

CORPORATE PLAN: PERFORMANCE MONITORING

COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have reviewed the performance information for the period 1 July to 30 September 2014 at their meetings in November. Their comments are set out below:-

Overview & Scrutiny (Social Well-Being)

The Social Well-Being Panel has questioned whether the use of Fixed Penalty Notices should be one of the Council's priorities. It has been suggested that fly tipping is a more appropriate priority and that, in addition, consideration should be given to applying the Council's enforcement powers to litter from business premises. Data on litter and fly tipping will be provided to Members.

A comment has been made that, given the low cost to the Council of the Sports and Active Lifestyles Team's diversionary activities, more sophisticated measures should be applied to this area of activity that take into account benefit and value for money.

In response to a question on whether the Council is flexible enough to undertake outcome / place based budgeting, it has been confirmed that this is the case but before it happens it will be necessary to clarify which partnerships are productive.

On the use of temporary accommodation, it has been noted that that good relationships with Registered Providers exist in this respect, but it is necessary to monitor closely turnaround times. Discussion on Home Energy Efficiency Assessments has led to the conclusion that a more strategic approach should be adopted, that measures should be introduced to verify that everyone who needs the service receives it and communication channels should be improved. A briefing note on the service will be prepared for Members.

It has been agreed that the next report will include greater details on inspections of food establishments together with an explanation of the term 'Broadly Compliant'. It has also been agreed that the targets for Disable Facilities Grants will again be looked at because the perception is that waiting for six months is too long and the target for next year is lower than for this year. It is accepted that the target reflects the terms of the shared service agreement. Performance levels in Huntingdonshire compared with the rest of the shared service area will be provided to assist with this debate.

In conclusion, the Panel has made suggestions for alternative performance indicators for next year. These include the cost of refuse collection per household compared with best practice, the effectiveness of residential waste minimisation and street cleansing standards. The latter will require detailed consideration of the approach to be adopted, for example, to adopting different standards in towns compared with rural areas.

Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being)

The Economic Well-Being Panel has expressed their appreciation of the progress that has been made in performance reporting. Members have been informed that work is ongoing to provide

clarification as to the 'acceptable variance' in which the progress made against key actions can be identified as Amber.

Strong Local Economy

In response to a question on the efforts which were being made to encourage local businesses to take part in the programme of themed business information events, Members have been informed that turnout has increased gradually over the course of the last three years and it is the view of the Executive Councillor that these events are well attended. However consideration can be given to the subject matter and themes of these events if Members think this would be helpful.

In terms of the action to commit to the Enterprise Zone skills strategy group, Members have queried the expected output from this action. It has been explained that work is ongoing to develop Enterprise Zone skills group activities and that early signs are encouraging. The development of a three year business plan for the skills hub will provide further detailed information.

In general terms, comment has been made as to the absence of any clear measurable targets within this theme which can be used to demonstrate progress. The Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal has been asked to give further consideration to this in advance of the preparation of the report for the third quarter. In terms of the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Executive Leader has explained that 'success' will be measured through the levels of business rates and income from these.

Having noted that the number of vacancies within the Development Management Team has had a direct impact on its ability to provide fast track pre-application advice, Members have been assured that progress will be made in the next quarter now that the vacancies have been filled.

Ensuring we are a Customer Focused and Service Led Council

Members have asked a number of questions regarding the key actions for 2014/15. In response, an update has been provided on the development of a full business case for previously identified energy reduction projects across the Council estate and the appointment of a Graduate Trainee within the Corporate Team. The Corporate Director (Services) has been asked to provide further information as to how the sample will be selected for the twice year postal survey of customers using the Council's Call Centre.

The Panel has also discussed the outcome of the Employee Opinion Survey which was undertaken in August 2014. Members have been advised that the new Corporate Management Team will now be working to address identified problems and an action plan has now been prepared for this purpose. Members have welcomed the feedback that had been provided to staff and the positive actions that have now been undertaken in response to the survey.

In terms of other key actions within the Plan, Members have commented upon the 705 replies that had been received from residents to inform the 2015/16 Budget process and have queried whether this is a worthwhile exercise. Whilst the Authority is encouraged to consult with local residents by External Auditors, the Executive Councillor for Resources has indicated that he hopes to do so in a more effective way in future years. With regard to the Facing the Future programme, it has been agreed that a copy of the full list can be made available to the Panel in due course.

In terms of the presentation of the information and using the example of the staff satisfaction survey, comment has been made that the progress update merely reported that it had been concluded and provided little information about the outcome of this exercise. In response, the Executive Leader has reminded Members that the development of performance information is an ongoing piece of work and that the identification of outcomes will be the next part of this process.

The Panel has discussed the development of the website for consultation and engagement and the absence of a target date for the completion of this activity. Having noted that the development of the website is a longer term piece of work, Members have been advised that the issues relating to links between the calendar, database and the website have now been resolved. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services has been asked to provide details of the timeframe for the development of the website for consultation and engagement. In response to a comment regarding the ongoing problems with Members' IT, the Executive Councillor has confirmed that he does not believe that the current problems relate to the hardware or software or the expertise and knowledge of staff.

Finally, the Panel has discussed the mechanisms for removing actions from the performance report once they have been completed. Members are of the opinion that items should not be removed from the performance report until it has been agreed with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Overview & Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being)

Comment has been made that there is a need to align more closely the reporting of performance with the remits of the Scrutiny Panels.

In response to questions about roads associated with large strategic housing sites, it has been confirmed that negotiation is taking place on new infrastructure in connection with potential development at Wyton and that conditions will be applied to the planning permission for proposed developments in St Neots that will limit development until improvements have been completed to the A428 and other roads.

Following questions about progress with the update to the Buildings at Risk Register and the processing of planning applications, the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing has reminded Members that the Planning Section has been operating significantly below establishment for some time and that both areas of activity will be 'on-track' by the end of the year. In addition to having a full complement of staff, other measures to improve the processing of planning applications include reviewing the Scheme of Delegation and the way it is interpreted. The Executive Councillor expects next year's target for processing planning applications to correspond with national levels of performance.

With regard to the number of households living in temporary accommodation, Members have been informed of a specific scheme to provide four additional dwellings intended for this type of tenure in Abbots Ripton Road, Huntingdon. More generally, analysis is being undertaken of demand and the location of temporary accommodation and, once this work is complete, other schemes will come forward.