

STAR CHAMBER PROCESS – 2006/07

PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Star Chamber is an informal meeting of Cabinet members supported by senior officers. Its purpose is to provide a continuing process that examines current and future spending plans with the aims of ensuring value for money, identifying efficiencies and diverting resources into Council priorities and away from non-priorities, as well as alternative methods of delivery. It also provides the framework and focus for achieving the financial savings targets included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and those efficiencies required under Gershon. Consequently, it will look at financial, physical, and human resource matters. This will be done through the following **Terms of Reference**:

- consider information regarding Service activity, particularly what is and what is not an explicit Council priority
- identify to what extent mandatory services are enhanced above minimum legislative requirements
- identify any Service functions or activities that no longer contribute to the Council's priorities
- identify Service efficiencies or re-engineering opportunities that could help meet the MTFs/Gershon targets
- identify Service savings
- identify any new legislative issues with future spending pressures
- identify potential sources of additional external funding, increased income opportunities and alternative methods of procurement
- identify resource diversion opportunities
- identify invest to save opportunities
- identify joint working opportunities through collaboration or partnerships
- consider capital programme bids

It is important to note that all the above will at some stage need financial information to help Star Chamber consider the various options before it. This will undoubtedly require some development of activity-based accounting.

Star Chamber is a continuous process and any matters outstanding from the previous years exercise will be reported back in accordance with the agreed timetable.

Star Chamber will employ project management techniques to oversee the successful completion of the overriding priority to keep annual council tax increase levels below 4.9% for 2007/8 and 2008/9

The above **Terms of Reference** will be undertaken by:

1. Challenging existing service provision levels and how they are delivered to provide Value for Money. This will necessitate where appropriate, a functional or activity analysis and eventually information on the costs of certain activities. Activities should demonstrate how they meet Corporate Plan priorities and any statutory obligations.
2. Requiring each Service to produce options in line with the Gershon efficiency strategy to achieve a 2.5% per year cashable efficiency gain/saving in net revenue expenditure/strategic increase in service charges that would help achieve the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In particular Star Chamber will make recommendations to assist the Leader and Chief Executive in preparing and signing off the Annual Efficiency Statements required to be prepared each year under Gershon.
3. Being the forum that triggers organisational change reviews to improve the efficiency and/or effectiveness of Council services.
4. A thorough examination of how electronic processes can re-engineer current service delivery and also what can be done collaborately or in partnership.
5. Considering not only how to implement Council priorities, but also to disinvest in Services which are being/can be provided by other public services or partnerships and to disinvest in those Services that are primarily the responsibility of other public service agencies.
6. Receive reports from the Asset Management Group on capital programme bids.

Process

Star Chamber will continue to meet throughout the year, initially in line with the agreed timetable up to the summer recess but from September each Wednesday thereafter (unless otherwise agreed) starting at 10.00 am and limited to 2 hours maximum.

Core Membership

Leader
Councillors Hanson, Quinton and Barry
Chief Executive
Corporate Directors
Head of Financial Services

Other Cabinet members and Service Heads will be invited when appropriate

Reporting Mechanisms – Presumption in favour of openness

Informally reporting / monitoring to Cabinet / Management Team informal meetings and a short Leader's report to Cabinet covering the work commenced with timescale if available. In addition, the Leader will report regularly to the Budget & Performance Panel on progress.

Formal decisions will be taken by Cabinet or Individual Cabinet Members