

CORPORATE ISSUES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING 18 AUGUST 2008

Present – Councillor Hollick (Chairman), P. Allen (as deputy for Councillor Shaw), R. Allen, P. Brierley, Cottam, Darvesh, Hayes, Hornby, Iqbal, Mistry, J. Silvester, A. N. Spencer and J. Walsh.

Also in attendance:

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Councillor Mrs. Thomas | - | Executive Member for Corporate Resources |
| Councillor Kay | - | Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity |
| Mr. P. Molyneux | - | Assistant Director of Highways and Engineering and Committee Chief Officer Support |
| Mr. I. D. Mulholland | - | Scrutiny Team Leader |
| Mr. S. M. Arnfield | - | Director of Finance and Deputy Chief Executive |
| Mr. D. Winstanley | - | Assistant Chief Executive |
| Mr. A. Eastwood | - | Director of Legal and Democratic Services |
| Mr. P. Marsh | - | Assistant Director Corporate Property Services |
| Mr. B. Colquitt | - | Asset Strategy Manager |
| Ms. S. Strange | - | Assistant Director, Communications and Marketing |

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Ayub and Shaw and Councillor Morris as Executive Member for Strategy and External Relationships.

Councillor Hollick in the Chair

Page 1 of 11

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd June 2008 were submitted.

Further to Minute 8, Minutes of the meeting of the Area Working Policy Development Group, Members expressed disappointment at the process for the replacement of Neighbourhood Panels.

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

10. 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.

Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That a report be factored into the work programme concerning the costs to the Council in respect of rates for vacant properties.

11. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Extracts of the minutes of meetings of the Executive held on 27th June and 25th July, 2008 were submitted.

Further to Minute 10, Financial Outturn, Members queried as to how much of the £50,000 allocated for Free Swimming Lessons had been spent.

The Committee was advised that the scheme was progressing well and no one had been turned away.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive be noted.

12. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE RESOURCES

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Corporate Resources held on 8th July and 5th August, 2008 were submitted.

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

13. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGY AND EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Strategy and External Relationships held on 9th July and 13th August, 2008 were submitted.

Further to Minute 29, East Lodge Heaton Cemetery, Members indicated their pleasure that a lease agreement had been reached. Members further enquired as to when a further report would be submitted in respect of proposals to ensure that the access to Heaton Cemetery was protected. It was explained that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive.

With regard to 35, Park Road, Little Lever set out in the Decision Monitoring appendix to the minutes of 13th August, 2008 Members expressed concern at the length of time taken to complete negotiations. Members were advised that the Council had done its best to accommodate the individuals proposals.

With regard to Minute 30, Former Salvation Army Citadel – King Street, Farnworth, Members enquired as to the progress.

The Committee was advised that the necessary documentation had not yet been signed.

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

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND DIVERSITY

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Human Resources and Diversity held on 15th July and 6th August, 2008 were submitted.

Members enquired as to the progress of appointments to various posts previously agreed by the Executive Member, where no update had been produced in the Decision Monitoring appendix.

It was explained that the position regarding appointments to those posts would be followed up.

In respect of Minute 29, Apprenticeships, Members enquired as to when the new apprentices would be taken on.

Resolved – (i) That the decisions of the Executive Member be noted.

(ii) That this Committee be notified of details of appointments to the various apprentices posts.

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Policy Development Group held on 18th July, 2008 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

16. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LICENSING ACT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Act Policy Development Group held on 29th July, 2008 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

17. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY - UPDATE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which updated the Committee on the work of the Communications and Marketing Agency and its future priorities.

The report particularly highlighted the overall spend in terms of Marketing and Communications and consultation and research from 2004/05 to 2007/08.

The report also highlighted that the Agency continued to achieve value for money and efficiency savings in all areas of its work through:-

- elimination of duplication and more efficient procurement;
- increasing use of web and commitment to sustainability; and
- setting objectives, planning and budgeting in scope activities at a more strategic level.

Members were apprised of details of recent examples of efficiency savings.

The report concluded by referring to issues of reputation management and communication.

Members in their deliberations discussed the following salient issues:-

- the need to be made aware of the various income funding streams;
- awareness of the various publications produced by the Agency;
- whilst savings had been made, had elements of previous spend now been re-charged somewhere else;
- the need for Bolton Council's Partner organisations to also use the Logo branding; and
- the cost of publishing the Bolton Scene.

Resolved – (i) That the report be welcomed.

(ii) That the Committee receives a further update report to a future meeting to include further information on income funding streams and produced publications.

18. CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT – THREE YEAR CAPITALISED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which set out details of the forward plan of capitalised expenditure on maintenance of built assets to align with Departments Service Asset Strategies (property and land) and building condition duties.

By way of background information, the report explained that the annual "Corporate Asset Management Plan" (AMP) had reported the requirements for investment to address "backlog maintenance" identified by the process of condition surveys of properties. This was identified at £68.72m in the 2007 Corporate Asset Management plan.

Emphasis was made in the 2007 AMP to address key elements of the performance of property in relation to overall Corporate Asset Objectives and these had similarly been the key elements of the work carried out within Corporate Resources, viz:-

- Staff satisfaction and the standard of operational property accommodation;
- Survey programmes and the management of established procedures to ensure compliance with Health and Safety legislation;
- Validation of condition surveys and data to a common base level to inform property performance reviews, the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programme processes, and Services Asset Strategy preparation;
- Progression of Asset Valuations;
- Property performance benchmarking, access to buildings, office accommodation rationalisation; and
- Achievement of targets for realising capital income.

Members were advised that an annual capital allocation had been made to address Health and Safety and Condition issues highlighted by the survey process and these had been commissioned on an annual basis.

The report went on to summarise the proposed three year plan to address these issues for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 based on the known information in the condition database and on the information provided by Departments as part of their Departmental Services Asset Strategy documents.

Members in their deliberations discussed the following issues:-

- The backlog of spend in relation to commercial properties and whether those buildings should all remain in the Corporate Portfolio.
- Future reports should include priority expenditure totals.
- The vast amount of spending identified for civic buildings.
- For libraries, only a quarter of earmarked spending identified.
- The eventual move of items from the essential to urgent categories and the further pressure of work.
- The amount of £20,000 earmarked for Mere Hall.

It was indicated that this was for the external part of the building only. The Council were not responsible for the interior.

- Why there were no programmed amounts for Community Education.

It was indicated that Maintenance was funded from other bodies in these areas.

The Committee was further advised that the forthcoming Property Performance Report and Asset Management Plan would enable a more strategic approach to Property Maintenance.

In terms of the Town Hall, it was reported that a survey had been commissioned to look at each elevation in order to assess holistically the work to be undertaken.

Furthermore, absailers would also shortly undertake a close inspection of the condition of the clock tower.

Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That an item be included on the agenda for the next meeting giving consideration to the possible establishment of a Scrutiny Panel on the issue of Property Maintenance.

19. JOINT CENTRAL DEPARTMENT'S PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD, END OF YEAR, 2007/08

The Directors of Corporate Resources and Legal and Democratic Services submitted a joint report setting out the performance data and financial outturn for the central departments for 2007/08.

In respect of Paragraph 2.4 of the report Members expressed satisfaction that the increase in the number of complaints being received and logged indicated more public awareness of the process. Action was now being taken in respect of failures at the point of delivery.

It was indicated that the complaints system was becoming more embedded and utilised by increased awareness.

Members also discussed the procedure for passing on complaints.

Resolved – That the Performance Dashboard be noted and further monitoring be undertaken at a future meeting.

20. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

1. The following question was submitted by Councillor Hollick in accordance with Standing Order 36:-

Q. With regard to Appendix A of Agenda item 13 : -
BVPI, "What happened to the 3.6% of uncollected council tax and the 2.5% of non-domestic rates not collected?

D10

- A. For the 2007/08 years the balances outstanding as at 31/03/08 and as at 31/07/08 were:-

| | 2007/08 Balance at 31/03/08 | 2007/08 Balance at 31/07/08 | Reduction in 2007/08 Arrears since 31/03/08 |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 2007/08 Council Tax | £3,766,894.46 | £2,732,405.38 | £1,034,489.08 |
| 2007/08 Non- Domestic Rates | £2,027,214.81 | £1,569,132.72 | £458,082.09 |

After the end of a financial year, for both Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates the Council continued to collect the outstanding arrears. The budget assumed a collection rate of 98% and it was aimed to achieve an even better collection. For example, for the years 2003/04 to 2005/06 the actual collection as at the 31st March 2008 was as follows:-

| | |
|---------|-------|
| 2005/06 | 98.6% |
| 2004/05 | 99% |
| 2003/04 | 99.3% |

As can be seen from the above, whilst there were arrears at the end of each year, by continuing the recovery processes the Council eventually achieved a collection rate of 99% plus. Bearing in mind the numbers of people who were unable to pay because of changes of circumstances, this was an excellent performance.

For information, an extract was also circulated from the report that went to the Committee in August, 2007 which explained what recovery actions were taken to collect unpaid charges.

2. The following question was submitted by Councillor Hollick in accordance with Standing Order 36:-

- Q. With regard to Agenda item 9(C), Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Member for External Relationships, Minute 18. "What was the decision regarding Neighbourhood Panels continuing or not?"
- A. Bolton at Home had recently completed a review of regeneration, and as a result the intention was for the Neighbourhood Panels to discontinue.

However, the current round of meetings of the Neighbourhood Panels and Local Community Panels was taking place, as an interactive session with panel members about what the issues were within their neighbourhoods and areas, and how they would want to be involved under the new arrangements for Transforming Estates in particular. Following this informal consultation there would be joint presentations by Bolton at Home and the Council during September, about proposed new arrangements and transforming estates.

Resolved – That the questions and responses be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00 p.m. and finished at 7.20 p.m.)