

Community Focus Scrutiny Committee



Date	27 May 2010
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	Councillor Keith Hyde (Chairman) Councillor Thomas Threlfall (Vice-Chairman) Christine Akeroyd, Maxine Chew, Leonard Davies, Tony Ford, Ken Hopwood, Linda Nulty, Janine Owen, Dawn Prestwich, John Singleton
Other Councillors	Karen Buckley
Officers	Allan Oldfield, Clare Platt, Tracy Scholes, Paul Walker, Paul Rossington, Joceline Greenaway, Jamie Dixon, Christine Miller, Lyndsey Lacey, Darius Ward
Other Representatives	Kim Cook and Louise Pope - Citizens Advice Bureau

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 Community Focus Scrutiny Committee held on 15 April 2010 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitution was reported under Council procedure rule 22.3:

Councillor Leonard Davies for Councillor John Prestwich

4. Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau- Monitoring Report

By way of introduction, Tracy Scholes (Director of Governance and Partnerships) presented an overview of key aspects of the Service Level Agreement including the various performance measures that the Council has in place with Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau.

Mrs Kim Cook (Manager) and Louise Pope (Deputy Manager) of the Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau attended the meeting to present key points arising from the CAB Annual Report which was circulated with the agenda.

In brief, the presentation covered details of the advice service provided and staffing arrangements in place. In addition, it provided an update on funding opportunities since the last report to committee, statistical information required by the Service Level Agreement, client/enquiry numbers in 2009/10, percentage of Lytham St Annes residents using the CAB service, statistical information on the types of enquiries dealt with together with details of its future proposals to meet the demands of the service.

Councillor Singleton sought clarification on the percentage of Fylde residents using the CAB Service. This was addressed by Mrs Cook.

Following consideration of this matter it was RESOLVED to note the report and to thank Mrs Cook and Mrs Pope for the presentation and their attendance at the meeting.

5. Performance Exception Report

Darius Ward (Corporate Performance Officer) presented a comprehensive report on performance data for the Council for the 2009/10 period. A summary of all performance for 2009/10 was included as an appendix to the report.

Mr Ward explained that the report was presented in a revised format to reflect the new performance management system (Performance Plus) and a full explanation of the new system was given at the meeting.

Members were advised that over the next 12 months there would be a review of all performance information collected by the authority. A number of national indicators had already been removed by the Audit Commission and these were summarised in the report. In addition, proposals had been made to remove some local performance indicators and these were also listed in the report. Mr Ward added that where the measures were not performance related these would continue to be reported in either the Place Survey or the People Strategy.

The report highlighted areas of under and over performance. It made particular reference to those areas highlighted at the last meeting including a supporting commentary. Each of the Directors was present at the meeting to address key issues relating to their service area.

In brief, the report provided information on the processing of 'major'(NI1157a) 'minor'(NI1157b), and 'other' (NI1157c) planning applications, the number of

affordable homes delivered (NI155), number of households living in temporary accommodation (NI156), improved street and environmental cleanliness - levels of detritus (NI195b), the average number of days to respond to all Freedom of Information requests (FL1016), the percentage of long term sickness (FL1001), the cost of recruitment per vacancy (FL1004) and cost of HR per employee(FL1009).

Councillors Owen and Chew commented on their reasoning for retaining local performance indicator FYS17 relating to the percentage of employees trained in customer care.

Councillor Singleton sought clarification on the percentage of overdue Freedom of Information requests. This was addressed by Tracy Scholes.

Councillor Hopwood commented on the local indicators relating to improved street cleanliness and sought an assurance that the removal of chewing gum in town centres, in particular Lytham, would be addressed. In response, Mr Dixon confirmed this was included in the programme. He stated that gum removal is most effective during periods of wet weather and it was therefore earmarked for the October/November period.

Councillor Owen enquired about the advertisement costs associated with recruitment. Particular reference was made to specialist publications.

Following detailed discussion it was RESOLVED:

1. To note the performance for 2009/10.
2. To note the removal of national and local indicators as highlighted in the report.
3. To retain current arrangements for the presentation of data.
4. To retain local performance indicator FYS17 relating to the percentage of employees trained in customer care.
5. To seek the approval of Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Community Engagement for any advertisement costs in relation to recruitment other than corporate subscriptions to Jobs Go Public.

(The Chairman indicated that he was satisfied that the matter was not controversial and dealt with the matter by a show of hands rather than by taking a recorded vote on it)

6. Exception Report Customer Service and Recycling

At the request of the Committee at its last meeting, Allan Oldfield (Director of Operational Services), Joceline Greenaway (Customer Services Manager) and Jamie Dixon (Assistant Director of Operational Services) attended the meeting to address key issues raised on the performance of the customer service team and the arrangements that had been put in place to collect cardboard for recycling.

In relation to Customer Services, Allan Oldfield explained that the service did experience a significant increase in the volume of calls in late March through to mid April 2010 as a direct result of the Council Tax, Business Rates, Benefits Service and Trade Waste Service. Mr Oldfield added that this was further compounded by the fact that the general election was called resulting in a further increase in the number of customer contacts. In addition, an even higher than expected number of calls were received during this period because of the added number of people calling about the changes to the cardboard collection service and the distribution of white sacks.

To assist members with their deliberations, appended to the report was performance data from the Customer Service Team over the last two years.

Mr Oldfield and Ms Greenaway further advised members on the staffing and telephone answering arrangements during this period, website updates undertaken together with proposals for the future management of the service.

With regard to the changes that had been made to the cardboard collection service, Mr Dixon explained that this was in response to the new waste treatment and disposal requirements set by Lancashire County Council.

Mr Dixon explained that a consultation exercise had been carried out in autumn to gauge the preferences for the potential options available to residents. Feedback was also obtained from workshops and road shows. The three options were:

- To provide no container at all and simply collect the cardboard as a side waste item (this is operated in Preston and South Ribble)
- To provide a large hessian sack for the cardboard at a cost of 12p each.
- To provide a wheeled bin for the cardboard (at a considerable cost to the Authority).

Mr Dixon further highlighted at the meeting a number of changes that had been made in response to feedback from customers since the launch of the cardboard collection service and these included:

- Press releases explaining the reasons why the changes were necessary.
- An interim temporary measure put in place to deal with the demand to collect green bins contaminated with food waste and cardboard.
- Website updates including regular updates to a frequently asked questions section.
- Three road shows planned for coming weeks in Kirkham, Lytham and St. Annes.

- Delivery of a new information leaflet to all households to remind residents what can go in each container.
- It is hoped that from Sept / Oct residents may be able to put food waste back into green bins. This is subject to confirmation from Lancashire County Council.
- A new service leaflet and white sacks will be delivered to all households later in the year.
- The stickers that are put on contaminated green bins have been changed to include additional information.
- Proposals to give stocks of white sacks to libraries and other public buildings.
- Proposals to review the changes later in the year and consider options for the future.

Mr Dixon further reported that a review meeting had been held with representatives of Operational services, Customer Services, the Communications Officer and the Portfolio Holder to help identify what went well, what did not go so well and lessons learned from the introduction of the new arrangements. A summary of the meeting was attached as an appendix to the report.

It was generally felt by members that it would have been helpful if they had been involved in the decision making. This had been compounded by the fact they had received many calls from local residents and felt that they were not in a position to address the concerns.

Councillor Chew suggested that it would be helpful for interested members to visit the new waste treatment facility at Thornton.

Following a full discussion it was RESOLVED:

1. To note the report
2. To ask the Assistant Director of Operational Services to write to Lancashire County Council expressing the committees concerns about the new disposal arrangements and the associated impact this has had on local residents.
3. To make appropriate arrangements for all interested members to visit the new waste treatment facility at Thornton.

(The Chairman indicated that he was satisfied that the matter was not controversial and dealt with the matter by a show of hands rather than by taking a recorded vote on it)

7. Planning Performance - Minor Applications

Paul Walker (Director of Strategic Development) and Paul Rossington (Development Manager) presented an updated report on activity around areas of under performance relating to minor planning applications as identified and discussed at the last meeting of the committee on 15 April meeting.

The update included an illustration of the numbers of applications received and determined from July 2009 to April 2010, the decisions made from 2001/02 to 2009/10, the determination rates for minor applications from July 2009 to April 2010 and a list of outstanding minor applications at the time of reporting with brief reasons for the “delay”

Mr Rossington stated the applications received and the decisions made had both increased / improved over recent months and that the determination rate for major applications had increased and now exceeded the national target. In addition, the minor and other categories were below target when measured at the year end for 2009/10, but that the minor cases were back above target on a monthly measured basis. Mr Rossington stated that in the main, the majority of “over time” minor applications were awaiting legal completions of Section 106 agreements (72%)

The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

(The Chairman indicated that he was satisfied that the matter was not controversial and dealt with the matter by a show of hands rather than by taking a recorded vote on it)
