

**BUDGET AND  
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**4.30 P.M.**

**31ST JULY 2007**

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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Jean Dent

Officers in attendance:

Roger Muckle	Corporate Director (Finance and Performance)
Graham Cox (part)	Head of Property Services
Liz Stokes	Corporate Performance Manager
Liz Bateson	Senior Democratic Support Officer
Jon Stark	Democratic Support Officer

**12 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**13 HOME WORKING PILOT SCHEME - INTERIM REPORT**

The Head of Property Services delivered a report on the progress with the Home Working and Hot Desking Pilot Schemes. It was reported that a number of trials had taken place amongst staff in Planning and Property Services as any reduction in overall office space would have a significant impact on the Council's accommodation provision.

The home working pilot saw a take up from 9 out of 89 employees in Planning representing 10% of the service. However, none of those were home working full time with most operating an average two days per week away from their traditional office base. Members were informed that an approximate figure per member of staff to participate in the pilot had been £2,000 - £3,000 with additional central and overhead costs.

Members were advised that although only 9 members of staff had participated in the pilot, it had been useful as an exercise and showed that there was potential for reducing space and overheads and improving employees' work/life balance. It was reported that further benefits could include a reduction in commuting and the demand for commuter parking and home workers had also displayed improved levels of productivity.

The Panel was advised that a hot desking, or desk sharing, pilot had also been carried out in Property Services. The service had noted that for over 50% of the working week at least three work stations were unoccupied, equating to 25% of the service total. Property Services had continued to operate hot desking although staff agreed that to be more effective it would require the whole service to commit to the scheme.

It was reported that to operate the hot desking scheme long-term a number of issues would need to be addressed such as work stations, chairs and screen being capable of adjustment to suit all staff and telephony becoming flexible to allow staff to use any phone as their own while at any particular work station.

Members were advised that the results of both pilots would be more fully reported and play a prominent role in the Access to Services review of the two options agreed by Council in 2006, due to be considered by full Council in autumn 2007. The Panel was informed that the pilot schemes had proved successful but would require significant 'cultural' change and the appropriate investment to provide reliable and flexible ICT and telephony systems.

Members welcomed the progress made with the pilot schemes and discussed the potential problems that may be encountered such as effective management and monitoring of home workers, and balancing the flexible arrangements with the times when staff needed to be on work premises. The Panel expressed its unanimous support for the schemes.

***Resolved:***

That the Budget and Performance Panel supports the principle of home working and hot desking where possible across the Council's services.

**14 OVERSPENDS IN PROPERTY SERVICES 2006/07**

Graham Cox presented a verbal report on the financial performance of Property Services for the year 2006/07. The Panel had requested the attendance of the Head of Property Services following overspends being highlighted in the Corporate Financial Monitoring report for April '06 to March '07.

The Panel was advised that the financial performance of Property Services reported recently to Cabinet had actually shown an overall underspend of approximately £20,000 for the year 2006/07 and that the Corporate Financial Monitoring report that had identified a potential overspend of £83,000 had been based upon estimated figures. Staff absences had meant that these had not been verified in time for the report considered at the Panel's previous meeting.

It was reported that the Service still had a year end deficit in respect of 4/5 Dalton Square and Members were informed that this was due to delays encountered in lettings in comparison with earlier estimates. However, this reflected a reduction in market demand for office accommodation across the Lancaster District since the onset of the project.

The Panel agreed that Members should receive written details of the current lettings at 4/5 Dalton Square and a summary of the measures being taken to address the shortfall.

***Resolved:***

That Members receive written details of the current lettings at 4/5 Dalton Square and a summary of the measures being taken to address the shortfall.

**15 CONSIDERATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Corporate Director (Finance and Performance) presented a report for Members to consider revised terms of reference for the Budget and Performance Panel. The revisions represented a more detailed outline of the role and powers of the Panel. Underpinning all the roles of the Panel was the consideration of risk management issues in reviewing and scrutinising performance and this was now reflected in the terms of reference.

The Panel was advised that the Corporate Director (Finance and Performance) was liaising with the Monitoring Officer to confirm that the Panel could agree the revision to the terms of reference under delegated powers or if they would require Council approval.

***Resolved:***

That Members agree to the proposed revision to the terms of reference of the Budget and Performance Panel and that the appropriate process be followed for formal approval.

**16 AUDIT COMMISSION VFM STATISTICAL PROFILE**

The Corporate Director (Finance and Performance) presented a report to provide the Panel with comparative statistical information prepared by the Audit Commission in respect of the Council's 2006/07 financial estimates. Members were advised that the report drew comparisons with the Council's 'Nearest Neighbours', other authorities of similar size, expenditure, rate of deprivation etc.

It was reported that the report contained data on all aspects of the Council's services and could be used to raise questions as opposed to answering them. The Panel was advised that the document would also be used by all Service Heads in evaluating their respective services' performance in delivering Value for Money and this would be compiled into a report submitted to Star Chamber in autumn 2007.

The Corporate Director invited Members to earmark areas they may wish to investigate further and it was agreed that all these issues be forwarded to the Corporate Director so that subsequent responses could be included within the Star Chamber report which would also be brought before the Budget and Performance Panel.

***Resolved:***

That the concerns of the Budget and Performance Panel be forwarded to service heads and addressed in the Value for Money report due to be considered by Star Chamber in autumn 2007 and subsequently reported back to the Panel.

**17 ANNUAL REPORT (BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN)**

The Corporate Performance Manager presented a report to advise Members of the publication of the Annual Report (formerly known as the Best Value Performance Plan). It was reported that the Annual Report was meant to be far more accessible and readable to the general public than in previous years.

Members were informed that the report had been designed to be accessed more widely

on the internet, as opposed to in physical format, in response to demand from the public. As a result of this, a greater proportion of the budget for the publication had been directed into its design instead of printing costs.

It was reported that the progress made with the Council's six priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan was evaluated extensively and a summary of the Council's performance across all service areas was included. The Corporate Performance Manager gave a practical demonstration of locating and navigating the Plan on the internet so that Members could investigate it in their own time.

Members were advised that the report could 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.

The Panel were advised that a further report would be prepared for their next meeting in respect of 'double glums' key performance indicators as identified in the Annual Report.

***Resolved:***

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Annual 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.
- 3) That a further report be brought back to the next meeting on 'double glums' KPIs.

**18 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT**

The Senior Democratic Support Officer introduced the Work Programme report to update Members with regard to the Work Programme. Members were advised that the Head of Democratic Services would be attending the September meeting of the Panel to discuss measures taken to improve performance with the publication of Minutes.

The Panel considered recommendations made by the Grants Task Group and noted their content including the establishment of panels of three Members to review and monitor non-housing organisations with Service Level Agreements, and undertake site visits to organisations with SLAs exceeding £10,000 per annum.

It was also agreed that the Panel would present their findings to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the SLA as part of the Performance Review Team process.

***Resolved:***

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Budget and Performance Panel appoints a panel of three Members to review and monitor non-housing organisations with Service Level Agreements and undertake site visits to organisations with SLAs exceeding £10,000 per annum.
- 3) That the Budget and Performance Panel present their findings to the Cabinet

Member with responsibility for the SLA as part of the Performance Review Team process.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 5.57 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)**