

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Social Well-Being, Economic Well-Being and Environmental Well-Being met on 7th, 9th and 14th September 2010 respectively to consider a report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships on the Council's performance against its priority objectives. This report sets out the Panels' views on the performance levels achieved.

2. COMMENTS

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have endorsed the comments of the Corporate Plan Working Group which are reflected in the following paragraphs.

Social Well-Being

- 2.2 The Social Well-Being Panel's attention has been drawn to the "number of admissions/participants in activities provided or promoted by the Council" at its Leisure Centres, which has not achieved the first quarter target. Whilst the report indicates that this is not an area requiring particular attention, Members have received clarification that no specific activities have been identified which give rise to any concern. Instead, the figure reported is attributable to the impact of the current recession and an increase in the target figure by 9%. Nevertheless some concern has been expressed by Members at the failure to achieve the quarterly target in light of the fact that significant capital investment has been made at each of the Leisure Centres.
- 2.3 In response to questions raised by the Corporate Plan Working Group, confirmation has been received that exercise classes for older people have not been relocated away from the St Ivo facility.
- 2.4 While welcoming the success of the launch of the One Leisure card campaign in attracting 90,000 card holders, Members queried why only 32,600 were regarded as "live" users. Members questioned the meaning of this term and whether any targeted marketing will be undertaken in the future. In response, Officers have confirmed that "live" users refer to the number of people with cards used at any of the Centres over the previous 6 months and that a recent e-mail data capture exercise will assist with future targeted marketing campaigns.
- 2.5 With regard to the retrospective loss of LPSA reward funding for projects undertaken by the Environmental and Community Health Services Division, it has been noted that alternative funding sources have been sought through the submission of a bid to the Lottery Fund.
- 2.6 Members have drawn attention to the fact that the target for the key measure relating to the "number of households living in temporary accommodation"

has not been achieved. The answer provided is that this is largely attributable to the impact of the ongoing recession.

- 2.7 Some concern has been expressed by Members of the Corporate Plan Working Group at the potential withdrawal of rent deposit loans and bonds and the likelihood of this increasing the number of homelessness cases and demand for temporary accommodation. Members have questioned whether there is any scope to use these methods to reduce the level of homelessness currently being experienced. Discussion then ensued on the number of empty homes within the District, for example at RAF Upwood, and Members have queried whether anything is being done by the Council to utilise these vacant homes as another source of accommodation. Whilst it is acknowledged that some of the vacant properties are privately owned, Members have questioned whether agreements could be reached for the use of such properties.
- 2.8 The Panel has received clarification from the Head of Planning Services of the definition of “alternative types of affordable housing provision”. Members have noted that this encompasses “The Community Right to Build”, a potential future Government initiative which has yet to come into force. Under such legislation, community organisations and other local interest groups will be able to deliver new local homes and facilities for their areas without the need to apply to the Council for planning permission.

Economic Well-Being

- 2.9 The Economic Well-Being Panel’s attention has been drawn to the key measure relating to “internal promotions as a percentage of all vacancies filled”. As a result of a question raised by the Corporate Plan Working Group, the Panel has been advised that eight fixed term posts have advertised over the reporting period.
- 2.9 The Panel has also endorsed the view of the Corporate Plan Working Group that the amber indicator recorded for the key measure relating to the “percentage of new employees still in post after 12 months” should in fact be regarded as a green as there was only a minimal difference of 3.3% between the target and actual figure and some of the employees who left would have been on fixed term contracts.
- 2.10 With regard to the Leisure Centres, Members have noted that profit margins on bars and catering are reported as being above or on target. They have been advised that, although there had previously been a fall in hospitality income of £65,000 as a result of the closure of the St Neots bars and catering operation, it has been possible to accrue savings on staff costs, in addition to reduced opening hours, better supplier prices and less wastage. This has enabled profit margins to remain on target.
- 2.10 The Economic Well-Being Panel has received clarification from the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships of the current position with regard to the submission of proposals to form a Local Enterprise Partnership, the outcome of which is expected to be known at the end of September.
- 2.11 The Panel has discussed the deliberations of the Corporate Plan Working Group on the Council’s use of external consultants. The Working Group has reiterated its intention to undertake further work on this subject with a view to satisfying themselves that the use of consultants is subject to appropriate

controls, management and justification. Having noted that expenditure on consultants had amounted to £1.8 million in the previous year and was likely to increase in the current year, that in order to contribute towards the savings that the Council needs to identify, the Economic Well-Being Panel recommend the Cabinet to reduce the amount that the Council spends on employing external consultants by £1.5m in the current financial year.

Environmental Well-Being

- 2.12 The Environmental Well-Being Panel has requested clarification as to the definition of 'Songbird funding' which has reportedly been downgraded which will result in broadband projects to complement BT roll-out needing to be reassessed.
- 2.13 In response to questions raised by the Corporate Plan Working Group, the Head of Planning Services has informed the Panel that because of the complex nature of the retail and development aspects of certain forthcoming planning applications, it will be necessary, in order to determine these applications and suitably protect community interests, to retain both specialist retail and legal advice. While the costs of retaining that advice will be partially off-set by the planning fee income received, it is likely that some additional costs will be incurred by the Council. However the significant, wider benefits of delivering an enhanced retail offer within Huntingdon and facilitating the long-sought after redevelopment of parts of the town centre are considered to justify any additional cost involved.
- 2.14 With regard to the failure to meet the target for the number of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures carried out as a result of District Council schemes and promotions, the Head of Environmental Management has explained that this was due to an unavoidable delay in appointing contractors for the Cosy Homes Insulation Scheme.

3. THE CORPORATE PLAN WORKING GROUP

- 3.1 Prior to the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Corporate Plan Working Group met to discuss various outstanding and current scrutiny matters. These included receiving an update on the Overview and Scrutiny Panels' recommendation in respect of the Council's expenditure on consultants and the Council's future budget planning and performance management process. With regard to the former, Members have requested an update to be made available to Members at the next scheduled meeting of the Panel Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen in September.
- 3.2 Bearing in mind recent developments concerning the Council's Redundancy Policy and its implications for the Council's strategic and future development, the Working Group has stressed the need for a clear vision of the Council's service to be developed in advance of any proposed re-organisation. Members urge the Cabinet to bear this in mind when taking decisions on these matters and accordingly suggest that the Cabinet invite contributions from opposition groups, Members, employees and the public in the search for the necessary financial savings. A review of the Council's Corporate Plan involving the Overview and Scrutiny Panels will assist in developing a clearer vision of the future of Council services and assist in setting future employment levels.

- 3.3 In respect of the proposals for the Council's performance management process, the Working Group has suggested that in the context of the recent Government decision to abolish the Comprehensive Area Assessment, the Cabinet should review all internal and external performance indicators to ensure that they are appropriate to the service delivered by or in partnership with the Council and that they remain important to residents and businesses of Huntingdonshire. Members have concurred with a suggestion that the Working Group should be involved as part of the review process.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 **All three Overview and Scrutiny Panels have expressed satisfaction with the performance levels that the Council has achieved. The Cabinet is invited**

- (a) **to consider the Panels' comments as part of its deliberations on the report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships;**
- (b) **to reduce the amount that the Council spends on employing external consultants by £1.5m in the current financial year;**
- (c) **to seek contributions from opposition groups, all Members, employees and the public in the search for the necessary financial savings;**
- (d) **to fully take into account the views expressed as a result of recommendation (c) above and review the Council's priorities, aims and objectives in the Corporate Plan with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels being involved in the review process;**
- (e) **to develop a clear vision of what services should be retained, delivered differently or withdrawn as a result of recommendation (d) above and use this as a guide in the application of the Council's Redundancy Policy; and**
- (f) **to review all internal and external performance indicators to ensure that they remain appropriate to services delivered by or in partnership with the Council and to involve the Corporate Plan Working Group in the review process.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Corporate Plan Working Group Notes of the meeting held on 26th August 2010.

Minutes and Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on 7th September 2010, Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) on 9th September 2010 and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) on 14th September 2010.

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