

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
15 MARCH 2007**

Present: Councillors Bing (in the Chair), Cooke, Sabetian,
Silverson, Springthorpe and Stevens (until 7.45pm)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tucker.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Silverson	31	Personal - DWP Employee
Stevens	31	Prejudicial - 1066 Housing Association Employee

30. MINUTES

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 23 January,
7 and 12 February be approved as a true record.**

31. QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE

Jane Hartnell, Policy and Performance Manager presented a report on performance up to the end of Quarter Three.

Members raised questions on the gender pay gap, benefit fraud and council tax banding. Particularly, members asked for information relating to the number of parking permits sold in the Information Centre and the level of activity in the Old Town Information Centre.

Members raised concerns on the performance levels within the Benefits Department. Neil Dart, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance explained that this had been due, in part, to long-term sickness levels as well as targets being too challenging. Performance had now increased greatly, although it was unlikely that the targets would be reached at year-end. Members asked that the Benefits staff be formally thanked for their continuing hard work.

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RESOLVED that:

- 1. staff in the Communications and Organisational Development and Deputy Chief Executive's Directorates be thanked for their hard work;**
- 2. the report be noted; and**
- 3. any shortfalls identified in the report be reported back to the next meeting and subsequent Overview and Scrutiny meetings (by 3 votes to 2 with 1 abstention).**

After the vote was decided, Councillor Beaver approached the committee to emphasise that members already receive the information requested in the resolution as a matter of course. The Policy and Performance Manager confirmed this. Councillor Silverson expressed disappointment that the lead member felt it necessary to remind the committee of this.

2. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Sabetian presented the final report on the Scrutiny Review of Council Tax Collection.

The 2006/2007 Annual Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny agreed to incorporate a review of Council Tax Collection in its work programme.

The review team consisted of Councillors Sabetian, Silverson (part), Springthorpe and Webb (part). The team looked at the factors which potentially were contributing to the decrease in collection, analysed data at a ward level and compared the collection rate with other authorities within the Family Audit Group.

The review team also explored possible avenues for increased collection of Council Tax.

Councillor Sabetian asked that members of the review team and officers involved be formally thanked for their work throughout the review.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the action plan be agreed; and**
- 2. the report go forward to Cabinet for consideration.**

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33. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE USE OF CONSULTANTS AND ADVISORS - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Bing presented the final report on the Scrutiny Review of Consultants and Advisors.

The 2006/2007 Annual Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny agreed to incorporate a review of the use of consultants and advisors in its work programme.

The review team consisted of Councillors Bing, Cooke and Stevens. The team looked at the present rules and procedures on employing consultants and whether they met the required financial and auditing standards, compared the use of consultants and advisors with other authorities within the Audit Family Group and considered the resource and service delivery implications of minimising the use of consultants in favour of permanent employees.

Councillor Bing asked that members of the review team and officers involved be formally thanked for their work throughout the review.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the action plan be agreed; and**
- 2. the report go forward to Cabinet for consideration.**

34. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CABINET DECISIONS

Katrina Strong, Scrutiny Officer, presented a report on the recent Cabinet Decisions made since the last formal meeting, highlighting areas that fell within the committee's remit.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.05pm)