

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE  
WAYTEMORE ROOM, COUNCIL  
OFFICES, BISHOP'S STORTFORD ON  
TUESDAY, 23 MAY 2006 AT 7.30 PM

AGENDA ITEM 2

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon (Chairman).  
Councillors H G S Banks, S A Bull,  
L R Pinnell, J O Ranger, N Wilson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors N Burdett, T Milner, R L Parker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Committee Secretary
Alaine Clarke	- Performance officer
Ceridwen Pettit	- Head of Performance
Jackie Sayers	- Scrutiny Officer

14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of  
Councillors P R Ballam and A D Dodd.

15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman commented that she had agreed to accept two late items onto the agenda in relation to the Election of a Vice Chairman and the Council's response to the Audit Commission's Consultation. In view of the fact that several Members of the Committee were not in attendance, Members agreed to defer the election of the Vice-Chairman to the next meeting of Performance Scrutiny Committee.

ACTION

The Committee agreed that in relation to the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment, that the item could be brought forward and considered as the first agenda item.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION16 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 10 May 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 DISTRICT COUNCIL COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE CONSULTATION

The Head of Performance tabled the Council's draft response to the consultation from the Audit Commission. (This had also previously been e-mailed to all Members.) The background to the consultation document was outlined in terms of the new framework for District Councils.

The Head of Performance outlined the overall shape of the CPA framework in relation to the Council's re-categorisation from 2006 and the basis of the draft comments for each of the sections detailed. It was noted that the document and response had been submitted to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) who were happy with the comments as drafted and the proposed framework. CMT had been pleased to note that the Commission had listened to the Council's previous concerns and the need to ensure that it was a staged management process. All the previous points made by the Council had been accepted by the Audit Commission.

Members stressed the need to ensure that the Council was seen as a "good" Council and that it alone would make the decision when it should be re-assessed/re-categorised. In terms of the process of any re-categorisation, this would require comments from the Council's new Chief Executive.

ACTION

Regular reviews would take place with the Council's Relationship Manager and the External Auditor to assess the Council's progress.

Members commented that the Council would have to work very hard to demonstrate a Level 4. Clarification was sought on the ramifications of the restrictions in terms of levels.

New rules in terms of the Use of Resources were explained. The Head of Performance commented that CMT was not happy with this as it implied that an overall score of 3 for Use of Resources could not be achieved, unless the Council achieved a "3" in the Value for Money assessment.

Further clarification was sought in relation to the timing of the use of resources assessment and whether some of the indicators which were proposed to inform the service assessment, were relevant and appropriate.

RESOLVED – that the draft response and Members' comments be submitted to the Leader and Councillor M G Carver.

ED

18 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN – TEXT AND 2005/06 OUTTURN

The Interim Executive Director submitted a report concerning the Best Value Performance Plan for 2006. The Council was required to publish the Plan by the end of June 2006. Whilst all national and local performance indicators for 2005/06 – Outturns and Future Targets were detailed in the report now submitted, only the local performance indicators which were marked as "external" from 2006/07 would be published with the Plan.

The Head of Performance provided updates in relation to the following indicators:

ACTION

- BV 86 – Cost of Household Waste Collection - £71.53
- LPI 4.2 – Energy Efficiency Usage – 452 kwh/m2
- LPI 7.2 Spendings: Net - £109.19
- LPI 7.4 Cost of Collecting Council Tax - £17.92
- LPI 7.5 Savings: Efficiency Savings – 5%

On the basis of updates in relation to the above, other local indicators could be updated, specifically:

- LPI 7.2 Performance Indicators: Targets – 69%
- LPI 7.21a Performance Indicators: Top Quartile 2004/05 – 55%
- LPI 7.21b Performance Indicators: Bottom Quartile – 5%
- LPI 7.22 Performance Indicators: Improvement – 59%

The Executive Member for Community Development, Councillor R L Parker, commented that OFSTED had recently advised the Council that staff helping on the Council's Play Schemes now needed to be Grade 2 qualified. This new requirement would seriously affect the Council's ability to provide some of the Council's Summer Play Schemes. A letter was being prepared by the Portfolio Holder to parents who were interested in sending their children to the play schemes. Members were appalled at the interference of OFSTED at this late stage in the year.

Clarification was sought on a number of related BV and LP Indicators. A number of measures were suggested

ACTION

including writing to OFSTED and local MPs and maximising the publicity of this negative step by OFSTED. Members also suggested that Officers should contact the Police, as such a decision could impact on the success of diversionary summer play schemes. Members were of the view that the targets for LPI 1.1, LPI 1.2 and LPI 1.3 should now be reviewed.

Similarly LPI 6.2 – Number of Farmers' Markets. The 2006-2009 targets were lower than the 2005-06 out-turn. With regard to the text of the Draft Best Value Performance Plan, this stated that in 2005/06, the Council's aim was to increase the availability of temporary accommodation for people in housing need in the district, but the 2006/07 aim was "to continue to reduce homelessness through preventative interventions and reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation and the amount of time spent in temporary accommodation". Members questioned whether there was a change of position.

In relation to BV 199a - Local Street and environmental cleanliness (litter and detritus). Members were of the view that the future performance indicators did not make sense as these appeared to anticipate a lower standard of service.

The Chairman expressed concern that Directors of divisions were not in attendance to be able to provide clarification on some aspects. The Chairman asked that Directors make themselves available when future reports were submitted to Performance Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be recommended to approve (A) the format and content of the Best Value Plan for 2006, particularly the outturn performance for 2005/06;

(B) the proposed amendment to the target BV 225 (Actions against domestic violence);

ACTION

(C) the use of the corporate strategic plan in order to meet the statutory requirement in preparing a Performance Plan for the year 2007/08;

(D) that the Interim Executive Director and from 5 June, 2006 the new Chief Executive be authorised to make any additional changes to the text appended to the report now submitted, to satisfy Government and audit requirements;

(E) the proposed amendments to LPI 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 be noted with deep regret and that the Portfolio Holder write to the media, MP and relevant decision makers, including the Police, to voice the Council's regret at the revised OFSTED rules; and ED

(F) the targets for BV 199a, b and c and LPI 6.2 be revisited by Officers in order to clarify why targets do not indicate an aspiration to improve performance. ED

## 19 JANUARY – MARCH 2006 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

The Interim Executive Director submitted a report detailing performance statistics for the period January – March 2006 in relation to the Council's national and local performance indicators.

It was noted that of the 26 Indicators (or sub parts):-

- 77% were on or above target
- 12% were between 1-5% off target
- 12% were 6% or more off target

The following indicators were 6% or more off target:-

ACTION

- BV 109b % of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks;
- BV 82a % of total tonnage household waste arisings recycled;
- BV12 number of working days lost due to sickness absence.

An explanation as to why the targets had not been achieved were provided.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

20 WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Executive Director submitted a report concerning the work programme of Performance Scrutiny Committee 2006/06 and considered a number of other initiatives which could be programmed into the Committee's timetable.

From the list provided, Members were of the view that a task and finish group be established to review ways of changing and improving the Community Voice service.

Additionally, in the light of recent action by OFSTED, it was agreed that Performance Scrutiny Committee give further consideration as to how it might scrutinise youth issues during 2006/07.

RESOLVED – that (A) a task and finish group be established, to consider ways of improving the Community Voice service; and

(B) Youth Issues be included on the agenda for the meeting on 11 July 2006.

DCG

ACTION

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

Chairman	.....
Date	.....

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