

**Performance  
Improvement Scrutiny  
Committee**



Date	22 January 2009
Venue	Reception Room, The Town Hall, Lytham St Annes
Committee members	Christine Akeroyd (Chairman) Cheryl Little (Vice Chairman) Linda Nulty, Keith Hyde, Kathleen Harper, Ken Hopwood, Craig Halewood
Other Councillors	
Officers	Allan Oldfield, Alex Scrivens, Paul Walker, Annie Womack
Others	Michael Gage and Martin Curtis (IDeA peer reviewers); Jack Rawcliffe (Wyre BC)

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. There were no declarations.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee meeting held 20 November 2008 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

No substitutions were reported.

4. The Corporate Performance Quarterly Report (April - December 2008)

Mr Allan Oldfield (Director of Performance and Business Improvement) presented a report detailing the performance to date against national and supplementary performance indicators.

The report included an appendix providing the detail of the performance to date against those indicators. There would normally be a second appendix detailing the General Fund Budget Monitoring, but this was not available and Mr Oldfield undertook to distribute it to the committee members at the earliest opportunity.

Several key areas where the authority is performing well were highlighted, such as the number of hits to the website and the target increase for online services for the year had already been exceeded. Cleanliness of street and surrounding environment was very good and crime rates of all types remain very low.

Mr Oldfield reported that the majority of indicators included in Appendix 1 are performing to target and in most cases currently improving on the performance achieved in 2007/08. The recycling figure is estimated to experience a seasonal drop, but will recover to deliver the target of 44% by March 31<sup>st</sup> as garden waste increases again in the early spring. Recycling performance at Fylde has remained exceptional for several years and it was pointed out that the national target was to achieve 40% recycling by April 2010, a figure Fylde exceeded by April 2008.

On Performance Management issues, he advised the committee that Fylde had taken a lead role across the North West on NI 14 which examines the amount of avoidable customer contact that a council deals with; the Place Survey was completed and that the full report would be before the March committee; and the Data Quality indicator had moved to 'performing well' status.

Members queried certain of the indicators and targets, such as the percentage of completed appraisals, and the sickness absence indicators were again a matter for debate, as Mr Oldfield had recommended a change in the target. Cllr Hopwood opined that the target should be nil.

Councillor Nulty raised the question of s106 monies and acknowledged that although they had already received some information as requested they wanted more detail, for example to what purpose those companies who have received such monies have put it. Mr Oldfield agreed that he would research this for the committee.

Another indicator to be discussed was the time taken to determine planning applications which was below target for the current year. The committee discussed the work done by members and staff with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to deliver improvements, and noted that the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group involved with that work had not been finalised. It was proposed that the performance of the planning department should continue to be a high priority on the Performance Monitoring agenda of this committee.

Following the debate it was RESOLVED:

- 1 That the report on the DC improvement should be made available to this committee at the earliest opportunity, and also the detailed information regarding the s106 monies.
- 2 To recommend support of the revision of the sickness absence target from the current 10.5 days per employee per annum by 31 March 2009, to 11.5 days; and that it continues to be monitored quarterly by this committee.
- 3 To recommend support for a revised target for online transactions from 16,000 to 20,000 in view of the current exceptional performance.

## 5. Report of Customer Services Performance Update

This report provided an update on the performance of the Customer Services Team along with a progress report on current changes and developments within the service area. This separate service performance report had been produced as part of a performance reporting programme agreed when the service was scrutinised by a Task and Finish Group in 2006. The performance has been tracked and monitored by the committee for in excess of 2 years since the Task and Finish group scrutiny work.

Mr Allan Oldfield (Director of Performance and Business Improvement) presented this report, outlining the overall performance of the department and explaining the work that had been done to meet the original recommendations of the Task & Finish Group. He advised how lunch breaks continue to be staggered and how staff are also utilised from the Corporate Admin Team to cover busier periods.

The committee was told of the Business Process Re-engineering between front and back office teams, including the monitoring of proper use of the voicemail facility, and of the work being done with LCC to deliver a district proposal for face-to-face working across the Fylde.

Improvement planning over the long term will focus on process efficiency and the migration of customers to online transactions in line with changing customer demands. Another key element of this work will be improvements to communication processes between the front and back office teams.

Members asked about the LSP Community Engagement Vehicle, which had been used to provide an outreach service across the Fylde borough. The aim of this partnership initiative was to take services directly to those communities that may find it difficult to access them both physically and through the web. Members commented that although this was a good service, it did not compensate for the service which had been lost, particularly for residents in the outlying rural areas. Mr Oldfield explained that the situation was under review, and that the face-to-face access would help. He reminded the committee that there was still a visiting service for the rural areas.

Following the debate it was RESOLVED:

- 1 To recognise the continued development of Customer Services at Fylde.
- 2 To recommend support for the continued use of the LSP Community Engagement Vehicle as a means of taking service provision and information to local communities across the Borough.
- 3 To agree to have all future performance reporting on the Customer Services Team integrated in the Corporate Performance Report that is regularly presented to the committee.

## 6. Vacant Post Impact and Strategy

This report was produced in response to a request by the committee to examine the current level of vacant posts across the authority and the impact on service provision. It clarified the approach to filling vacant posts and the benefits of implementing a flexible

and responsive establishment. Mr Allan Oldfield explained to the committee that this was one of a number of initiatives designed to achieve budget savings currently, and that each decision to hold a post vacant is taken after an appropriate risk assessment.

Whenever a post becomes vacant at Fylde the Line Manager responsible is required to consider options for the service. Because the requirements of service delivery change so quickly a 'like for like' replacement is not always the best option. Every vacancy is viewed as opportunity to introduce change and improvement to the service. Members were advised that this approach to vacant posts had been in place at Fylde for several years. By applying this strategy it is possible to achieve incremental change over a period of time that is consistent with the changing requirements of the service

Mr Oldfield went on to explain the current need to justify any decision to fill a vacancy with a like-for-like on economic grounds, and outlined the process which would result in a vacancy either being filled or left vacant. He also talked about other initiatives designed to provide support where vacancies may occur.

Members examined the appendix which was a list of posts currently being held vacant as part of the initiative to achieve budget savings, and an assessment of the impact on service delivery, and questioned Mr Oldfield on some issues.

He explained that recently some posts had been filled because of the seriousness of the business case put before the Chief Executive of leaving the post unfilled. Also that the situation forces new thinking, and process re-engineering could result in freeing capacity. Redeployment was also a possibility.

Members highlighted certain posts as having importance in maintaining services. There was a suggestion that some outside agencies could be used to help, and Mr Oldfield agreed that some friends groups had been of great assistance, as had the LSP.

Cllr Nulty said that though redeployment was an important consideration, it was equally important to ensure that we have the right skills in the right jobs. Committee expressed particular concern about the vacancy in scrutiny, and the two highways technician vacancies and hoped they could be filled as soon as possible. The Chairman asked whether there was an up-to-date skills audit of staff.

After the debate it was RESOLVED:

- 1 That the committee supports the approach taken to fulfilling vacant posts and the implementation of a flexible approach.
- 2 That Mr Oldfield should organize a skills audit and bring the results back to committee in May; and also to bring to the attention of the Portfolio Holder responsible for Highways and the Portfolio Holder responsible for Scrutiny the concerns of the committee regarding these vacant posts.

## 6. Property Maintenance Agreement with Wyre BC

This committee reviews the contract partnerships that the Council enters into and had requested that this agreement be brought for review.

The report, which provided information on the property maintenance agreement with Wyre BC which has come to an end and is to be reviewed, was introduced by the Director of Strategic Planning and Development, Mr Paul Walker.

Mr Walker described how the contract agreement had come about and outlined the main service provisions which Fylde accesses through the agreement.

He went on to explain the costs of the current agreement and the pressures on the budget for 2009/10. These pressures meant that there had been a reduction in the planned maintenance programme, and that it was no longer viable to have the same level of management delivering the service.

Mr Walker advised the committee that in reviewing the service they should have regard both to the scope of the service, and to who should provide that service. He had provided a chart of the options, and the advantages and disadvantages of each which he went through for the benefit of members.

Mr Rawcliffe of Wyre BC, who currently manages the service, had attended the committee meeting, and when asked he advised the committee that he would be happy to look at the various issues with Mr Walker, and to try to tailor the service to fit the needs of the budget better.

After the debate, the committee RESOLVED:

1. To ask Mr Walker to renegotiate the contract with Wyre Borough Council and report back to the committee in March 2009.

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