and project redesign.

The Panel was advised that the LAMP process had flagged up increased roofing costs through its reporting process although this additional cost was being accommodated by reducing specifications in other areas. At this stage it was not anticipated that the costs of the roof would lead to an overall overspend.

It was reported that work had begun on site whilst the item was still included in the Council's Forward Plan (requiring a decision to sign the contract) as it was necessary for the project spend to be completed by December 2008 to prevent the possible loss of secured funding. Members were informed that some adjustments in the project design were anticipated in order to keep costs at a minimum and deliver the project within budget and within the original specification.

The Panel was advised that the original contract for the project had been a standard partnering contract but this had been revised following a Council resolution ensuring any savings be returned to the Council. It was reported that an independent Quantity Surveyor had been appointed to assess and quantify the potential for financial risks to the project and the details of the assessment would be available to Members prior to the contract documentation being signed.

Members raised concerns that the project was underway without an apparent legally binding agreement protecting the Council from any liability for legal costs that may be incurred if any matters of contention arose between the Council and its partners. It was agreed that the Head of Economic Development and Tourism would obtain information from Legal Services regarding the legal position of the Council in relation to the contracts with partners.

***Resolved:-***

That the Head of Economic Development and Tourism circulates information from Legal Services regarding the legal position of the Council in relation to the contracts with partners.

**39 PROCEDURE AND PERFORMANCE IN THE COUNCIL'S COLLECTION OF VEHICULAR FINES**

The Head of Property Services introduced a report to explain to members the procedures and performance in the Council's collection of vehicular fines. It was reported that the Council commenced Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2004 in partnership with the County Council as part of the Parkwise scheme across Lancashire.

Members were advised that Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued by Parking attendants with a charge of £60 reducing to £30 if it was paid within 14 days of the date of issue. On the 57<sup>th</sup> day from the date of issue a Charge Certificate was posted to the registered keeper and the charge increased to £90. By the 113<sup>th</sup> day from the date of issue the amount outstanding is £95 and a warrant could be issued to a Bailiff to collect the charge and their fees added to the debt.

It was reported that of the 9,657 PCNs issued between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007 60% had been paid, 14% cancelled and 26% were in progress. It was reported that the cancellation figure appeared high as there was no separate category for written off PCNs although this issue had been raised by the Parking Operations Manager and was being progressed by ParkWise.

Members were advised that changes in legislation to allow recovery of debts outside of England and Wales would help improve debt recovery rates. Regarding persistent offenders, clamping and even confiscating vehicles was not always a suitable way of arranging payment of debts as often the debt was greater than the value of the vehicle.

The Panel was assured that the Council was working very closely with the Police and Parking Attendants to maximise performance.

***Resolved:-***

That the report be noted.

**40 REVIEW OF SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS WITH NON-HOUSING VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**

It was noted that with the agreement of the Chairman this item would be considered at a future meeting of the Budget and Performance Panel.

**41 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT**

The Senior Democratic Support Officer presented a report to update Members with regard to the Work Programme. It was reported that the Panel would need to call an extraordinary meeting in January so that the Review of Service Level Agreements with Non-Housing Voluntary Organisations report could be considered prior to the January Cabinet meeting. It was agreed that the meeting be scheduled for Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

The Panel was asked to consider if a report should be requested detailing a six month review on the usage and cost efficiency of the new Customer Services facilities and whether the issue should be added to the Work Programme. It was reported that the full integration of services into the Customer Service Centres was not scheduled for completion until March 2009 by which time the footfall in the centres was expected to increase significantly.

Members agreed to request a report in six months time regarding the progress and success of the Customer Service Centres and details of plans for further service integration. Members were advised that a report on car park pricing, the cost of enforcement and the possible introduction of car park barriers and a report on in-house recharging between Council Services would both be available for consideration at the Panel's meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

It was reported that the Panel had received a referral from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate the robustness of the financing of the Council's Capital Programme. Members agreed to add this item to the Work Programme.

***Resolved:-***

- (1) That an extraordinary meeting be scheduled for Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008 in order for the Panel to consider the Review of Service Level Agreements with Non-Housing Voluntary Organisations report.
- (2) That a report be brought before the Panel in six months time regarding the progress and success of the Customer Service centres and details of plans for further service integration.
- (3) That Officers report back to the February meeting on the following:-
  - i) Car parking pricing, the cost of enforcement, and the possible introduction of car park barriers.
  - ii) In house recharging between Council Services.
- (4) That a report be requested to investigate the robustness of the financing of the Council's Capital Programme.
- (5) That the Panel's Work Programme be updated accordingly.

---

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 5.14 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Jon Stark, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582132  
or email [jstark@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:jstark@lancaster.gov.uk)**