
CORPORATE ISSUES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

04 FEBRUARY 2008

Present – Councillors P. Brierley (Chair), R. Allen (Vice-Chair), P. Allen (as substitute for J. Walsh), Ashcroft, Bashir-Ismail (as substitute for Darvesh), Connell, Hayes, Hollick, Hornby, Murray, J. Silvester, Spencer, and D. Wilkinson.

Also in attendance

Councillor Morris - Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance

Councillor White - Executive Member for Human Resources, Performance, and Diversity

Mr D. Winstanley - Assistant Chief Executive

Mr S. Arnfield - Director of Corporate Resources

Mr A. Eastwood - Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Mrs S. Curran - Deputy Director, Corporate Resources

Ms. S. Strange - Assistant Director (Communications and Marketing), Legal and Democratic Services

Mr P. Marsh - Assistant Director (Corporate Property Services), Corporate Resources

Mr J. Rowlands - Assistant Director (Tax and Benefits), Corporate Resources

Mr A. Donaldson - Head of Policy and Improvement, Policy and Improvement, Chief Executive's

Mr M. Dixon - Principal Fairness Officer, Fairness Team, Chief Executive's

Mr C. Wiper - Corporate Information Manager, Corporate Information, Legal and Democratic Services

Mr I. Mulholland - Scrutiny Team Leader

Mr J. Dearling - Senior Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr S. Harriss – Chief Executive, and Councillors Darvesh and J. Walsh.

Councillor P. Brierley in the Chair

51 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 December 2007 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

Attached Reports:

[Minutes of Last Meeting](#)

52 MONITORING OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SCRUTINY PANEL DECISIONS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report that informed members of the progress of decisions taken and issues raised by the Committee.

Resolved - That the action and progress outlined in the report be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Monitoring of Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panel Decisions](#)

53 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE

Extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 10 December 2007 and 9 January 2008 were submitted.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 10 December 2007 and 9 January 2008](#)
[Extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 10 December 2007 and 9 January 2008](#)

54 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance held on 12 December 2007 and 30 January 2008 were submitted.

With reference to minute 69, Liability Insurance Renewal, members sought and received assurances concerning the tenderer awarded the contract.

With reference to minute 70, Bolton Arena, members sought assurances regarding the ability of the Arena to

meet future required payments. The Committee was advised that the core trading of the Arena was adequate to meet such repayments.

With reference to minute 72, Breightmet Primary Care Resource Centre/Breightmet Library, members questioned the costs to the Council if Lottery funding was not forthcoming at Stage 2. In reply, the Committee was advised that to secure the Big Lottery Fund grant the Council had to provide a submission demonstrating value for money.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance held on 12 December 2007 \(enclosed\) and 30 January 2008 \(to follow\)](#)

[Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance held on 12 December 2007 \(enclosed\) and 30 January 2008 \(enclosed\)](#)

[Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance held on 12 December 2007 \(enclosed\) and 30 January 2008 \(enclosed\)](#)

55 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HUMAN RESOURCES, PERFORMANCE, AND DIVERSITY

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Performance, and Diversity held on 18 December 2007 and 30 January 2008 were submitted.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Performance, and Diversity be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Performance, and Diversity held on 18 December 2007 \(enclosed\) and 30 January 2008 \(to follow\)](#)

[Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Performance, and Diversity held on 18 December 2007 \(enclosed\) and 30 January 2008 \(enclosed\)](#)

[Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Performance, and Diversity held on](#)

[18 December 2007 \(enclosed\) and 30 January 2008 \(enclosed\)](#)

56 MINUTES OF THE AREA WORKING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Area Working Policy Development Group held on 16 January 2008 were submitted.

In response to questions from members, the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance indicated that the intention remained to introduce the new arrangements in time for the new municipal year.

In reply to members' questions, the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance confirmed that the new ward-based area forums could hold themed events in addition to those meetings scheduled four times a year.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Minutes of the Area Working Policy Development Group held on 16 January 2008](#)

57 MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Strategy and Finance Policy Development Group held on 11 January 2008 were submitted.

With reference to minute 9, City Region Update, Committee members asked when a report detailing the potential benefits and issues of a City Region would be submitted to the Executive and also sought assurances that this would be before the end of the municipal year. In response, the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance indicated that such a report would be considered by a Policy Development Group before its submission to the Executive.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Minutes of the Corporate Strategy and Finance Policy Development Group held on 11 January 2008](#)

58 MINUTES OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy Development Group held on 23 January 2008 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Minutes of the Human Resources Policy Development Group held on 23 January 2008](#)

59 IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES FOR SCRUTINY / ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which provided members with suitable criteria to aid in the selection of topics for scrutiny and outlined the Committee's work programme.

Members' views and comments were sought in relation to any further items and issues that they wanted including on the Committee's work programme, but members indicated their satisfaction with the current timetabled work schedule.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Identification of Issues for Scrutiny / Annual Work Programme](#)

60 MOBILE PHONE MASTS ON COUNCIL LAND AND BUILDINGS

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report informing the Committee of the current position regarding those phone masts and telecommunications equipment on Council owned land and buildings.

The Committee was advised that telecommunications companies had the ability and were likely to challenge the Council's termination of any agreements relating to cellular telephone base stations, aerials, and equipment installations on buildings or land owned by the Council. The Committee was informed that the relocation of

telecommunications equipment might impact on service users.

In response to questions from members, the Committee was advised that schools had the powers to decide whether to enter into agreements with telecommunications companies over the siting of cellular telephone base stations, aerials, and equipment installations on school land. The Committee was informed that schools had previously been made aware of the Council's policy.

Members sought clarification of the government's advice about appropriate safeguards for cellular telecommunications masts and equipment. In reply the Committee was informed that the advice suggested low emissions from such installations presented low risks.

In reply to questions from the Committee, the Assistant Director (Corporate Property Services), Corporate Resources, confirmed that Horwich Leisure Centre was Council land and this status was not affected by the partnership with Serco.

In relation to scheduled agreements with telecommunications companies, the Committee was informed that the onus was on the Council to act once agreements lapsed. With reference to two recently expired agreements, the Committee was assured that increases in fees would be sought if appropriate. The Committee was informed that an independently assessed fee could be imposed if the Council and a telecommunications company failed to reach an agreement.

In response to members raising concerns at the amount of additional installations likely from the expansion of third generation wireless technology and then the introduction of a fourth generation communications system (4G), the Committee was advised that agreements usually allowed for the addition of equipment upgrades.

Members suggested the value of investigating whether telecommunications companies would contest moves by the Council to terminate legal agreements relating to existing base stations, aerials, and equipment installations and suggested obtaining evidence that drew upon the experiences of other local authorities.

Members questioned the incentive for telecommunications companies to pay for siting masts on buildings when they could use the highway cost-free. Members suggested the merit of obtaining information concerning the number of cellular telephone base stations, aerials, and equipment installations on highways land and on buildings and other land. Information was also requested about both the number of Council owned sites and highways sites with telecommunications masts.

Resolved – (i) That members be provided with further information, detailed above, relating to the siting of cellular telephone base stations, aerials, and equipment installations.

(ii) That the report be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Mobile Phone Masts on Council Land and Buildings](#)

[Mobile Phone Masts on Council Land and Buildings](#)

[Mobile Phone Masts on Council Land and Buildings](#)

61 SECURITY OF COUNCIL DATA

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report providing members with an overview of the security of the Council's main data sets and the measures being taken to protect them. The report informed the Committee that the Council currently held over two thousand different sets of records, of which just over half contained either personal data or information which was sensitive or confidential. The report indicated that access to data sets was commonly restricted to staff in the relevant team, with certain exceptions that included partners and outside bodies. The Committee was informed that monthly transfers of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit data to the Department for Work and Pensions had been suspended until a secure electronic system was in place. The report outlined the network and system security measures in place, and the work the Council was undertaking on the encryption and secure transfer of data. The report concluded that the Council was not aware of any significant data loss.

In response to questioning by members, the Committee was advised that the Data Protection Act governed the issues of consent and disclosure of information.

Members questioned the security of laptops used in

home-working and mobile working situations. The Committee was informed that laptops were password-protected and the Council was examining the encryption of hard disks on laptops.

Resolved – That the Committee's satisfaction with the measures in place to protect Council data be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Security of Council data](#)

62 CORPORATE ASSESSMENT UPDATE AND ACTION PLANNING – PRESENTATION

The Head of Policy and Improvement outlined to the Committee the success of the recent Corporate Assessment and the improvements and challenges identified by the inspection. The Committee was advised of the key messages confirmed by the Corporate Assessment: the vision – It's Bolton's Time; the strength of community leadership and partnership working; the strength of member and officer leadership; Bolton first, politics second; the quality of the Council's people and culture; the strength of the Council's priorities, business planning, and delivery arrangements; the strength of performance management; and that the Council had achieved much but many challenges remained.

The presentation identified three headline recommendations from the Corporate Assessment report; namely, improve performance management; improve Bolton's health; and better leadership around environmental sustainability. The Committee was also advised of action planning measures to deliver better outcomes. The Head of Policy and Improvement made clear the importance of the role of scrutiny in achieving improvement.

Members congratulated the Head of Policy and Improvement and his team for their work during the recent Corporate Assessment and particularly praised the work of the Chief Executive.

Resolved – That the Head of Policy and Improvement be thanked for his presentation.

63 EXPENDITURE ON RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING – UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Executive informed the Committee that a written report detailing the Council's expenditure on recruitment advertising would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. He stated that a report evaluating the Council's pilot of internet recruitment advertising would be considered by a Policy Development Group before its submission to the Committee. The Committee was advised that initial impressions from the three month pilot suggested significant reductions were likely but consideration also needed to be given to other issues, including the accessibility of internet recruitment advertising and the quality of applicants.

Resolved – That the verbal update be noted.

64 REVIEW OF CASHIERS

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report reviewing the implementation of an alternative cash collection service and providing details of payment patterns. The report compared the new service with the previous service and outlined the financial savings.

The report indicated that the cost of collection in an area cash office was approximately 79p per transaction, compared with 40p per transaction through a company called Allpay.

Members questioned, with particular reference to Post Offices, whether information was available to gauge the impact of an Allpay facility closing in a deprived area. Members suggested the merit of obtaining detailed information for all Allpay sites. Members requested that information on the total number of Post Offices in the Allpay network across the borough be provided to the Committee.

The Assistant Director (Tax and Benefits), Corporate Resources, informed the Committee that payment information could be obtained by locality and that the trend was for more Allpay outlets rather than fewer. He advised that approximately sixty per cent of Allpay's overall volume payments went through the Post Office and he expected Bolton's figure would be similar. The Committee was advised that specific instances of Allpay facilities being more distant than a previous area cash office could be investigated.

In response to members questioning how direct debit had been actively marketed and pursued, the Committee was

informed that direct debit had been promoted chiefly through individual contact by customer services as part of an ongoing campaign and also an increase in the number of payment dates available.

Resolved – (i) That members be provided with further information relating to Allpay Post Office sites across Bolton.

(ii) That the report be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Implementation of revised cash collection facilities](#)

65 SUMMARY OF EMPLOYMENT MONITORING RESULTS 2006/7

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report summarising the results of the Council's employment monitoring for 2006/07 and showing the contribution of individual departments to the overall results.

The report indicated that the main issue for the Council in terms of gender and employment was the declining number and proportion of male employees. The report informed the Committee that in terms of race, seven per cent of the workforce came from ethnic minorities, compared with a target of eight per cent. The Committee was advised that 3.5 per cent of the Council's workforce were disabled, compared with a target of 7.5 per cent. The Principal Fairness Officer informed the Committee that the Council had improved its performance over previous years and, taken overall, progress towards achieving employment targets was very encouraging.

Members asked how Bolton's employment monitoring results compared with other authorities within AGMA (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities). In response, the Committee was informed that Bolton's results compared favourably with other AGMA councils.

In reply to questioning, the Committee was advised that a particular gender imbalance apparent in the number of female staff earning over £55,000 was an issue that was being solved in the authority. Members were advised that images used in job adverts should be welcoming to all.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Summary of Employment Monitoring results 2006/7](#)

66 AN UPDATE ON THE WORK OF BOLTON COUNCIL'S COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING AGENCY

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report updating Committee members on the establishment and work of the Communications and Marketing Agency, together with future priorities. The report informed the Committee that the Bolton brand was nationally acclaimed and suggested annual savings and efficiencies gained by the agency on behalf of the Council were over half a million pounds.

The Assistant Director (Communications and Marketing), Legal and Democratic Services, informed the Committee that results from the latest General Residents Survey which suggested more satisfaction with the Council's services were attributable to an increased public awareness through the brand of the Council's actions.

In response to questioning by members, the Assistant Director (Communications and Marketing), Legal and Democratic Services, stated that the agency was examining how to improve the impact of the Council's Bolton Scene newspaper.

In response to questions from members, the Committee was advised that a series of templates was being developed to ensure that small projects were able to be delivered quickly but remained within the control of the agency.

Members questioned both the volume and the related cost of the high quality literature that the agency had produced and also suggested the value of obtaining departmental publication costs. In response the Committee was advised that paper publications were being reduced and greater use would be made of the internet.

Resolved – (i) That the Committee be provided with a further report six months hence which detailed the Council's publication costs and updated members on the work of the agency.

(ii) That the report be noted.

67 SICKNESS ABSENCE 9 MONTH MONITORING REPORT, 1 APRIL 2007 TO 31 DECEMBER 2007

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report advising the Committee of the Council's sickness absence statistics for the first three quarters of 2007/08. The report indicated that overall the Council was on course to meet the target level set for 2007/08 of 9.75 days per full-time equivalent (FTE) employee. The report informed members that absence rates were highest in Adult Services and in Environmental Services and tended to be higher amongst weekly paid employees in these departments.

Members questioned the amount of savings achieved through the reduction in sickness absence levels. The Committee was informed that in instances of sickness absence a relatively small proportion of jobs necessitated the employment of replacement staff and this was reflected in the level of savings to be achieved against budget. The Committee was advised that the detrimental effect of absence upon the quality of service offered to customers was perhaps a larger issue.

Resolved – That the Committee continue to monitor sickness absence on a bi-annual basis.

Attached Reports:

[Sickness Absence 9 Month Monitoring Report, 1 April 2007 to 31 December 2007](#)

68 CENTRAL DEPARTMENTS SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE, QUARTER 2, 2007/08

The Chief Executive and Director of Corporate resources submitted a joint report providing the Committee with an overview on the key financial and service performance data from the central departments following the end of the second quarter, 2007/08. The Committee was advised that a small number of challenging targets had been narrowly missed.

In response to questions from members, the Committee was informed that feedback from customer complaints was obtained and acted upon but not in every instance.

Resolved – That the Committee continue to monitor and ensure management of the key financial and service performance data in respect of the central departments, as detailed in the report, on a quarterly basis.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.56pm)

Attached Reports:

[Central Departments Service and Financial Performance,
Quarter 2, 2007/08](#)

[Central Departments Service and Financial Performance,
Quarter 2, 2007/08](#)

[Central Departments Service and Financial Performance,
Quarter 2, 2007/08](#)

[Central Departments Service and Financial Performance,
Quarter 2, 2007/08](#)