

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at the Council Offices,
Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, on Thursday 22 November 2007 at 7.30 p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: *Councillors: Julian Cunningham (Chairman), David Miller (Vice-Chairman), Allison Ashley, Clare Body, John Booth, Tom Brindley, Arthur Jarman, Marilyn Kirkland, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Lawrence Oliver and Deepak Sangha.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Councillor B. Lovewell (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health)
Councillor Tricia Gibbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs)*

*Chief Executive
Strategic Director of Customer Services,
Head of Financial Services,
Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance,
Head of Housing and Environmental Health
Head of Communications and Public Relations
Head of Strategy and Customer Services
Performance Manager
Housing Options Manager
Customer Services Manager
Member and Committee Services Officer.*

38. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chairman also welcomed Councillor Tricia Gibbs the Portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs (Agenda Item 8) and Councillor Bernard Lovewell the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health (Agenda Item 7).

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors: Allison Dear and Michael Weeks.

40. MINUTES – 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2007 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman, save for the following amendments:

Minute 28, Paragraph 2, last sentence to read as follows: Overall, Crime detections had risen by 2.1 per cent.

Minute 33, Paragraph 9, final word to read as Careline.

41. SUBSTITUTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Chairman confirmed that there were no substitutions.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP DIRECTIONS

No declarations of interest were made.

No Party Whip directions were made.

43. REFERRAL FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK PANEL: RISK MANAGEMENT – QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Head of Financial Services (HFS) advised the Committee that the first meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel took place on 27 September 2007 and referred the Committee to the Minutes (Minute 7 refers) of that meeting applicable to Risk Management.

In response to a question on the validity of the referral from the Audit and Risk Panel to PARC rather than directly to Cabinet the HFS confirmed that Cabinet could only receive a referral from a fully constituted Committee. Consequently, the referral would proceed to PARC and subject to PARC's agreement would then be referred to Cabinet.

Following a short debate, PARC agreed the recommendations from the Audit and Risk Panel and:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

- (1) That the proposed changes to the Cabinet Top Risks to include Hitchin Town Centre Development and Financial Management be agreed;
- (2) That the proposal to move the risks of Office Accommodation and Asset Management from Corporate Management Team to Cabinet be agreed;
- (3) That the proposal to move the risk of Workforce Planning from Cabinet to Corporate Management Team be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow PARC continue in its overview and scrutiny function for Risk Management matters as proposed by the Audit and Risk Panel.

44. THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Councillor B. Lovewell thanked the Chairman for the invitation to address the Committee and referred to two performance Indicators that were of concern to PARC i.e.

BV 183a	Introduced 2002-2003
Title	Length of stay in Temporary Accommodation (Bed and Breakfast).
Description	The average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.
Purpose/Aim	To measure authorities' success in reducing the inappropriate use of temporary accommodation.

BV 183b	Introduced 2002-2003
Title	Length of stay in Temporary Accommodation (Hostel)
Description	The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.
Purpose/Aim	To measure authorities' success in reducing the inappropriate use of temporary accommodation.

The Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that all Best Value Performance Indicators would be replaced by national performance indicators at 31 March 2008 and as NHDC did not provide temporary bed and breakfast accommodation this indicator (BV 183a) had no performance data and this BVPI was removed at 31 March 2007. The Committee noted that there was a Local Indicator LPI 1a 'The number of placements in bed and breakfast accommodation'.

Indicator BV183b was reported to PARC and the Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that this indicator did not present a true picture as data was only recorded once a family or individual left the hostel. And consequently the departure of a long stay family of say 50 weeks gave the wrong slant and with one family unit expected to exceed 123 weeks in a hostel would make the data appear worse. The Portfolio Holder suggested that it would be more appropriate to record on a regular basis the actual number of weeks that a family unit were in the hostel. The Portfolio holder advised the Committee that there would be a new national indicator from 1 April 2008 NI 156 'Number of Households living in temporary accommodation'.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that officers went through several stages (non payment of rent, subject to an ASBO, details from North Herts Homes, details from other registered social landlords) before placement in a hostel and that every effort was made to avoid hostel accommodation and at the same time confirming that the family was not intentionally homeless.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Lovewell and officers for the informative presentation and during a short discussion it was agreed that it would be more appropriate for PARC to receive updates on local indicator LPI 1b which recorded the number of placements in a hostel at the end of a reporting period.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the information provided be noted;
- (2) That the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health be thanked for the presentation.
- (3) That the Head of Housing and Environmental Health be requested to liaise with the Performance Manager to ensure that Local Performance Indicator LPI 1b 'The number of placements at the end of the period in other temporary accommodation' be reported to PARC within the next Performance Management Report.

45. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

By way of introduction the Chairman confirmed that Councillor F.J. Smith (Current Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership) was unable to attend this meeting and that Councillor Tricia Gibbs was in attendance to answer any questions.

The Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance (HPPP) presented her report to the Committee and provided a summary of the background to the LSP and detailed the constituent representatives to the LSP. The HPPP confirmed that the LSP had developed well in terms of relationships for closer working on projects and other delivery partnerships such as: The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and The Learning Partnership. However, a barrier to the LSP had been the lack of funding for additional plans or work and the ten voluntary and community sector partners in the North Herts LSP could not be expected to provide funding.

The HPPP clarified this further by identifying 12 additional activities as a support to the Community Strategy e.g. no-smoking scheme, obesity referral for children in Royston, development of cycle routes. Other successful pilot projects were the development of business skills in Royston and a Rural Social Support project.

The Committee noted that despite all the work undertaken by the partners in the LSP the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act had set a new agenda i.e. An over-arching, strategic partnership for an area (not defined) which would be accountable for the receipt and allocation of Local Area Agreement Reward and other funding streams (not defined).

The HPPP advised the Committee that the successor to CPA – Comprehensive Area Assessment would examine closely how we work with our partners and seek confirmation of an improved partnership working.

Led by the Chairman the Committee reviewed the achievements of the LSP and it was of concern to Members that the residents did not have the opportunity to access the LSP, and Councillor Gibbs confirmed that this was not possible at the moment. The Committee noted that the boundary of the LSP matched that of the North Herts District Council, was free standing and would deliver the Local Area Agreement and that the new partnerships would deliver the outcomes of the new Sustainable Community Strategy for the District.

The Committee were also concerned about the amount of officer time contributed by NHDC to the LSP and Councillor Gibbs expressed a view that NHDC should not lead the LSP despite the requirements of the new Act which stated that local authorities must provide leadership and drive the LSP forward. The HPPP advised the Committee of the linkage between the LSP and the Local Area Agreement and the potential reward grant of £1.5M to this authority. Throughout this discussion several Members were still uncertain as to the main function of the LSP and the linkages to the Local Area Agreements 1 and 2.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the progress made to date regarding the development of the Local Strategic Partnership be noted;
- (2) That the proposals to develop the Local Strategic Partnership in response to recent legislation be noted;

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow PARC be aware of the current status of the Local Strategic Partnership, be aware of the need for changes to the structure of the LSP and the formal statutory role in the future.

46. DELIVERY OF THE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT FOR HERTFORDSHIRE – PROGRESS UPDATE

The Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance (HPPP) presented her report to the Committee and provided a brief summary of the background to Local Area Agreements (LAA) where an LAA was originally a major part of the Ten Year Vision for Local Government 2005 policy document, that was now entrenched in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which confirmed that LAAs and LSPs (which would deliver the LAA) would be placed on a statutory footing. The Committee noted that this role for the LSP was a major change to the status of an LSP.

The HPPP re-confirmed the integral role of the LAA within local authority performance management and thus into Comprehensive Area Assessment and that the Hertfordshire LAA had considered 31 stretch targets for agreement in the allotted three years and presented at Appendix 1. The HPPP reminded the Committee of the four theme blocks for the stretch targets and that the final LAA agreement had been approved by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 23 March 2006. Subsequent to this acceptance pump priming money was released to Hertfordshire of which £1.62M was allocated on a bidding process across the County. In response to an enquiry the HPPP confirmed that if a stretch target was not achieved to a minimum of 60 per cent then the reward grant for that target only would not be secured. With this in mind the HPPP advised that the total amount of reward grant for Hertfordshire totalled £30M of which 50 per cent would be allocated in tranches of £1.5m to each of the ten LSPs in the county. The HPPP stressed that the next phase of Local Area Agreements (LAA2) would not receive any more funding and consequently the first reward grant plus any other grants would need to be combined to meet the stretch targets in the future.

The HPPP advised the Committee that LAA2 would be the vehicle by which improvement targets between central government, the local authority and partners based on an understanding of each body's priority for improvement. This partnership would provide support for the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for North Hertfordshire and into the NHDC Corporate Plan. There would be an additional 18 statutory targets for 'early years and education' on top of the 35 targets previously set for the next LAA2, and that these extra targets should be set to meet the aspirations of local residents for the SCS. The Committee noted that the signing off of LAA2 with central government was planned for June 2008, and all LAAs by April 2009 would have 53 set targets from within the 200 Indicator Set currently proposed by central government as well as local targets.

The HPPP concluded her report with a description of the new risk assessment for the 'comprehensive area assessment' scheduled implementation in 2009.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance for the clarification of the role and function of the LAA1 and the linkage to LSP following on to LAA2. The Committee discussed at length the progress of the LAA1 and how NHDC had been involved with the Leader of the Council being one of two on the Herts Forward Group and each Chief Executive in Hertfordshire as lead officers on the LAA. However, as with the LSP (Minute 45) there was some doubt as to the understanding of the *raison d'être* for the LAA and comment was made as to the difficulty in understanding the diagram at Appendix 2 'Current Finance Arrangements', how targets would be set but not necessarily met and the resulting lower reward grant and the ultimate effect on the NHDC Corporate Plan.

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that with the assistance of the HPPP a PARC Member Working Group should be set up to review progress on both the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement 2 in order to provide a more clear understanding of these bodies that would play an ever increasing role in the future of this authority.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the progress made to date with the Local Area agreement for Hertfordshire be noted;
- (2) That the identification and development of targets to which NHDC could contribute be noted;
- (3) That the outcome of the self assessment (Appendix 1) made by the Herts County Local Area Agreement (including areas for future development) be noted;
- (4) That the proposal for PARC to receive updates on progress with the Local Area Agreement as well as performance against targets at six monthly intervals be agreed;
- (5) That the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance be requested to liaise with the Chairman of PARC to set up a PARC Member Working Party and agree on structure and *modus operandi* for a regular review of the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement in the future.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: The recommendations made at Paragraph 9 were made in accordance with the declared policy of North Hertfordshire District Council.

47. COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The Head of Strategy and Support Services (HSSS) advised the Committee that the report covered the period 1 April 2007 to 30 September 2007 with a summary of trends and remedial action taken in response to complaints. For more details of each segment of the 3Cs, Customer Dissatisfaction and Actions, complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman and the 3Cs Action Plan the HSSS referred the Committee to Appendices A,B,C and D respectively.

The HSSS confirmed that 524 3Cs items were received in this reporting period, a 66 per cent increase on the comparable period 12 months ago, of which 478 3Cs were registered by NHDC contractors, there were 125 Comments (a 400 per cent rise), 89 Compliments (a fall of five per cent) and 310 Complaints (a rise of 64 per cent). The HSSS regretted that there would be no reporting on the breakdown by category of complaint due to an omission in the reporting suite on the new Customer Relationship Management System. The Committee noted that contacts with the Customer Service Centre had risen from 4,000 to 9,000 compared to 12 months ago.

The Committee noted that key area of customer complaint were in the following areas of service: Elections and Democratic Services, Parking, Grounds Maintenance, Hitchin Swim. North Herts Leisure Centre, Waste Management, Council Tax, Revenues, Housing Benefit, Housing Needs and Planning. The HSSS referred the Committee to Appendix B which detailed actions taken against the six categories of dissatisfaction and that complaints at Leisure Centres had fallen since completion of refurbishment .

There had been an increase in complaints since the introduction of the alternative weekly waste and recycling collections, with 161 Complaints received in October with 62 Comments and 7 Compliments, but, the HSSS advised that this was expected given the change in scale of service change which impacted on every household in the District and that the extensive publicity campaign has had the desired effect of advising residents how they could participate and that the next two to three months would present a much clearer picture of the new service and if there were any customer concerns which had to be addressed.

During this reporting period there were nine complaints (Appendix C) against this authority made to the Local Government Ombudsman, of which eight were not allowed and one was a premature complaint and there were no cases of maladministration.

The HSSS concluded her report with reference to GovMetric a new and innovative customer satisfaction measurement tool which allowed access to customer satisfaction by channel e.g. email and telephone and work was underway to identify the most efficient reporting channels and format and summary reports would be made in future to PARC. Although the external audit had confirmed a good and sound 3Cs system there would be ongoing testing and audit of the system throughout NHDC to ensure consistency and subsequently a detailed programme of audits was now underway.

The Committee reviewed the Action Plan as presented at Appendix D and agreed that the Customer Service Team should proceed with the Plan.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the good performance in the management of Comments, Compliments and Complaints between 1 April 2007 to 30 September 2007 be noted;
- (2) That the remedial action taken following the receipt of Comments and Complaints be noted;
- (3) That the proposed 3Cs Action Plan as presented at Appendix D to the report be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To meet the requirements of the BSI standard complaints system standard ISO 10002/2004;
- (2) For PARC to receive the corporate reporting of Comments, Compliments and Complaints received at NHDC.

48. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT – APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2007

The Performance Manager (PM) presented the report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance which provided details of the performance results for the period April to September 2007 (Summary at Appendix A and Supplementary Information at Appendix B) and seven Rescue Recovery Plans as detailed at Appendix C.

The PM reminded the Committee that NHDC would monitor 95 performance indicators of which 69 were statutory, 26 were local, and that 34 indicators would be inspected more closely.

The PM provided an update on LPI 24, BV12, 6 waste indicators (BV82ai, BV82aii, BV82bi, Bv82bii, Bv84a and BV84b) and advised that three of the rescue recovery plans presented to PARC at its meeting held on 21 June 2007 (Minute 21 refers) had returned to green status. There remained seven rescue recovery plans and the Committee reviewed each plan in turn and agreed the options (see(1) below). The Committee expressed concern at the lack of progress for the improvement to the utilisation of market stalls (LPI 11) specifically at Hitchin and requested that other options should be explored. It was noted that despite a further reduction in charges by way of a smaller cost per foot and promotion in national publications there had been no increase in utilisation.

With regard to LPI 8, the PM clarified the current status of the recruitment of staff to undertake inspection of food premises and that the Head of Housing and Environmental Health requested a deferment of the £3,000 expenditure pending the evaluation of recruitment in early 2008. The Committee agreed to this proposal and noted that the use of an external consultant may not be necessary.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Rescue Recovery Plans presented for 7 performance indicators at Appendix C to the report be allocated the following options:

BV 64 – The number of non-local authority owned vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the financial year as a direct result of action by the local authority.

Option 2 Use part of the new post to provide a co-ordinating role to manage the contact between the owners and Registered Social Landlords where appropriate.

BV 166a – The local authority's score against a checklist of best practice for environmental health.

Option 2 Continue the in-house development of ACOLAID reported via the Reportsmith tool. To facilitate accurate and reliable reporting to the structure of ACOLAID codes to be radically re-engineered so as to record all relevant officer actions across the Housing and Environmental Health Service.

BV 170b – Number of visits to museums/galleries that are in person per 1000 population.

Option 2 Monitor through put closely and carry out more promotional work by word of mouth, advocacy, use of web site, the What's On guide and the Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy.

BV 183b – the average length of stay in shared hostel accommodation of households that include a pregnant woman and /or dependent children and who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Option 1 The authority considered the available options to improve performance in this area, as part of the review of the housing allocation policy. On 16/10/07, Cabinet endorsed a change to the housing allocation policy that dispensed with property choice and increased the areas where homeless households could be offered accommodation. This would improve the chances of rehousing for many households and keep the length of stay in hostel accommodation to a minimum.

In addition, the authority had implemented stringent rent arrears management. It works closer with housing associations and households in current or former rent arrears, and monitored progress to ensure that these were kept to a minimum and to improve the chances of permanent resettlement.

The outcome of these changes would be an improvement in the BV183b performance, although the authority was not likely to achieve this in the short-term. Where households had already stayed in hostel accommodation for a considerable time, the positive act of moving into permanent housing would have an adverse affect on the performance return. For 2007/08, if all longer-term households moved into permanent housing the average length of stay would increase. However, the revised housing allocation policy would ensure that performance had improved considerably in 2008/09.

Financial and Regulatory Services DMT would continue to monitor performance on a monthly basis.

BV 204 – The number of planning appeal decisions allowed against the authority's decision to refuse on planning applications, as a percentage of the total number of planning appeals against refusals of planning applications.

Option 1 Monitor the position on a monthly basis and establish any emerging patterns in appeal decisions, which could influence decision making in the future.

LPI 11 – Percentage of market stalls utilised.

Option 2 Continue with current practise.

LPI 25 – Employees attending First Day Welcome within three days of employment.

Option 1 Continue to ensure that all managers gave priority to new starters attending the first day welcome.

- (2) That the areas of under achievement and good performance be noted;
- (3) That the updates on annual performance indicators be noted;
- (4) That the updates on rescue recovery plans presented at the meeting of PARC on 21 June 2001 be noted;
- (5) That the proposed change to LPI 8 'The percentage of other risk food premises programmed for inspection in the monitoring period, which were actually inspected by the authority' be agreed;

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The recommendations made at Paragraph 9 were made in accordance with the declared policy of North Hertfordshire District Council.

49. CORPORATE PLAN MONITORING – SECOND QUARTER

The Performance Manager (PM) presented the report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance which provided details of progress against the Corporate Plan for the period April to September 2007 and was the second quarterly Monitoring Report for the 2007-2008 financial year. The PM advised the Committee of the progress on 32 actions and the progress against 37 related activities as presented at Paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 respectively and reminded the Committee one related activity ' plan for a further crime audit in 2008 and a new Community Safety Strategy had been cancelled. The Committee noted that the first drafts of the Strategic Assessment of the individual Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership for NHDC would be produced soon for presentation to the County Chief Officer Group this December.

The Committee noted the 10 actions and related activities that were 'behind schedule' at Paragraph 4.6 and the more detailed information for each activity as presented at Appendix A. The PM advised the Committee that of the 21 actions and related activities to be completed by 30 September 2007, 13 were completed on time, three were completed ahead of schedule, and five were behind schedule and that more details were presented at Appendix A. Consequently progress against 'Measures of Success' rated at 4 achieved target, one did not meet its target and 17 had no reportage this quarter (annual collection or less frequently).

The Chairman thanked the PM for his presentation and the Committee acknowledged that the completion of actions and related activities had improved in the period since the last presentation to PARC but that there were still areas of concern to the Committee e.g. Strategic Objective Healthier Communities Ref. 4 should be expanded in its description, and Sustainable Communities Ref. 3 where the narrative did not relate to its target and there was no reference to the Nottingham Declaration. The Committee also expressed a view that the phrase ' we will promote' was not strong enough and that it was difficult to actually measure performance of The Corporate Plan. Comment was also made on Sustainable Communities Ref. 12 where a Hitchin Ward Member was able to confirm that the introduction of two CPZs was not on target and it was agreed that all narratives should be clear and accurate. There were other examples of weak narrative in Appendix A and the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance confirmed that improvements would be made to all narratives at the next presentation and advised that there were many detailed service plans and it was difficult to keep the document to a manageable size.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That progress and achievements of the Corporate Plan in the period April 2007 to September 2007 be noted;
- (2) That the areas of under-achievement as well as the good progress in the Corporate Plan be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The recommendations made at Paragraph 9 were made in accordance with the declared policy of North Hertfordshire District Council.

50. BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEWS – UPDATE ON SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The Performance Manager (PM) presented the report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance which provided details of the five Service Improvement Plans (SIPs) that followed Fundamental Service Reviews and previously presented to PARC at the meeting held on 31 May 2007 (Minute 6 refers). The PM referred the Committee to Appendix A which detailed the five SIPS and the Committee noted where appropriate the single service and cross cutting reviews of each SIP.

The PM reminded the Committee that PARC in its monitoring role had to assess the progress of the SIP arising from each Fundamental Service Review and subsequently PARC would 'sign off' completed plans. The Committee reviewed the current status of two SIPs: Housing Strategy and young People's Services and agreed that the two documents could be signed off. The PM advised the Committee that two further SIPs: Leisure, Swimming and Sports Centres and Street Scene included ongoing actions which could not be completed as they were within the Capital Programme, and therefore included within an agreed forward schedule of work to be considered by Cabinet. The PM concluded his report that these two SIPs and the Planning and Regulatory Services SIP would be placed before PARC at the next six month update.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposal to 'sign off' the following completed service improvement plans
 - a. Housing Strategy
 - b. Young People's Servicesas presented at Table 4.3 be agreed.
- (2) That the proposal to 'sign off' all other actions categorised as 'completed' and 'complete for the purpose of the Service Improvement Plan' and 'no longer proceeding' as presented at Table 4.3 be agreed;
- (3) That the proposal for PARC to monitor the current progress of all ongoing actions as presented at Appendix A be agreed;
- (4) That the Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships be requested to present an updating report on outstanding actions required to a meeting of PARC to be held in May 2008.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The recommendations made at Paragraph 9 were made in accordance with the declared policy of North Hertfordshire District Council.

51. THE CONSULTATION STRATEGY

The Head of Communications and Public Relations (HPR) presented his report to the meeting and advised the Committee that the major aspects were: An update on the progress of the Consultation Strategy and the revised Consultation Strategy as presented at Appendix C. The HPR also referred the Committee to Appendix A which detailed the Consultation Strategy Programme for 2005-2010 and to Appendix B which detailed descriptions of the District Wide and Best Value Performance Indicator General Survey.

The HPR provided updates on the Implementation of the Consultation Strategy in 2005-2006, the Implementation of the Consultation Strategy in 2006-2007 and the revision of the Consultation Strategy for 2007-2008. The Committee noted that the strategy for 2005-2010 focussed on the District Wide Survey, Best Value Performance and to ensure that budget was correctly allocated throughout 2005 to 2010 and was never intended to be a best practice template.

However, due to problems identified in recent consultations it was considered necessary to revise the Consultation Strategy. With the acquisition of SNAP software it was now possible to produce a corporate identity for questionnaires, engage all consultees at inception and the use of a standard consulting and reporting database. Unfortunately, this database had not been used all the time which meant that the Consultation Officer was unaware of other consultations and that Members and residents were not informed about new consultations. The HPR advised the Committee that all consultation exercises were expected to be successful and that the revised Consultation Strategy Template should be used throughout NHDC, meet objectives and ensure effective engagement and eventually a vastly improved approach to consultation.

The HPR confirmed that the Citizens Panel had been formed from volunteers found during the District Wide Survey and that the vast amount of consultation performed by this authority was of a statutory nature.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the progress made in the implementation of the Consultation Strategy in the period 2005-2006 to 2006-2007 be noted;
- (2) That the revised Consultant Strategy template as presented at Appendix C to the report and as detailed at Paragraph 4.4 be agreed;

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that NHDC listens and delivers services that met the needs and expectations of all residents which informed the Satisfied Communities Strategic Objective.

52. SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2008-2013 – EFFICIENCIES AND INVESTMENTS 2008-2009

The Head of Financial Services (HFS) presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance and Regulatory Services. The HFS also confirmed that the Efficiency and Investment Items for 2008-2009 through to 2012-2013 were presented to Cabinet on 16 October 2007 (Minute 60 refers), forwarded to Member Workshops held on 30 October and 1 November and subsequently to each of the Area Committees.

The HFS advised the Committee that a minimum efficiency target for 2008-2009 of £651,000 was required and this target incorporated changes to the General fund and an allowance of £250,000 for investment proposals against a Council Tax increase set at 4.9 per cent. The Committee noted that the proposed increase to car parking charges SG32 with a projected income of £141,000 had been rejected by Cabinet. The HFS confirmed that he would report to Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 18 December 2007 any comments made by PARC.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the work of PARC was to review the process and that Members would have had sufficient time to make comments on any specific efficiency or investment at the budget workshops and at each Area Committee. Particular reference was made to the scoring system for Efficiencies and Investment proposals and that the NHDC Capital Strategy be classified against ten key factors and scored to determine the risk and effect of growth on a service. The Chairman requested and it was agreed that a worked example of a Capital and a Revenue Investment scoring should be placed in Members Information Service as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the progress in the Service and Financial Planning Process for 2008-2009 be noted;
- (2) That the future steps in the Service and Financial Planning Process as presented at Appendix 6 be noted.
- (3) That the Head of Financial Services be requested to pass on the thanks and appreciation of PARC to all officers who had participated in the preparation of the Service and Financial Planning process for 2008-2009.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To provide PARC with the opportunity to review the Service and Financial Planning Process and comment as appropriate on the proposed Efficiencies and Investments for 2008-2009.

The meeting closed at 10.05 p.m.

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Chairman