

CORPORATE ISSUES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING 20 AUGUST 2007

Present – Councillors P. Brierley (Chairman), R. Allen (Vice-Chairman), Ashcroft, Ayub, Connell, Hayes, Hollick, Hornby, Murray, Scowcroft, J. Silvester, Spencer, J. Walsh, 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
Councillor Adia	–	Executive Member for Development
Mr. S. Harriss	–	Chief Executive
Mr. D. Winstanley	–	Assistant Chief Executive
Mr. S. Arnfield	–	Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. A. Eastwood	–	Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Mr. J. Rowlands	–	Assistant Director (Tax and Benefits), Corporate Resources
Ms. J. Spencer	–	Head of Libraries, Adult Services
Ms. M. Keane	–	Communities and Learning Manager, Library Services, Adult Services
Mr. J. Addison	–	Scrutiny Support Manager
Mr. J. Dearling	–	Senior Scrutiny Officer

Councillor P. Brierley in the Chair

10. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 June 2007 were submitted.

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

11. 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 report be noted.

12. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE

Extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 18 June, 2 July, 23 July, and 6 August 2007 were submitted.

With reference to minute 3, Corporate Big Issues and Financial Forecast 2008-2011, 18 June 2007, members expressed concern that abbreviations and acronyms were not always explained in reports.

In response to questions from members, and with reference to minute 3, Corporate Big Issues and Financial Forecast 2008-2011, 18 June 2007, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Finance confirmed that the Equal Pay Settlements should be financed without an increase in council tax or a reduction in services.

With reference to minute 12, AGMA TIF Bid – Report of the Transport Innovation Fund Working Party, 23 July 2007, the members questioned the method of public consultation. In response the Committee was advised that Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority would undertake consultation across the conurbation. In addition, the Committee was informed that any initial bid approved by central government would be subject to statutory guidance that would stipulate

consultation measures.

- Resolved – (i) That measures be implemented to ensure all abbreviations and acronyms be explained within the Committee's papers.
- (ii) That the decisions of the Executive be noted.

13. 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 9 July and 8 August 2007 were submitted.

With reference to minute 17, Smart Cards and E-Money – Urgent Action, 9 July 2007, members asked for a progress update. The Committee was advised that a number of local traders had expressed an interest in accepting transactions using the e-money facility on the Council's Smart card.

With reference to minute 21, Land at Lever Street, Little Lever, 9 July 2007, members sought assurances that the land leased out by the Council would not be built upon. The Committee was informed that the developer wanted to use the land for a landscaped entrance to its development, but the matter would be investigated.

With reference to minute 28, Corporate Resources Department Performance Indicators – Quarter 1 2007/08, 8 August 2007, members asked about Private Finance Initiative expenditure at the Castle Hill Community Learning and Resource Centre. In response it was suggested to the Committee that the additional sum referred to was possibly for the costs of air conditioning.

With reference to minute 30, Licensing of Stretched Limousines, 8 August 2007, members questioned the progress achieved. In reply the Committee was informed that stretched limousines had been required to comply with licensing conditions from 1 June 2007 and that failure to do so would be a breach of the licence.

- Resolved – (i) That further information concerning the leasing of land at Lever Street, Little Lever, be provided to the Committee.
- (ii) That data on the number of stretched limousines in Bolton be provided to the Committee.
- (iii) That the decisions of the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance be noted.

14. 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 July and 15 August 2007 were submitted.

With reference to minute 10, Elected Member Development Strategy Progress, 18 July 2007, members discussed the value of training for scrutiny committee chairs, praised both the training provided to newly-elected members and the Personal Development Planning process for all elected members, and sought assurances regarding funding of members' training programmes. In response the Executive Member for Human Resources, Performance, and Diversity indicated that the question of funding would be addressed next at a meeting of Leaders and Whips.

With reference to minute 27, Bonus Removal Strategy, 15 August 2007, members asked for an update on the situation. In reply the Committee was advised that the trades unions had agreed to communicate the proposed bonus removal package to their members and that letters would shortly be despatched to staff affected.

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

15. MINUTES OF THE AREA WORKING POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meeting of the Area Working Policy Development Group held on 18 July 2007 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

16. MINUTES OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the meetings of the Human Resources Policy Development Group held on 3 July 2007 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

17. 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.

18. BRIGHTMET LIBRARY BIG LOTTERY BID: RATIONALE FOR RETROSPECTIVE PERMISSION

The Director of Adult Services submitted a report informing members of the rationale for seeking retrospective permission to bid to the national Big Lottery Fund for a new library for Brightmet. The report advised the Committee that the initial proposed relocation of Brightmet Library to the Leverhulme Park site had raised concerns with some elected members and library users. Members were informed that the possibility of being part of the new development at the Alistair Ross Primary

Care Resource Centre came within days of the closing deadline for bids to the BIG lottery programme. The report stated that permission to submit the bid was given verbally on the understanding that a written report would be submitted to the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance at his next meeting.

In response to questions from members, the Committee was informed that the suggestion to use the Alistair Ross site came from members of the community during consultation sessions held at Breightmet Library.

In relation to questions on the risk of any budget outlay should the bid fail, the Committee was advised that due to the flexible design of the building there was no such risk.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

19. SHAPING FUTURE SERVICES – REVIEW AND PRIORITIES

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report updating the Committee on the progress to date of the Council's change programme and outlining the priorities for 2007/08. The report indicated the seven main delivery programmes established for the Shaping Future Services process: Children's; Adults; Communities and Place; Business; Access Channels; Access Points; and Shared Services. The report also identified the change programme's achievements to date.

In relation to the roll out of burgundy bins, members questioned whether every household had received a leaflet asking about take-up of the service and whether the timescale remained unchanged. In reply the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance indicated that every household would receive a leaflet about the roll out and the process would be completed in 2007/08.

In reply to questions from members about a police presence in the One Stop Shop, the Committee was informed that by the end of the six month trial period enquiries had fallen to such a level that Greater Manchester Police judged their resources to

be better deployed elsewhere. The Committee was advised that the telephone sited previously outside Howell Croft North Street police station, for contacting police when the station was closed, was now sited outside the Town Hall.

In response to members questioning the identified fleet management savings, the Committee was assured that the £490,000 per year saving had been achieved. Members sought clarification as to whether trackers had been installed on the Council's vehicles and agreed that this information was best presented to the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to the off road motor nuisance campaign, members requested details of measures taken to tackle offenders. In reply the meeting was informed that such information was best presented for scrutiny at the Adults Services Scrutiny Committee.

In relation as to whether all thirty-three Safer Neighbourhood teams had been established, the Committee was advised that the matter fell within the remit of the Adults Services Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to a police presence at the bus station, the Committee was advised that such a topic was best addressed by the External Organisations Scrutiny Committee.

- Resolved – (i) That the issues raised and information requested by the Committee, detailed above, be referred and provided to the appropriate scrutiny committees.
- (ii) That the reported progress of the Council's change programme be noted.

20. COUNCIL INCOME RECOVERY AND WRITE-OFF PROCESSES

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report advising the Committee of the Council's income recovery and write-off processes and policies for the Council's three main

types of income: Council Tax and Business Rates; Housing Rents; and General Income.

In response to questioning, the Assistant Director (Tax and Benefits), Corporate Resources, informed the meeting that the Council's own system of checks would be exhausted before a third party was ever employed to help recover debts.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

21. HOUSING BENEFIT INVESTIGATION TEAM

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report providing information about the remit and work of the Housing Benefit Investigation Team. The report outlined the team's scope of operations and informed the Committee that the team had achieved all the performance standards for security included as part of the Housing Benefits Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Members requested details of the total cost of housing benefit fraud and were advised that only figures for detected fraud could be provided.

Resolved – (i) That details of the amount of detected fraud be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

(ii) That the report be noted.

22. VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENTS AND ILL HEALTH RETIREMENTS – THIRD AND FOURTH QUARTERS 2006/07

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report advising the Committee of the number of employees retiring early under Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) or Ill Health Retirement (IHR), and the related financial implications. The report stated that between 1 October 2006 and 31 March 2007 the number of Voluntary Early Retirements was fifty-five and Ill Health Retirements numbered eight. The report indicated that the

number of VERs was attributable to budget cuts, but made clear that the total spend on VERs and IHRs of £3,519,049 in 2006/07 was an underspend on the total allowance of £5,743,394.

The Committee was informed that VERs were a useful tool in terms of management change, particularly at times of reductions.

Resolved – (i) That the Committee continue to monitor VERs and IHRs on a twice-yearly basis.

(ii) That the report be noted.

23. CORPORATE RESOURCES DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER 1 2007/08

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted the Performance Indicators relating to the first quarter 2007/08 for the Corporate Resources Department. The report concluded that actions taken to achieve targets for 2007/08 were having an impact and that all the identified actions could be met from existing allocated resources.

The Committee was informed that the Contact Centre had missed its local performance indicator target, for answering eighty-five per cent of calls within one minute, due to more calls than anticipated.

Resolved – That the Committee continue to monitor and ensure management of the BVPIs in respect of the Corporate Resources Department, as detailed in the report, on a quarterly basis.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.01pm)