
CORPORATE ISSUES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

05 FEBRUARY 2007

Councillors Hussain (Chair), P. Brierley (Vice-Chair), Connell, Darvesh, Mrs. Fairclough, Hornby, Peel, Mrs. Ronson, J. Rothwell, Rushton, J. Silvester, Spencer and A. Walsh (as deputy for Councillor Hollick)

Councillor Morris - Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance
Councillor Adia - Executive Member for Development
Councillor White - Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity
Mr. A. Eastwood - Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Mr. S. Arnfield - Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. D. Winstanley - Assistant Chief Executive
Ms. S. Curran - Deputy Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. A. Donaldson - Head of Policy and Improvement
Ms. C. James - Head of Strategic Projects
Mr. D. Mee - Head of Estates
Ms. C. Quinn - Deputy Facilities Manager
Ms. C. Holland - Building Consultancy Manager
Mr. J. Addison - Members Services Manager
Mr. J. Kerambrum - Trainee Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Hussain in the Chair

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Hollick

56 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 27th November, 2006.

Resolved - That the minutes be approved a correct record.

57 COMMITTEE'S FORWARD PLAN

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted the Forward Plan for the submission of items to this Committee.

The document contained details of the key decisions within the Executive's and the relevant Executive Members' Forward Plan that fell within the remit of this Committee.

Members were informed that the Work Programme described the items that had been identified by Members to be considered at the Committee at future meetings.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

58 EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE HELD ON 18TH DECEMBER, 2006 AND 8TH JANUARY, 2007 (TO FOLLOW)

Extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 18th December, 2006 and 8th January, 2007 were submitted.

Resolved - That the decisions of the Executive be noted.

59 EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DEVELOPMENT HELD ON 11TH DECEMBER, 2006 (TO FOLLOW)

An extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Member for Development held on 11th December, 2006 was submitted.

Resolved - That the decisions of the Executive Member be noted.

60 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE HELD ON 13TH DECEMBER, 2006 (TO FOLLOW) AND 24TH JANUARY, 2007

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance held on 13th December, 2006 and 24th January, 2007 were submitted.

Resolved - That the decisions of the Executive Member be noted.

61 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND DIVERSITY HELD ON 13TH DECEMBER, 2006 AND 31ST JANUARY, 2007 (TO FOLLOW)

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity held on 13th December, 2006 and 31st January, 2007 were submitted.

Resolved - That the decisions of the Executive Member be noted.

62 MINUTES OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP HELD ON 17TH JANUARY, 2007

The minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources and Diversity Policy Development Group held on 17th January, 2007 were submitted.

Resolved - That the minutes be noted.

63 CASTLE HILL SCRUTINY PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS - REPORT BACK ON PROGRESS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which provided the Committee with an update on the Castle Hill Project, following the Executives response to the recommendations contained in the Castle Hill Scrutiny Panel Report.

The report informed the Committee of the revision of the Corporate Property Services Project Management Handbook. Corporate Property Services (CPS) had reviewed its internal Project Management Handbook and had looked at the comments of the Scrutiny Panel and, where appropriate, had incorporated them into the revised Handbook. The CPS Handbook had been created as a tool for CPS staff acting as a Project Manager. It was intended that once the CPS Project Management Handbook was completed, it would be used as a basis for the Corporate Management Handbook, which would effectively govern how larger scale project were managed throughout the Council.

The report stated that within the framework of the CPS Project Management Handbook, the recommendations made by the Executive would be undertaken by the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) on any future project. The SRO, along with the Project Board on large projects, would be responsible for ensuring agreement with all stakeholders as to what the desired objectives at the outset were and to provide clearly defined goals to the Project Manager (PM).

The report concluded by stating that a Project Team would be established to undertake this work with departmental representatives with a lead chief officer.

In their deliberations members requested to see a copy of the completed Corporate Project Management Handbook and for a composite report detailing the current position in relation to the implementation of all the Scrutiny Panels' Recommendations be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

64 CORPORATE RESOURCES DEPARTMENT - PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - QUARTER 2

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which provided the Committee with information on the Corporate Resources Department performance indicators for quarter 2 of 2006/07.

Appendix A of the report detailed the performance for quarter 2 for 2006/07 along with the quarterly and the annual targets.

Appendix B of the report explained in detail the variations for each Performance Indicator and commented that, generally, performance had improved on quarter 2 in 2005/06.

The report concluded by stating that the performance of the BVPi's was generally better than the same period last year and that all targets were expected to be met in 2006/07. The report also added that local indicators were performing well.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

65 CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING, QUARTER 2, 2006/07

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which examined the revenue monitor in the first quarter of 2006/07 and predicted an overspend of £75,000 relating to land charges and also predicted an energy cost overspend.

The report also showed the measures that had been taken to contribute towards the Authority's overall Gershon efficiency targets and showed the projected achievement against these targets.

A preliminary assessment of the Legal Services trading account showed that it was on target to break even.

Capital expenditure to date was examined and compared to the capital programme and, at this stage, the outturn appeared to be in line with the programme in most areas, although slippage was predicted for the Asset Management Plan and Area Property Reviews due to deliberate delays in projects and because of awaiting outcomes of the Shaping Future Services Programme.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

66 CENTRAL DEPARTMENT'S SERVICE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT, QUARTER 2, 2006/07

The Chief Executive submitted a report which provided the Committee with an overview on the key financial and service performance data from the central departments following the end of the second quarter 2006-07.

The service and financial performance from the three central departments showed the following:-

(a) performance against Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) was good, with 60% showing an improvement compared with the same period last year;

(b) a new approach to monitoring Service Improvement Action Plans (SIAPs) had delivered improvements, and work was continuing to deliver further improvements;

(c) revenue and capital expenditure to date was largely to plan; and

(d) Gershon efficiency performance was on track.

The report also enclosed a number of appendices, which provided detailed background information and key improvement actions, including the Central Departments' Revenue and Capital outturn report, 2006-07.

The report stated that improvements in performance were anticipated for all over the coming quarters. Performance

against these measures would be updated quarterly at future Executive Member meetings.

The Director of Corporate Resources reported that with respect to invoices paid within 30 days (BVPI) this had increased to 90% in the 3rd quarter.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

67 BOLTON COUNCIL PERFORMANCE TRENDS REPORTS 2001 - 06

The Chief Executive submitted a report which provided the Committee with an overview of available data showing performance trends over the past five financial years.

By way of background information, this report had been compiled following discussions at a previous Executive Member meeting where more information on long-term performance was requested, beyond the year on year analysis contained in existing regular "dashboard" reports. Following discussions with both Members and Officers, a total of 32 indicators had been identified for inclusion in the report.

The report explained that in absolute terms, 72% of the 32 indicators showed an improvement in performance between 2001-02 and 2005-06; however, around a fifth had declined over the past five years and appropriate action was being taken to improve performance. Though these calculations represented a selection of the Council's existing Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI), this data reflected a generally positive direction of travel in the performance of key services.

The report went on to state that Bolton's performance, compared to other similar authorities, had improved well since 2001-02 with respect to these indicators. The proportion of indicators within the bottom quartile had halved to 15% while the proportion within the top two quartiles had risen from 48% in 2001-02 to 52% in 2005-06.

The report concluded by stating that, whilst the selection of the BVPIs presented precluded a comprehensive assessment of performance over the past five years, this data was indicative of continued improvement across a wide range of services.

In their deliberations members sought clarification on

reference 54, Older People Living at Home and discussed the performance of early retirement BVPIs. Members also asked about the cost to the Council of early retirements and were assured that structures were in place for this BVPI to get back on track.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

68 AGGREGATE FINANCIAL MONITOR HALF YEAR 2006/07

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which advised the Committee of the outcome of the half year Aggregate Financial Monitoring exercise for 2006/07.

The report summarised the results of the half year monitoring exercise for 2006/07 and considered the following:-

- General Fund Revenue Monitoring;
- Aggregate Capital Monitoring; and
- Monitoring of the Prudential Guidelines.

The report stated that, overall, there was a net increase in revenue balances of £550,000 compared with the first quarter report to the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance on 6th September, 2006. The significant changes were as follows:-

- a reduction in estimated interest costs by £500,000;
- projected savings in Waste Disposal volumes of £275,000;
- increased electricity costs of £150,000; and
- reductions in land charges income of £75,000.

The report then went on to explain that Projected Capital Expenditure had reduced by £2,537,000. The reduction was largely made up of scheme slippage and expenditure at the projected level could be fully funded. In addition, a capitalisation directive had been sought in respect of equal pay settlements for the current year. A further £8,000,000 had been included in the capital monitor for this purpose.

The report also commented that the monitoring of Prudential Indicators showed that all Treasury indicators were within the limits set. The only area where projections suggested limits may be exceeded were Capital Expenditure, however, the major component of any increase was likely to arise from the capitalisation

directive. It was, therefore, proposed to await the outcome of the Council's application before seeking a revised Council resolution regarding this matter.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

69 REVIEW OF KIOSK SERVICE POINTS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which informed the Committee of BT's decision to discontinue support nationally for on-street kiosks.

The Committee was reminded that, as part of the Council's overall suite of PSA1 targets, an objective was agreed that the Council would provide an electronic service point within ten minutes walking distance of each residents home. Consequently, a three year pilot scheme was negotiated with BT to convert 42 of their on-street telephone kiosks to internet kiosks.

It was stated that the cost of the scheme was £360,000 over the three year period from December, 2003 to December, 2006, with an option to renew at £2,000 per annum for the following two years, if the pilot was successful. Therefore, the contracts were now technically due for renewal. Furthermore, as part of the overall negotiations, nine kiosks were also provided in Bolton at Home offices and two in the Town Hall One Stop Shop and the contracts for these ran until the summer of 2008.

The report provided details regarding the usage of the kiosks and Appendix 1 showed the total number of web hits and duration by minutes since the kiosks were commissioned. Based on this information, it was evident that overall usage peaked during the first eight months of 2004 and, since then, had steadily declined. In view of this, it was unlikely that officers would have recommended retaining more than a handful of on-street kiosks.

The Committee was advised that BT had also taken a strategic decision to discontinue national support for on-street kiosks with immediate effect. In view of this, BT would begin a rolling programme of converting all their suite of on-street internet kiosks back to telephone kiosks and it was likely that the programme would begin in Bolton in March, 2007.

In terms of future developments, BT would continue to support the off-street kiosks at least until the summer of 2008 and it was intended to use the money diverted from

the kiosk project to help develop the Council's website.

Members were advised that neither BT nor the Council would incur any financial penalties.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

70 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT 6 MONTH REVIEW AND LSP REVIEW

The Chief Executive submitted a report which provided the Committee with information on the outcome of the recent 6-monthly assessment of Bolton's Local Area Agreement undertaken by Government Office North West.

By way of background information, the report explained that in April, 2006, Bolton's Local Area Agreement (LAA) was agreed by Bolton Vision Partnership and Central Government via Government Office North West (GONW) and with Bolton Council as the Accountable Body.

The report explained that under the terms of the Local Area Agreement, it fell to GONW to oversee 6-monthly reviews of Bolton's performance against the targets contained in the LAA. Attached to the report was the first 6-monthly review of Bolton's LAA prepared by GONW based on a self- assessment submitted by Bolton's LSP. GONW had awarded Bolton's LAA a 'green light', the top rating, both for its progress to date and its direction of travel overall. However, it was stated that at this stage only 25% of the targets in the LAA were monitored quarterly, so the report did not provide a full picture of LAA performance. A first full annual review report was due in June, 2007 and this would be an important milestone in terms of Bolton's LAA.

The GONW expressed the view that effective partnership working, strong LAA governance and robust performance management arrangements had meant that good gains were already being made in terms of improving outcomes for the local community. However, within their report GONW did identify a range of issues that would warrant further consideration by the LSP:

- the 6 monthly Statement of Grant Usage revealed a slow build up of relevant expenditure. Action was being taken by the Council and its partners to address this; and

- the report highlighted a number of risks around achieving LAA outcomes, indicating a number of areas

where performance was currently not on target. These issues had however already been identified by the Council and its partners, with robust plans in place to get performance back on track.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

71 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved - That, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, it is likely that if members of the press and public were present during the following item of business there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and that, in pursuance of Section 100A(4) of such Act, members of the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

72 CAPITAL RECEIPTS PROGRAMME 2006/07 (TO FOLLOW)

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which advised the Committee of the current situation regarding the Capital Receipts Programme.

The appendices to the report showed completed land and property transactions to date, as well as those receipts that were still anticipated to be completed in the current financial year.

Resolved - That the report be noted.