

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

Thursday 5th September, 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, Harley, Marrey, Mottram, Russell, Sykes and K
Turner.

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. 7 only)

Assistant Director, HR and Organisational Development; Assistant Director,
Housing Strategy and Private Sector; Assistant Director, Quality and
Partnership (Children's Services) and Head of Service - Housing Options

(for Agenda Item No. 6 only)

Treasurer, Assistant Director Customer Services, Head of Revenue Services,
Policy and Performance Manager and Deputy Head of Benefits (All Directorate
of Corporate Resources).

5 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor
Wright.

6 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBER

It was noted that Councillor Harley had been appointed as a substitute member
for Councillor Wright for this meeting of the Committee only.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

8 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th June, 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

9 PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

10 CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c) it was:-

RESOLVED

That agenda item number 7 – Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Report - be considered as the next item of business.

11 QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the first quarter Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Report for 2013/14, relating to performance for the period 1st April to 30th June, 2013. A copy of the Quarter 1 report had been circulated separately to members together with an addendum in relation to activities under the headings Regeneration, skills and employment and Cleaner, greener and environmentally friendly.

Following a presentation of the content of the Quarter 1 Report by the Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer members asked a number of questions to which responses were given. Particular points raised were as follows:-

- In response to a question regarding the five performance indicators in respect of young people where performance was below target and a request made for information as to what actions were being taken to address the situation the Assistant Director Quality and Partnership (Children's Services) detailed the action that was being taken in each case.

Arising from the comments made and a query in respect of PI 660 – Number of children in need per 10,000 of the child population (rate) – it was agreed that the Assistant Director, Quality and Partnership would arrange for information as to the performance of the Council on this measure compared with the national picture to be circulated to all Members of the committee.

- With reference to objectives 3 and 4 regarding young people it was agreed that the Assistant Director Quality and Partnership would arrange for details as to how many outstanding school places there were for children with SEN needs who had not been allocated a school by the end of last year's school term and how many such pupils had not been allocated a place by the start of this school term and the reasons for this and clarification as to what were referred to as "alpha children" in relation to entitlement to transport to school given the impact this was reported to be having on three special schools in particular.
- Regarding PI 120 – percentage of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) it was agreed that a breakdown by ward of the numbers involved be provided to members of the Committee by the Assistant Director Quality and Partnership in respect of this indicator.
- In respect of PI 170 – Credit Union share to loan ratio – in response to a query regarding the below target performance on this indicator reference was made to the comments in the addendum regarding the extension of the operation of the Credit Union into the south of the Borough by mid September 2013. This was part of a deliberate policy by the Credit Union to build up bank savings and so have a pool of funds available to attract new members in the south of the Borough the increased membership would then replenish the banks holdings and thereby improve the share to loan ratio. The timeline for undertaking this operation was requested and the Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement would arrange for the necessary details to be forwarded to Councillor Caunt.
- Regarding PI 325 – number of adults in English and Maths programmes the Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer would arrange for the information as to the success rate of adults undertaking such programmes to be notified to all members of the Committee.
- Arising from a query on the Black Country Wide "Meet the Funder" event to be held during quarter 2 referred to on page 10 of the report under objective 2.2a – the Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement would ascertain whether members were to be invited to this event.
- In response to a comment made regarding a request made in February, 2012 for details of firms in the borough so that they could be informed of European funding, a response to which was still awaited, the Principal Policy and Performance Management Officer would investigate this matter and respond direct to Councillor K. Turner.

- Regarding objective 3 – reference 2.3d – development of a new tourism strategy and action plan for the Borough – arising from a query about the progress made arising from the tourism summit held in July 2013 – the Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement would arrange for an update on the revised strategy and delivery plan to be circulated to all members of the Committee.
- Regarding the three performance indicators referred to on page 23 of the report relating to the Office of Public Health it was agreed that confirmation would be sought from the Director of Public Health by the Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement that these indicators had been brought forward from those to which the office were working when they were part of the National Health Service and that the comments received by circulated to all members of the Committee.
- With reference to the performance figures for recycling contained on page 26 of the report it was agreed that clarification would be sought by the Assistant Director Policy and Improvement on the issue raised of the non-recycling of yoghurt pots and the view expressed that appropriate advice on this could be incorporated into the A-Z of recycling booklet referred to under reference 6.1a.
- Regarding PI 350 – percentage of municipal waste land filled on the addendum to the report it was agreed that the Assistant Director, Policy and Improvement would arrange for details of the additional costs incurred arising from the below target performance on this indicator and from which budget the costs would be met to be circulated to all members of the Committee together with details as to how many times the new recycling vehicles had broken down since delivery had been taken of them.
- Arising from a query as to whether the Healthy Hubs in the Borough were to continue and where the funding was to come from in the event of this it was agreed that the Assistant Director, Policy Improvement would arrange for this matter to be investigated and a response sent to all members of the Committee.

- Arising from a query raised about return to work interviews an explanation was given of the process adopted since 1st May, 2013 in relation to these and the overall Attendance Management Policy that had been adopted. In essence given the implementation date it was too early to draw any specific conclusions as yet however systems were in place to ensure that such interviews were undertaken by managers and supported by IT developments. Manual systems were also in place. It was commented on that there had been a reduction in the sickness figures following the introduction of the Attendance Management Policy.
- Arising from consideration of objective 7.7a – Roll forward the Council’s Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy - arising from a query regarding the operation of the Coffee Lounge it was agreed that the Assistant Director, Quality and Partnership (Children’s Services) would arrange for the financial position to be investigated and for a response to be sent to all members of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the Quarterly Performance Management Report submitted; in the quarter one report circulated separately to members and the addendum thereto, in respect of performance for the period 1st April to 30th June 2013, be noted together with the comments made at this meeting and that the officers indicated undertake the actions referred to above.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

As it was indicated that it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted and of the nature of the proceedings, that exempt information would be disclosed, it was:-

RESOLVED

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as indicated below and in all the circumstances, the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure.

<u>Description of Item</u>	<u>Relevant Paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A</u>
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR)	3

13. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION (CTR) SCHEME

A report of the Director of Corporate Resources was submitted on the further detail in respect of specific areas that members of the Committee had identified for further scrutiny at the informal meeting held on 30th July 2013.

The Assistant Director, Customer Services, in his presentation of the content of the report referred to the three options for the Council's 2014/15 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which were:-

Option 1 – continue with current arrangements.

Option 2 – increase council tax payable by cutting the level of CTR by 8.5%.

Option 3 – increase the council tax payable by cutting the level of CTR by 20%.

As part of the further consideration to be given to this matter information on the protection of vulnerable groups and on a breakdown of Direct Debit payers by Council Tax Property Band had previously been circulated to members of the Committee.

Reference was then made to a presentation to be made at the meeting providing the latest information in relation to:-

- Public consultation results – so far.
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – scheme plans to date.
- Collection issues.
- Next steps.

Officers present then commented further on the presentation given at the meeting.

Regarding the public consultation undertaken and the results to date it was noted that a wide range of consultation had been undertaken, focusing on benefit claimants but also including the general public via approaches such as the Council's website, press release, twitter and facebook.

Of the 320 responses received and analysed up to 23rd August 2013, 237 (74%) favoured option 1. Of the 74%, 86% were in receipt of benefits. 37 (12%) favoured an 8.5% cut in CTR whilst 36 (11%) favoured a 20% cut in CTR. Of these 81% were Council Tax Payers.

A further one hundred responses had now been received and would be analysed in due course.

Updated figures would be given to the Chair by the Assistant Director, Customer Services in due course.

The twelve week consultation period would end on 18th October 2013.

Of the vulnerable groups which could be protected, in the event of either option 2 or 3 being adopted, the highest percentages of positive responses related to protecting disabled adults, disabled children and working age war pensioners .

On the issue of consultation some members commented that more should be done to consult with the general public and in response it was noted that other avenues of consultation such as consulting tenants and via Directorates of the Council were being used.

In addition the use of the Council's Community Forums was raised together with use of further press coverage.

Further ways of engaging with the general public would therefore be explored and undertaken.

Arising from consideration of the position in neighbouring Councils reference was made to the issue of protecting vulnerable groups.

A broad definition of disabled had been used which encompassed all possible categories of disability and long term sickness.

The vulnerable groups were disabled adults and children, lone parents with a child aged under 5 and war pensioners of working age.

It was noted that a variety of definitions of disability were used by other Local Authorities. The effect of protecting all of the vulnerable groups specified in the report and using the full definition of disability would be to reduce the extra collectible Council Tax in any revised scheme by approximately half.

It was considered that a clearer definition of disability and sickness was required and this would be looked into and a tiered approach could also be considered.

Issues relating to the collection of any extra collectible Council Tax were also discussed however, the overall conclusion was that, based on the evidence available, it was too early to indicate how collection rates would actually perform by implementing either options 2 or 3 and that collection rates were also affected by other legislative changes that have been made.

The position would therefore continue to be monitored. It was also noted that collection rates were dependent on the approach taken to recovery of debt.

Regarding the next steps it was noted that the Cabinet would meet on 30th October to consider and propose a scheme to the full Council meeting on 5th December which would include any recommendation made by this Committee at this meeting.

Arising from the presentation and comments made further questions/comments were made, relating principally as to which, if any, of the three options should be recommended to Cabinet.

Various views were then expressed including continuing with the current arrangements – option 1, increasing the Council Tax payable by cutting the level of CTR by 20% - option 3, option 2 with provisos and that option 2 would be uneconomic to implement.

In respect of option 3 a comment was made that if adopted this should be with the narrow Disability Living Allowance definition of disability whilst the contrary view was also expressed that vulnerable groups should be protected using the widest definition of disability.

Comments were also made that there was a need for further information before a decision could be made, as the position regarding collection rates was inconclusive, that the consultation period still had a number of weeks to run and that there was a need to broaden out the consultation to more council tax payers.

At the conclusion of comments made, and following consideration of various proposals it was, following the proposal and seconding of a particular motion and voting thereon:-

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet be informed that this Scrutiny Committee do not wish to make a recommendation to them regarding which of the three options for the Council's 2014/15 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme should be adopted, on the basis that there was currently not enough information available on which to make a decision but that if Cabinet/Council wish to implement either options 2 or 3 it is recommended that the vulnerable groups identified within the papers circulated to members and referred to at this meeting be protected and that the widest possible definition of disability be features of the proposed Scheme.

The meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.

CHAIR

CPMEE/15