
EXECUTIVE

MEETING ,30TH APRIL ,2007

Councillor Morris
Leader of the Council – Corporate Strategy and Finance
Councillor Mrs. Thomas
Children's Services
Councillor Adia
Development
Councillor J. Byrne
Environmental Services
Councillor Clare
Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor Ibrahim
Culture and Community Safety
Councillor Kay
Schools
Councillor Sherrington
Recycling and Waste Management
Councillor White
Human Resources and Diversity
Councillor Zaman
Regeneration

Non-Voting:

Councillor Peel
Councillor A.N. Spencer
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Critchley
Councillor Morgan
Councillor Mrs Fairclough
Councillor Mrs. Ronson
Councillor Hayes
Councillor Cox

Officers:

Mr. S. Harriss
Chief Executive
Mr. S. Arnfield
Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. A. Eastwood
Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Ms. S. Crossley
Assistant Director Adults Services
Mr. P. Bridge
Assistant Director Environmental Services
Mr. A. Jennings
Democratic Services Manager

Also in attendance Mr. J. Foster - Relationship Manager Audit Commission.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor David Wilkinson.

Councillor Morris in the Chair

73 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Executive held on 16th April, 2007 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

74 ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted the Annual Audit and Inspection letter and the Executive were provided with a summary by Mr Foster from the Audit Commission.

The Commission's report provided an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council and drew its findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council and inspections that had been undertaken in the last year and from a wider analysis of the Council's performance and its improvement over the last year, as measured through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework. The main issues highlighted in the report were as follows ;

- Bolton Council continued to perform at a high level, retaining its 4 star rating under the CPA methodology and achieving an "improving well" in the direction of travel judgement. There was a clear focus on improving the quality of life for all and in particular those in deprived communities. Closing the gap between different communities across the Borough was a key

element of Council and partnership working and there were encouraging signs of progress.

- Service quality was good overall and was excellent in some areas, particularly Adult services who were seen as excellent in helping vulnerable people live independently. Performance had also improved in benefits and cultural services.
- The targeted efforts to improve the quality of the environment was yielding results and resident satisfaction with cleanliness had risen markedly through a focus on more deprived areas and closer integration of Council services.
- There was continued success in job creation, attracting inward investment and pressing ahead with regeneration across the Borough. Employment rates were rising but future prosperity could be hindered if issues such as equality of opportunity across all communities were not addressed in areas such as educational attainment.
- Strong partnership working was contributing to achievement of long-term crime reduction targets. There had been considerable attention on reducing the gap in crime levels between deprived and other communities and this approach was yielding results. However crime levels remained comparatively high and a recent slow down needed to be closely monitored.
- Internal capacity could be further strengthened by continuing to focus on improving value for money, addressing high rates of sickness absence, tackling high vacancy levels in adult social care and

further developing the approach to workforce planning. These areas were considered important as they would help increase available capacity to deliver Bolton's ambitious plans including the on-going change programme.

The Commission's report also detailed the following action required by the Council ;

- work with partners to continue to focus on closing the gap between different communities across the Borough, particularly the disparities in educational attainment;
- closely monitor and ,if necessary, take action to address recent rises in some crime levels. In particular further progress was needed to address higher crime areas and halt the rise in overall levels of violent crime. There was a risk that long-term crime reduction targets would not be met if performance deteriorated;
- address continued gaps in internal capacity, primarily addressing sickness absence, vacancy levels in adult social care and further developing the approach to workforce planning. Delivery of this would put the Council in a much stronger position to deliver its ambitious change programme;
- improve the processes in place for the management of the Council's fixed asset base;
- demonstrate how service investment achieved output consistent with objectives;

- quantitatively assess, monitor and report the level of reserves;
- continue to review and enhance the processes in place for risk management so that the Council could clearly demonstrate it was embedded within corporate business processes; and
- make value for money an integral part of the performance management framework.

Resolved – (i) That the Executive welcomes the Commission’s findings that the Council continues to perform at a high level and that performance and outcomes continue to improve in many areas.

(ii) That the Executive acknowledges those areas where the Commission considers that performance can be strengthened and that an action plan will be submitted to the Executive for approval early in the next municipal year

75 MANAGEMENT OF THE ALBERT HALLS

Further to Minute 30 of the meeting held on 13th November, 2006 a report was submitted that informed the Executive of the actions necessary to meet the recommendations of the Albert Halls Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel had made three recommendations as follows:-

- that the Albert Halls and the Civic Catering function in Environmental Services be brought together into a single department with a single and coherent management

structure.

- that work be undertaken to draw up a Council wide list of meetings and function rooms which could be booked centrally.
- that steps be taken in order to improve the clarity and transparency of the accounts which relate to the Albert Halls and Environmental Services – Civic Catering.

The proposed actions for implementing the Albert Halls Scrutiny Report findings were set out in the report as follows;

- Catering Events - currently the events were duty managed by both the Albert Halls Duty Manager (Adults) and a Catering Manager (Environmental Health). Under the joint working arrangements it was proposed that the Catering Manager took the lead for these events and it was envisaged that such arrangements would lead to efficiencies.
- Day to Day Management of the Building - currently, the Hospitality Waitresses were responsible to the Banqueting/Catering Manager and to assist in the service delivery and control of the buildings activities it was proposed that the Hospitality Waitresses were responsible to the Duty Manager on a daily basis, so service contracts and continuity remained

with one person.

- Entertainment/Other Events (Conferences/Seminars) - Currently the Elizabethan Bar service was the responsibility of the Banqueting/Catering Manager and it was proposed that the Albert Halls Duty Manager took responsibility of the service to cover entertainment events leading to a more efficient use of management resources
- Week – end/bank holiday enhancements – it was proposed that a way of introducing a ‘buyout’ of week-end and bank holiday enhancements was implemented in the Albert Halls which would need to be carried out in consultation with the Trade Unions and staff as soon as practicable and within the context of other corporate reviews e.g. Pay and Grading.
- Elizabethan/Lancaster/Mobile bar - The Elizabethan Bar had recently been converted into a bottle bar to enhance and speed up service which had resulted in a weekly saving of approximately £400.

The conversion of the Elizabethan Bar had been undertaken to minimise the wastage on draught beers as a result of cleaning the pipes and it was considered that this service could be extended to the Lancaster Bar and the mobile bar ,albeit with the use of smaller barrels and a quick chill system to continue the sale of draught beers.

It was considered that Work should commence immediately with Corporate Property Services to develop the creation of a meetings room and facilities database across the Council. A facility would be published throughout the Authority to encourage departments to use internal Council facilities rather than go externally with a resultant loss of income.

With respect to the clarity and transparency of accounts it was explained that the major reason that there was a loss on the catering activities was the low turnover in comparison to the level of departmental overheads charged for the activity. Whilst the income exceeded the cost of service provision, it was insufficient to cover the fixed overheads within the department. Such overheads prohibited the current arrangements, or an external provider, to operate commercially. Therefore, in order to undertake this service at the Albert Halls, the departmental overheads would have to be re-allocated to other activities within the department which currently Adult Services were looking into. In addition there needed to be increased use and better timing of meetings to ensure that the overhead apportioned against usage was minimised.

Following the Executive's meeting in November, 2006 the Director of Legal and Democratic Services had undertaken further investigation and had recommended the following in addition to the above ;

- (a) there needed to be a concerted effort to increase paying usage;
- (b) marketing of the Albert Halls was now undertaken by the Communications and Marketing Agency which would provide a clear

marketing plan for the various functions and facilitate monitoring systems to determine uptake of services as a result of improved marketing; and

(c) to market test the services offered in a year's time following implementation of the recommendations now detailed .

Resolved - (i) That the Albert Halls and the Civic Catering function in Environmental Services be brought together into a single department with a single and coherent management arrangement, as set out in the body of the report ,and that this work be implemented forthwith.

(ii) That in order to implement the proposals expeditiously staff (when working under provision of services within Albert Halls) should record their time to an Albert Halls cost centre thus enabling baseline data to be prepared immediately whilst the single departmental service is brought together.

(iii) That work be undertaken to draw up a Council wide list of meetings and function rooms which can be booked centrally and electronically to enable maximum multi-use of rooms and effective timing of catering facilities.

(iv) That the financial budgets of the Albert Halls and all costs attributed thereto be allocated into a trading account to demonstrate service costs and that ,following the outcome of the Adult Services exercise in respect of administrative charges, further analysis of such be undertaken and that recommendations as to future service delivery be made as necessary.

(v) That an analysis of the increased usage

as a result of effective marketing be used to determine those events which generate the highest net income and that programmes be prepared accordingly.

(vi) That once marketing ,usage ,base lining of trading accounts and determination of which components of the Albert Halls demonstrate value for money a market testing exercise of the revised operation be undertaken in 12 months time or sooner if possible.

(vii) That a 10 year maintenance plan be completed to ensure standards are maintained and improved .

(viii) That consultation be undertaken with non-users of the facilities and an analysis undertaken as to why these potential customers do not use the facilities.

(ix) That the current criteria for applying for a reduction in room hire charges (both internally and externally) be reviewed in line with the Council's objectives.

(x) That In order to demonstrate best practice a benchmarking exercise be undertaken with similar civic venues enabling best practice to be followed.