

EXTRACT

THE EXECUTIVE

A meeting of The Executive was held on:-

MEETING, 30TH APRIL, 2007

when the following people were present:-

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 Members

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.

Councillor Morris in the Chair

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

73. MINUTES

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.