

Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee



Date	21 September 2006
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	Fabian Wilson (Acting Chairman) John Dolan (Acting Vice-Chairman) Christine Akeroyd, Eric Bamber, Elizabeth Clarke, Elizabeth Oades
Other Councillors	Paul Rigby
Officers	Paul Norris, Allan Oldfield, Tracy Scholes, Brian White, Jocelyn Greenway, Peter Welsh, Annie Womack
Others	Mike Thomas & Gareth Winstanley (Audit Commission)

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.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 July 2006 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitution was reported under council procedure rule 22.3:

Councillor Elizabeth Oades for councillor Keith Wright

4. Performance Report Update

Allan Oldfield, Executive Manager for Policy and Performance presented the report and apologised on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Performance who was unable to attend the meeting. The report provided an update to the committee on the arrangements for monitoring performance across the council in which the committee had a primary responsibility. Details of some outstanding performance updates from the first quarter report presented on July 20th 2006 were also included.

The report outlined three changes which had been implemented to strengthen performance monitoring arrangements which included the development of a policy ensuring data produced is of a high standard; the appointment of a Performance and Efficiency Officer and exception reports being presented to Cabinet at each meeting. The latter change involved the Chairman of the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee and Portfolio Holder presenting a joint report to Cabinet outlining where performance is poor compared to agreed targets. Following consideration of the report members raised a number of issues, which included the under performance of BVPI 79a (percentage of cases within a random sample for which the calculation of benefit due was incorrect) and the reason for setting a lower performance target than in the previous year; who was responsible for setting the individual performance targets and approving them.

Following consideration Members RESOLVED:

1. To note the arrangements in place to monitor and report performance across the council along with the responsibility of the committee.
2. That if BVPI 79a fails to improve during the next quarter the responsible officers and Portfolio Holder be requested to attend and report to the committee at it's meeting in January 2007.

5. Corporate Plan Monitoring 2006/07

Allan Oldfield, Executive Manager for Policy and Performance presented the report, which outlined the first progress updates against the actions agreed in the Corporate Plan for 2006/07.

Members were informed that many of the actions identified in the plan would extend beyond the current 2006/07 financial year.

This was the first report against the final actions agreed by Cabinet in May 2006 and as such some of the actions would be delivered or start to be delivered later in the financial year. In these circumstances there was little or no progress to report at this stage so the term 'Action had yet to be taken on this' was used in the progress column contained within the report.

The progress updates presented were a snapshot of the work being carried out against the action. In many cases more detailed reports and presentations had been made to Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and partners. The purpose of this report therefore was to provide a general overview of progress against all the actions in the Corporate Plan.

Feedback from the officers responsible for delivering the actions in partnership with the Portfolio Holders was positive and almost all the actions that had been started were on target to be achieved.

Following consideration of the report members raised a number of issues, which included the lack of progress in respect of key action EC02 (finalise the strategy for the regeneration of Kirkham town centre and consult the local community) and the slippage in respect key action ENS08 (prepare the Local Development Framework in accordance with the currently adopted Local Development Scheme).

Following consideration the committee RESOLVED:-

1. To note the report and the progress made to date.
2. That the committees concerns on the lack of progress in respect of the regeneration of Kirkham town centre be brought to the attention of the relevant portfolio holder and officers and that they be requested to attend the next meeting of the committee in order to provide members with an update.

6. Audit Commission Governance Report

Mike Thomas (District Auditor - Audit Commission) presented the annual report from the Audit Commission on Governance Issues for 2005/06. (A copy of the report was circulated with the agenda). This was a new report and replaced the previous report, which was restricted to commenting on the Statement of Accounts produced by the Council. The new report also commented on Value for Money issues.

Mr Thomas made reference to various issues contained within the report, which included reference to the financial statements; use of resources; adjusted misstatements; value for money conclusions together with the Audit Commission recommendations.

Mr Thomas informed members that the audit commission had a good working relationship with the council and also thanked officers for their assistance following the requirement to bring forward the reporting process.

Following the presentation members asked a number of questions on the value for money policy; actions to avoid misstatements happening in the future and the implementation of the audit commission's recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That Members approve the report and the letter of representation contained in the report be signed by the Chairman.

7. Progress Report of the Task and Finish Group on the Review of Customer Services

Councillor Fabian Wilson presented the report (a copy of which had been included with the agenda) that provided members with an update of the work already undertaken by the task & finish group that was set-up to scrutinise Customer Services.

Interviews had been taken with the Customer Services Manager and one of the Customer Services Supervisors and the work of the contact centre had been observed together with a visit to Kirkham office. Benchmarking with other local authorities and a survey sent out to all councillors had also been undertaken and a survey was due to be sent out to a citizens panel and a focus group would be established for a more in-depth discussion of customer needs and feedback from customers who have telephoned the Contact Centre will be sought.

During the course of this review, it had become apparent that the focus should initially move away from the One Stop Shops to concentrate on the Contact Centre. This was because the Contact Centre dealt with many more customers than the One Stop Shop, had to deal more with back office services and in general was subject to more pressure. The One Stop Shops would still be reviewed, but it was likely to be more of a light touch.

The Contact Centre had some problems that prevented it from functioning to its full potential. Despite this, the Task and Finish group recognised that the staff did an excellent job under difficult circumstances and would like to commend them.

Following consideration of the report members raised a number of issues, which included I.T. software and support; staff numbers; Team Knowledge software; telephone responses from back office staff; integration of systems and business planning. Members felt it was of paramount importance that in terms of IT support, because the Contact Centre was a customer facing service, it should receive priority in terms of IT support - this was both in terms of day-to-day support but also in terms of developing systems further.

Paul Norris, Executive Manager and Josceline Greenaway, Customer Services Manager were in attendance at the meeting. Ms. Greenaway provided her observations on IT/software issues and felt that the Team Knowledge system, which was used by the Contact Centre, was a good system. However, there was room for improvement and some add ons had now been purchased for the Team Knowledge system, which would allow it to integrate with other systems in operation across the council.

Following consideration it was RESOLVED to note the progress of the work currently undertaken by the Task & Finish group.

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