

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
11 MARCH 2010**

Present: Councillors Barlow, Cartwright, M J Lock, Sabetian, and Wilson (in the Chair)

Lead Members in attendance: Councillor Beaver

Apologies were received from Councillors Armstrong, Pragnell and Katrina Silverson

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

The following councillors declared an interest in the minutes as indicated:

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>

24. MINUTES

RESOLVED the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2010 be approved as a true record.

25. QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Neil Dart, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources presented the Quarter Three Performance report.

The report advised members of the performance against the 2009/10 targets in Part II and Part III of the Corporate Plan and related budget and risk issues within the Resources Directorate.

Members discussed the development of the Council's Asset Management Plan, the industrial units, St Mary in the Castle, the Audit Plan, the Sustainable Procurement Policy, the staff survey, customer contact and equalities.

Members also discussed the level of council tax collection and rise in housing benefit claims and were pleased to note that collection rates were on target despite the pressure on resources to deal with the increased number of housing benefit claims.

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RESOLVED that:-

- (1) staff in the Corporate Resources Directorate be thanked for their hard work**
- (2) that the Committee be assured that action is being taken to improve any shortfalls in performance and/or to address risks highlighted.**

26. FINAL REPORT ON SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (CONSULTATION PROCESSES)

Councillor Cartwright presented the report of the Consultation Review Team which examined the Council's consultation process. Various methods were used over the course of the review, including interviewing a selection of Heads of Service, LSP partners and informal interview discussions with community members. Jane Hartnell (Head of Policy, Partnerships & Sustainability) remarked that this had been a useful exercise and both she and Councillor Cartwright thanked the review team.

RESOLVED that the Review Recommendations are referred to Cabinet for approval and where appropriate inform development of the Council's Participation Strategy refresh.

27. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ON STREET PARKING AND THE USE OF THE PARKING SURPLUS

Richard Homewood, Corporate Director Environmental Services presented the report which provided an update on progress with the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of on street parking and the use of parking surpluses.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

28. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

Verna Connolly, Head of Personnel & Organisational Development presented the report which updated the Committee of progress made since the Scrutiny Review of Sickness Absence Management report was published on 10 March 2009.

The Committee congratulated Verna on the reduction in sickness absence levels and the successful strategy in place of early intervention and support for employees with serious ill health issues by Human Resources officers.

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The Committee also welcomed the establishment of an internal mediation service to assist in resolving workplace tension, particularly against the backdrop of the restructuring exercise and continuing financial uncertainty.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the progress made on reducing sickness absence to below the target figure of 8.75 working days per employee be welcomed and staff thanked;**
- (2) that further progress on reducing sickness absence levels is reported to Overview and Scrutiny through the regular quarterly performance monitoring process.**
- (3) that the strategy of early intervention in serious ill health cases and establishment of an internal mediation service are welcome initiatives and staff be thanked.**

29. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS

Graham Belchamber (Scrutiny & Democratic Services Manager) presented the report by Kevin Boorman, Head of Communications & Marketing. The report updated the Committee on progress made since the Scrutiny Review of Public Contact Arrangements report was published in March 2008 and the update report which was given in March 2009.

Good progress has been made in the three areas identified as being of concern, in particular a significant reduction in call waiting times against a backdrop of a significant rise in the number of Housing Benefit claims and telephone enquiries.

Progress is still being made regarding some items from the original action plan and this will be reported to Overview & Scrutiny through the regular quarterly performance monitoring process.

Councillor Beaver, Lead Member for Corporate Resources, also highlighted the performance achieved by staff in dealing with an increased number of housing benefit claims, maintaining an excellent rate of council tax collection and also managing to decrease the waiting time for an increased number of telephone callers.

Councillor Lock asked if there were figures for abandoned calls. Graham replied that measures are being looked at for establishing the correct number of abandoned calls. He explained that currently any call where the caller receives an answer to their query from the initial recorded message is classified as an abandoned call by the IT software. In fact it is a query

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successfully dealt with rather than the caller simply abandoning the call before they talk to an officer.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) progress made on improving public contact arrangements be welcomed, especially in respect of the areas highlighted as being of particular concern, and that staff be thanked.
- (2) that further progress on improving public contact arrangements is reported to Overview & Scrutiny Committee through the regular quarterly performance monitoring process.
- (3) welcomed the performance by staff in reducing call waiting times against the backdrop of increased workload while also maintaining council tax collection rates.

30. POLICY REVIEW OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY ACTION PLAN

Richard Homewood (Corporate Director Environmental Services) presented the report which provided Members with a progress report against recommendations made in the Policy Review of the Climate Change Policy Action Plan.

RESOLVED that Members note the progress made in implementing the Scrutiny Review recommendations.

31. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CABINET DECISIONS

Graham Belchamber (Scrutiny & Democratic Services Manager) presented the report by Katrina Silverson (Scrutiny and Electoral Services Officer) which provided members with detailed information on Cabinet decisions taken since the last O & S meeting that fall within the remit of this Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.32pm)

O&S R.13