

**CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT,  
EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.  
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

**PRESENT:-**

Councillor Blood (Chair)  
Councillor A. Ahmed (Vice Chair)  
Councillors Boleyn, Caunt, Marrey, Mottram, Russell, Sykes and Mrs.  
Westwood.

**Officers**

Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
(Lead Officer to the Committee), Principal Policy and Performance Management  
Officer and Mr. J. Jablonski (Directorate of Corporate Resources)

**Also in attendance**

(for Agenda Item No. 5 only)  
Assistant Director, HR and Organisational Development; Assistant Director,  
Housing Strategy and Private Sector; Assistant Director, Environmental  
Management; Head of Service - Housing Options; Head of Service - Private  
Sector Housing and Head of Human Resources - HR Supporting DUE

**Observers**

Councillors Harley and Islam

**1      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No member declared an interest in any matter to be considered at this meeting.

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**2      TERMS OF REFERENCE AND ANNUAL SCRUTINY PROGRAMME, 2013/14**

A report of the Lead Officer and the Director of Corporate Resources on the  
Terms of Reference of the Committee and the items included in the Annual  
Scrutiny Programme for detailed consideration by this Scrutiny Committee  
during 2013/14 was submitted. Appendix 1 to the report set out the Terms of  
the Reference of the Committee and Appendix 2 gave more detailed information  
on the topics set out in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2013/14 referred to  
in paragraph 7 of the report submitted.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That the Terms of Reference of the Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, be noted.
  - (2) That the issues contained in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2013/14, as referred to in paragraph 7 and Appendix 2, to the report submitted, be noted.
  - (3) That it be noted that an informal development session would be held for Members and Officers at the conclusion of the formal business of this meeting, to discuss how they wished to progress the items for detailed consideration by the Committee during 2013/14.
  - (4) That a “public forum” session be included as a standing item of business on the agendas for future meetings of the Committee.
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### 3 QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the fourth quarter Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Report for 2012/13, relating to performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013. A copy of the Quarter 4 report had been circulated separately to Members.

Prior to this meeting of the Committee, Members had been asked by the Chair to give notice of issues that they wished to raise questions on and in this connection the Chair referred to questions that he had raised in respect of temporary accommodation, private sector landlords/promoting empty homes into use, recycling “blip” (PI348), and when will the Borough have 100% collection areas for all recycling? In addition, Councillor Caunt had indicated that he wished to raise questions in relation to the Credit Union, Black Country Collaboration, Percentage of Household Waste Recycled and Sickness Absence.

Regarding PI 323: Number of Households Living in Temporary Accommodation - the Head of Service - Housing Options circulated at the meeting further analysis on this performance indicator and commented on the content of the briefing note circulated. A copy of the briefing note would be uploaded to the Council’s Committee Management Information System.

It was noted that there were 55 households in temporary accommodation, as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013 and that, for various reasons, the number fluctuated, that of the 2,270 homeless applications received during the year ending the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013, a full housing duty had been accepted in respect of 171 and that temporary accommodation was provided for a number of reasons, for example, the approach made had been late when the household was already homeless and they had arrived late in the day at the Council's offices, the complexity of the casework involving a range of issues and problems were becoming more difficult to solve, for example, due to the impact of the welfare reforms. In the current year, the number of private tenants presenting as homeless had also increased.

Regarding a point raised as to how many of the applicants were from outside the borough, it was reported that there were six such cases and, therefore, this was not considered to be a major issue. Regarding the statistics given in respect of the performance of neighbouring housing authorities, with particular reference to Sandwell, the reasons why the performance for Sandwell was different from that of the other authorities was explained in detail in that, basically, they operated differently to the other authorities indicated. There was not, therefore, a like-for-like comparison.

In response to question asked to how many adults and children were included in the 55 households, it was reported that there were 64 children and that the Head of Service - Housing Options, would arrange for the figures to be reported to members of the Committee.

In response to a question as to how many properties were empty for emergency purposes, it was reported that a portfolio of around 20 furnished units was maintained, together with access to whatever vacant/ready to let housing stock properties, were available. It was further reported, however, that the property types available may not always be suitable for the households presenting as homeless for example high rise flats were not used for families with children.

In response to a query as to the effect of the Choice-based Letting Scheme in relation to homeless households, it was reported that the scheme was working as envisaged in respect of such households. Amongst the 55 cases in temporary accommodation those who were not intentionally homeless or had a dubious tenancy history were only in the temporary accommodation for three months.

In response to a query regarding the circumstances leading to re-housing, it was noted that it was extremely rare for the housing service not to provide assistance and many attempts were made to do this. The main reason why assistance might not be given was if the household concerned did not engage with the Council.

Regarding PI 355; Private Sector Dwellings used/demolished, Councillor Blood commented as to whether the Council were really promoting sufficiently the need for private sector landlords to get their empty homes back into use and referred to the below-target performance in this area.

Councillor Caunt then queried whether Private Sector Housing had difficulties with planning officers in respect of properties that were no longer fit to accommodate anyone but landlords had difficulty in getting approval for the property to be demolished and the land re-developed. In response, it was stated by the Head of Service - Private Sector Housing that she did not recall any properties that she had dealt with where there was any specific problem of this nature. A comment was also made that there was no recollection of any action being taken by Private Sector Housing using their Environmental Health powers. It was also reported that Private Sector Housing would support, advise and assist any landlord who wished to bring their property back into use, but a lot would depend on what the landlord wished to do. The Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Private Sector undertook to raise with planning officers the points made by Councillor Caunt.

Regarding PI 348 - Percentage of Household Waste sent for Re-use, Recycling and Composting - Below Target Performance and questions related to when the Borough would have 100% collection areas for all recycling and the percentage of household waste recycled, the Assistant Director, Environmental Management reported on the reasons why the performance target for Quarter 4 was below target reiterating comments made in the Quarterly Performance Report, which had had an impact. He also referred to the collection of national figures in this regard which were only now available, three months after the end of the financial year and considered that whilst the performance would still be below that of Quarter 3, he considered that there would be an increase of 2% on the final outturn figure shown.

In respect of the trial roll-out, the first phase for wheelie-bins would commence in July, 2013, with a collection of waste and recycling from August. The second phase would commence in October, with the collection of waste and recycling commencing in November. By the Spring of 2014, the whole Borough will have been completed.

The Assistant Director also commented that, in response to feedback received, collections for waste and recycling would be on the same day.

It was also noted that risk assessments would be carried out in respect of assisted collections and, as appropriate, an alternative option would be pursued. Each property involved would be re-visited.

In response to the question regarding the percentage of household waste recycled and whether increased costs were incurred by greater use of incineration, it was reported that this was not the case as the amount of waste collected had reduced so less had been taken for incineration. There was also the fact that recycling was extending to further areas not previously recycled and so would not go for incineration. The aim in connection with recycling was to reduce the amount going to landfill because of the expense incurred.

In response to a further point from Councillor Caunt it was agreed that actual tonnage figures for recycling be included so that it could be more easily seen whether there had been a reduction in the amount recycled. The Lead Officer would arrange for this information to be included in future quarterly reports.

In response to the issue raised regarding the Credit Union, Councillor Caunt queried the financial health of the Credit Union. In response, an updated background Briefing Note was circulated at the meeting in relation to the Performance Indicators in respect of the Credit Union, in particular, PI 406 and PI 170. It was also commented upon that the Credit Union now received no financial support from the Council and that the trend as regards total number of Credit Union members was upwards, although not in line with the target at Quarter 4. The reasons for this were outlined in the Briefing Note circulated, which included the clearance of dormant accounts and the slow post-Christmas period. Reference was also made to the loan products overview information given in the Briefing Note. There was therefore steady growth in the areas the subject of performance indicators and the Credit Union had funds available which were ready for loaning out.

Regarding the issue of Black Country Collaboration, set out under Reference SB6f(A121), the Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement commented that the notes referred to in relation to libraries did not relate to a shared management service for the Black Country, which had ceased, as reported to a former Scrutiny Committee, but to the on-going ICT work to consider how Black Country Networks could be joined up from a purely technical perspective. In respect of Trading Standards, this was not being pursued, as one of the Authorities involved decided not to participate. In respect of Procurement, this was being led by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and a number of initiatives/projects were being developed. As regards Legal Services, the Council was working with Walsall to develop an approach and with Birmingham in respect of the obtaining of specialist Counsel rates. Other measures were also being looked at over the longer term.

Regarding sickness absence, the Assistant Director, HR and Organisational Development, circulated a note at the meeting setting out information on absence, including comments on why there had been the increase in absence shown, statistics relating to absence, actions taken during 2013 and in relation to the Workplace Wellbeing Project. Reference was also made to the introduction with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2013, of the new Attendance Management Policy and Procedure and of the new and revised Stress Management Policy and Procedure.

Councillor Caunt, who had raised this issue commented that he was concerned with short term absence and that although there was a Council policy that return to work interviews should be done, he was looking to ascertain what guarantees HR had that managers would be conducting these.

In response, the Assistant Director, HR and Organisational Development commented that within the new Attendance Management Policy there were now three triggers requiring managers to be more proactive and requiring them to undertake mandatory return to work interviews. These were also tied in to absence recording systems introduced which would not close an absence until the return to work interview had been carried out.

Councillor Mottram commented on work-related stress and following the comments made, undertook to get further information so that, if appropriate, the points could be raised with the Assistant Director, HR and Organisational Development.

Councillor Caunt then raised two further issues, firstly in relation to Objective Reference RE1b(A20) in relation to the value of seized counterfeit goods by Trading Standards. The Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement undertook to arrange for the figure quoted to be clarified and for a response to be sent direct to Councillor Caunt.

The second issue was in respect of signage on canals, indicating that canal users were now in the Borough. In this connection, he referred to previous decisions of the former Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education Scrutiny Committee requesting that this work be carried out but that, to date, this had not been done. The Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement undertook to raise this matter with the appropriate officers and respond direct to Councillor Caunt.

#### RESOLVED

That the information contained in the Quarterly Performance Management Report submitted, and in the Quarter 4 report circulated separately to Members, in respect of performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013, be noted, together with the comments made at this meeting and that the officers indicated undertake the actions referred to above.

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## 4 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the four month period commencing 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2013 and on the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board that this Scrutiny Committee considers whether it wishes to recommend that any items contained in the Appendix to the report submitted, setting out a Schedule of Key Decisions, should be scrutinised.

#### RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and the Appendix to the report, be noted and that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be informed that there were no items that this Scrutiny Committee wished to recommend be scrutinised.

The meeting ended at 7.22 p.m.

CHAIR