

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

**Meeting held at the Council Offices,
Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, on Thursday 1 September 2005 at 7.30 p.m.**

PRESENT: *Councillors: J. Cunningham (Chairman) Mrs Sarah Wren (Vice-Chairman), S. Bloxham, A. Hartley, Lawrence McNamara, Ian Mantle, D. Miller, Lawrence Oliver, Derek Sheard, and Mrs C.P.A. Strong,*

ALSO PRESENT: *Councillor Allison Ashley (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health)*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Chief Executive, Strategic Director of Customer Services
Head of Financial Services, Head of Customer Services and IT,
Acting Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Strategy and
Community Services Manager and Member and Committee Services
Officer.*

ALSO PRESENT: *Chief Superintendent G. Kitching
Inspector P. Wright*

42. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and Councillor Allison Ashley – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health.

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors: D.J. Barnard, A.F. Hunter, R. Inwood and P. Mardell.

44. SUBSTITUTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Chairman confirmed that there would be no substitutes at this meeting.

45. MINUTES – 28 JULY 2005

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP DIRECTIONS

No Declarations of Interest had been made.

No Party Whip directions had been made.

47. HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY – PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REVIEW

Chief Superintendent Kitching thanked the Chairman for the invitation to address the Committee and proceeded to give details of crime statistics on violent crime, robbery, burglary (including vehicle crime) and domestic crime for the period 1 April to 31 July 2005 and for the comparable period in 2004. The greatest challenge came from violent crime with 790 cases recorded since 1 April even though this had been a reduction of 7.2 per cent from 2004. There had been 37 reported robberies since 1 April 2005 with 27 in 2004 and the Committee noted that the majority of cases had been drug related. The Chief Superintendent advised that the detection of vehicle crime (high value cars were stolen in North Herts and removed to London and Luton) had not been good and resources would be focussed on this problem and strong forensic evidence had become available recently. There had been 159 recorded burglaries since 1 April 2005 compared to 252 incidents in the same period in 2004.

The Chief Superintendent advised that this police area was one of 15 districts in the iQuanta family and that North Herts had moved up 5 places and was below average for offences per 1000 population. Incidents in Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock had fallen but there had been a dramatic increase in crime recorded in Royston, some of which had been serious injuries. The Committee noted that local people had been involved in these incidents and that Ministry of Defence officers and military police had been assisting the local constabulary where required.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the representatives of Hertfordshire Constabulary be thanked for their presentation;
- (2) That Hertfordshire Constabulary be invited to make their next presentation to the Performance, Audit and Review Committee at its meeting to be held on 6 April 2006.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow the Performance, Audit and Review Committee receive regular updates on the achievement by Hertfordshire Constabulary against Performance Indicators BVPI 126, BVPI 127a,b, c and d and BVPI 128.

48. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR MANAGEMENT – APRIL 2005 – JUNE 2005

The Acting Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance advised the Committee that this was the first report of the financial year 2005/2006 and was presented in a new format for the three directorates and incorporated performance information on all high level indicators. As previously requested a table indicating the performance indicators for each portfolio holder and the traffic light status for each had been included with this report.

The Committee reviewed the proposals to amend targets for five performance indicators and for one new indicator and agreement was made to the change to L61 and the inclusion of a new indicator H6. However, considerable debate was given over to the proposed changes for BV 82ai, and BV82aii which concerned the tonnage of household waste arisings which had been recycled in that targets had been set at a lower level. It was proposed and agreed that additional information was required by the Committee in order to reach a decision and it was considered appropriate that a decision would be made on BV 82bi and BV82bii at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the performance data presented at Appendix A be noted;
- (2) That the areas of good performance as presented at Paragraph 5.2 be noted;
- (3) That the Head of Environmental Services be requested to present a report to the next meeting of the Performance, Audit and Review Committee to be held on 13 October 2005 concerning performance targets set for BV82ai, BV82aii – Percentage and total tonnage of household waste arisings which have been recycled in 2005/2006 to 2007/2008 compared with previous years. This report should also provide additional information on the performance targets set for BV84a – No. of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population and BV84b – Percentage change from previous financial year in the number of kilograms of household waste collected per head of the population;
- (4) That the proposal to replace L60 – Number of new staff that have attended the organisation induction day within 4 months of joining NHDC' with the more meaningful measure at L61 – The percentage of new staff that have attended the half-day induction within three days of joining NHDC be agreed;

- (5) That the proposal to include a new local performance indicator: H6 – No. of reported incidences of rough sleeping in North Hertfordshire be agreed and that further information would be provided in an oral format also agreed;
- (6) That the list of performance targets matched to Portfolio holders as presented in the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

The recommendations contained within Paragraph 9 to the report had been made in accordance with the declared policy of North Hertfordshire District Council.

49. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 183(b) – LENGTH OF STAY IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION (HOSTEL)

The Head of Financial Services presented this report to the Committee and confirmed that although the number of homeless housed through the housing register had remained consistent some households had remained in temporary accommodation for a long periods, and many applicants chose a specific area and property type and often excluded flats and maisonettes. The Committee noted that 98 households had left temporary accommodation in 2004/2005 with a target time of stay at 40 weeks and that the final return had been 44.6 weeks with 97 households in temporary accommodation at 30 June 2005. The Head of Financial Services reported that although the numbers of families in temporary accommodation was declining the length of stay in a hostel was proving difficult to reduce to the target of 35 weeks

The Head of Financial Services described the proposed actions that would reduce the overall time of stay which included *inter alia*: A closer monitoring or rent arrears, good and realistic advice on the allocation of housing after entering a hostel, targeting of those who have had the longest stay in a hostel, and information on the location of suitable properties in areas where the majority of stock was available. The Committee was pleased to note that the monthly returns had shown a steady improvement as a result of the measures described above, falling from 75.4 weeks in April to 46 weeks from April to July. Also, that 90 per cent of households were re-housed in a short time period and it was only the remaining 10 per cent who were 'long stayers'.

The Committee thanked officers for the progress made and wished to have a regular updating on this performance indicator at a quarterly interval and that such reporting should include the effect of local conditions and if possible incorporate a graphical presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Action Plan to improve the performance on BV 183b – Length of stay in temporary accommodation (Hostel) as presented at Paragraph 4.3 be agreed;
- (2) That officers be requested to include in the next presentation on this Performance Indicator a detailed note on local aspects of Temporary Hostel Accommodation and use a graphic to support the note.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow the appropriate allocation of resources which would achieve a reduction in the length of stay in temporary accommodation for homeless households.

50. ACCESS TO SERVICES AND STRATEGIC SERVICES SUPPORT CONTRACT

The Head of Customer Services and IT reminded the Committee that the Access to Services Action plan had been endorsed by PARC at its meeting held on 22 May 2003 and last reported at the meeting held on 6 January 2005 (Minute 66 refers).

The Committee noted that the majority of the actions within the Access to Services were dependent on the delivery of the Strategic Services Support Contract (SSSC) and that the SSSC had been awarded to Anite Public Sector Limited with an effective start date of 1 July 2005.

The Head of Customer Services and IT provided a brief description of the six main projects (A to F) within SSSC and then provided an outline of current status of each project and confirmed that the Access to Services Project Board would use the PRINCE2 methodology to monitor the project.

Project A Infrastructure – The project commenced on time and hardware and software components had been procured to establish the relevant reference architecture;

Project B Service Integration – This project is currently behind schedule, a recruitment drive has commenced;

Project C Customer, Property, Asset Index – Commence in Year 2;

Project D Corporate Document Management – Commence in Year 3;

Project E IT Effectiveness – This project had been delayed pending the re-structure of the IT division and subsequent recruitment to new and vacant posts. A revised start date of 1 October 2005 was under consideration;

Project F Mobile and Home Working – The business case for a pilot project was confirmed by the Access to Services Project Board on 19 July 2005 and implementation was underway and progressing well.

The Head of Customer Services and IT next described the main improvements to be achieved via Project F and that the prevention of benefit fraud was a major objective. Hot desking should lead to the saving of the equivalent of 8 staff work stations and that the cost of processing each claim would fall by nearly 16 per cent.

The Committee noted that a Communications Plan would be distributed soon in order to increase awareness and readiness for SSSC, regular features in Team Talk, NHDC News, Outlook with presentations, roadshows and awareness sessions. A Programme Manager had been appointed on a secondment basis and additional recruitment would be in two phases.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That officers be requested to report quarterly (the next at the meeting to be held on 24 November 2005) on the progress of the Strategic Services Support Contract as indicated at Paragraph 4.8 to the report and use the PRINCE2 methodology as appropriate;
- (2) That each quarterly report should include where possible identified savings and achieved savings;
- (2) That the progress to date of the implementation of the Strategic Services Support Contract be noted;
- (3) That the Chief Executive via the Access to Services Project Board be requested to present a report to a future meeting of PARC which would identify a business case for Customer Services – One Stop Shop – at main locations in North Hertfordshire.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To allow the Performance, Audit and Review Committee monitor the progress of the Strategic Services Support Contract and ensure that the correct level of information is received.

51. IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT 4.5

The Head of Customer Services and IT reminded the Committee that each year this authority was required to complete an IEG Statement which clarified the progress towards implementing e-Government. Although the actual deadline for submission was 31 December 2005 a mid term review had been requested by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OPDM) and this review (IEG4.5) had been submitted on 18 July 2005 and presented at Appendix A to this report. The Committee noted that the OPDM would no longer expect an annual submission, but regular updates would now be provided using a mandatory on-line toolkit.

The Head of Customer Services and IT referred the Committee to the pie charts presented at Paragraph 4.2.3 which confirmed that 22 priority outcomes would be achieved by 31 December 2005 and that this would rise to 40 by 31 March 2006. Against all required outcomes only one would be outstanding at 31 December 2005 and with regard to Change Management the Committee noted that several new standards and policies had been introduced into the e-government arena with the data presented at Paragraph 4.3.

An item of particular interest to the Committee was progress with BVPI 157 – The Number of transactions electronically enabled in respect of the A – Z of Services. With a very large target of 659 transactions the forecast completion of 64 per cent (c 422) by 31 December 2005 was noted. However, the OPDM expected that local authorities should achieve 100 per cent by December 2005 and the Head of Customer Services advised the Committee that there would be a marked improvement with the implementation of the SSSC and that a completion of 75 per cent by the end of 2005 could be achieved and with further implementation the target of 100 per cent might be achieved by mid 2006.

The Committee made comments on the status of several Priority Outcomes as shown at Appendix A, and what would be the result of submitting items at a certain status when this might not be the precise level of achievement. The Head of Customer Services confirmed that any status variances would be corrected and that the document would always be presented as an exact representation of status. It was noted that R5 – Public access to online reports, minutes and agenda from past council meetings, including future meetings diary updated daily should be re-graded at amber from green.

The Head of Customer Services and IT concluded his report with an update on: Access Channel Take-up, Expenditure and Efficiency Gains.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of this authority's Implementing Electronic Government Statement 4.5 as presented at Appendix A to the report be endorsed;
- (2) That the dependency on the success of the Strategic Service Support Contract in the achievement of e – government be noted and confirmed;
- (3) That the proposal for the Performance, Audit and Review Committee to continue as a consultation forum for the ongoing development and implementation of e – government be agreed;
- (4) That the Head of Customer Services and IT be requested to pass on a vote of thanks from this Committee to all officers concerned with the implementation of e-Government to North Hertfordshire District Council.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of this authority's Implementing Electronic Government Statement 4.5 as presented at Appendix A to the report be approved.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow the continuation of progress by North Hertfordshire District Council in the implementation of e-government.

52. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT – IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that PARC at its meeting held on 23 June 2005 had requested further details on the actions in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan (CPAIP) that had been completed and advice on how ongoing performance issues would be monitored (Minute 30 refers).

The Committee noted that 16 of the items listed in the CPAIP had been completed and the clarification of actions 14 and 18. Action 14 related to long term re-provision of temporary accommodation and detailed comments had been presented at Appendix 2 to this report. Action 18 concerns improvement to the physical environment of the District. The Chief Executive requested the Committee to agree to his proposal that apart from two conditions concerning Section 106 agreements and participation in the BVFSR street scene that this action was complete and could be removed from the CPAIP.

The Chief Executive referred the Committee to Appendix 1 which set out the full set of completed actions and to Appendix 4 which described the incomplete actions: 6,8,11,12,17 and 22. The Committee noted that the focus of activity would be with these six actions and accepted that although actions had been considered as complete for the purposes of CPAIP, some specific issues would receive continual monitoring e.g. Improvement in the turn round and determination of planning applications, waste minimisation targets and crime reduction. The Committee noted the arrangements for the alternative monitoring arrangements for the issues above as set out in Appendix 3.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposed alternative monitoring arrangements for Action 18 – Improve the physical environment of our District be endorsed;
- (2) That the details of completed actions and sub – actions as presented at Appendix 1 to the report be noted;
- (3) That the ongoing monitoring arrangements for Actions: 2,4, 5,7,9,10,13,14,16,19,20 and 21 in the CPA Improvement Plan as presented at Appendix 3 be noted;
- (4) That the detailed comments on Actions within the CPA Improvement Plan not yet complete as presented at Appendix 4 to the report be noted;
- (5) That the proposal for the Performance, Audit and Review Committee to receive the first annual report at the meeting to be held in September 2006 on the re-development of Temporary Accommodation (Action 14) as set out at Appendix 2 to the report be agreed.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the proposal to remove Action 18 – Improve the physical environment following the provision of alternative monitoring arrangements and then removed from the CPA improvement Plan as complete be approved.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow the Performance, Audit and Review Committee monitor progress on achieving completion of actions set out in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan and as appropriate make recommendations to Cabinet.

53. TEN YEAR VISION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Acting Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance provided a comprehensive description of the discussion paper 'The Future of local Government – Developing a 10 Year Vision' and that the consultation period was scheduled to end at 31 December 2005. The major components of the paper were: National Standards versus local targets, Devolution and Delegation – vibrant local leadership, Citizen engagement, Performance Framework, New settlement between central, regional and local government, Local Area Agreements, Local Public Service Agreements/Local Public Service Boards and Freedoms and Flexibilities

Members of the Committee agreed that this was a very important discussion paper, which had identified significant changes and the way forward for Local Government in the next ten years. It was noted that there may well be political implications for Members and ultimately the Constitution of North Hertfordshire District Council and the way that this authority would be operated and administered.

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that a meeting should be convened for all Members to discuss the proposals and implications for this authority and should have a facilitator.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the contents of the consultation document 'Governments 10 Year Vision' be noted;
- (2) That the Acting Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance be requested to place in Members Information Service a copy of the 'Governments 10 Year Vision' with an introduction from the Chairman of PARC;
- (3) That the proposal made by the Chairman to convene a meeting for all Members of the Council for an informal discussion on 'Governments 10 Year Vision' be agreed;
- (4) That a vote of thanks be recorded in respect of the excellent report on 'Governments 10 Year Vision' prepared for PARC by the Acting Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The 10 Year Vision was a key decision on Government and Local Government Policy which would assist in decisions made by North Hertfordshire District Council;
- (2) The development and delivery of Local Area Agreements and Local public Service Agreements would focus attention on national and local priorities;
- (3) The increased evidence of partnership working through delivery of a Local Area Agreement for Hertfordshire would contribute to future Comprehensive Performance Assessment inspections.

54. BEST VALUE FUNDAMENTAL SERVICE REVIEW – STREET SCENE – SCOPE DOCUMENT

The Strategic Director of Customer Services presented the scoping document for the Best Value Fundamental Service Review – Street Scene to the Committee as at Appendix 1. Because of the vast array of competing interests and that streets accounted for approximately 80 per cent of public space within urban areas and formed a significant part of this authority's physical assets it was noted that the Scope of the front would not examine specific Council services. The review would look at the way that Council Services affect the street scene and investigate the different expectations of the street scene from the rural and urban perspective.

The Strategic Director in response to an enquiry confirmed that housing estates were included in the street scene review.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the scope document of the Best Value Fundamental Service Review – Street Scene as presented at Appendix 1 be agreed.
- (2) That the draft project plan for the Best Value Fundamental Service Review – Street Scene as presented at Appendix 2 be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

To allow this review of the Street Scene in North Hertfordshire commence and meet the proposed outcomes.

The meeting closed at 9.25 p.m.

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Chairman