

REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS
TO THE EXECUTIVE
2nd JUNE 2006

Corporate Governance Report Fourth Quarter (January, February, March) 2005/06

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 To receive the corporate governance report for the fourth quarter of 2005/06.
- 1.2 The Contact Officer for this report is Tim Sadler, Strategic Director (01235) 540360.

2.0 Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to resolve that:

- (a) *the Directors' Group Corporate Governance Report for the fourth quarter 2005/06 be noted*
- (b) *the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment action plans be closed in their entirety and that officers propose updated replacements to the July meeting of the Executive.*
- (c) *staff in the Housing and Benefits teams are congratulated for strong performance throughout the year.*
- (d) *staff in the waste management are congratulated on the successful implementation of the Brown Wheeled Bin Scheme*
- (e) *contact centre staff are congratulated on a successful first year.*
- (f) *The reductions in BVPI 2a (equality standard) and 2b (promotion of race equality) are noted with concern and that the Strategic Director, Tim Sadler, and Portfolio holder, Roz Smith, progress the situation as a priority and monitor progress closely*
- (g) *The success of the change to the Housing Allocations Policy in respect of hostels be noted.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report

- (a) relates to the entire Vision Statement.
- (b) relates to the Best Value Performance Plan and Corporate Plan and
- (c) Complies with Corporate Planning Timetable.

4.0 Background and Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Directors' "Corporate Governance Report" for the quarter looks at the key areas of:-
- Key issues and projects
 - CPA Improvement Action Plan monitoring
 - Corporate
 - Housing
 - Open Spaces
 - Implementing Electronic Government (IEG)
 - Best Value Performance Indicators
 - Local Performance Indicators linked to priorities for improvement
 - Financial Information

- Key staffing data

4.2 Key Issues

The key issues list has been updated and is reproduced in Appendix 1. There are no significant issues to report beyond this. In order to produce the Best Value Performance Plan for 2006/7 and update the Corporate Plan steps will be taken to close down as many outstanding key issues between this report and the next. The list will then be updated with new key issues identified in the service and budget process.

4.3 CPA Improvement Action Plans

These have been updated and are attached. Significant progress has now been made against these action plans. It is proposed that these action plans now be closed down and new plans be brought to the Executive reflecting that progress and those significant issues identified in the various recent reports from the Audit Commission which help the Council in focusing on new priority development areas.

4.4 Best Value Performance Indicators

Of particular note are:-

BVPIs 2a (Equality Standard for Local Government) and 2b (duty to promote race equality checklist score), due to a lack of maintenance of existing procedures, for example on review of the Corporate Equalities Plan, our performance has dropped over the last year. Members of the Executive will be aware that there are plans in place to reverse this trend.

BVPIs 183a (Average length of stay in bed and breakfast) and 183b (average length of stay in a hostel – weeks), Continued strong performance in respect of use of bed and breakfast. Much improved performance in respect of hostels reflecting the change in policy adopted last year which restricted the period of offer to three months. It is your officers' view that this change has had the desired effect with no noticeable negative impacts and that the policy should remain in its amended form.

None of the housing BVPIs are now in the bottom quartile, a substantial reversal of our position at the time of the CPA inspection.

Benefits BVPIs show continued high level performance despite the additional work and the acknowledge risk of staff uncertainty around the shared service organisation and the transfer of some work to Capita.

BVPI 82 (Recycled and composted waste) The impact of the introduction of the Brown Wheeled Bin scheme can be seen with the local target being exceeded.

BVPI 166 Environmental Health Checklist remains an issue for the Council. This has been investigated by the Scrutiny Committee and an action plan has now been approved to remedy the situation.

4.5 Local Performance Indicators

Affordable Housing – the local performance indicators show continued strong performance in the last quarter and for the year as a whole. There is an issue around the balance of rented to shared ownership provided in the context of the draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance and the targets the Council has set. This essentially relates to site viability and the amount of public subsidy available. Where there are viability issues the level of rented accommodation provided is reduced and replaced with shared ownership which requires less

subsidy. We are investigating a number of possibilities in this respect including the Expression of Interest in Private Finance Initiative funding.

Access to services – the contact centre has now been running for a year and has dealt with over 67,000 contacts. The target for the time to answer calls has been missed. However, it should be borne in mind that the Council's target exceeds the industry norm of 80% in 20 seconds and hence is still good performance. Of particular note is the abandoned call rate which has been reduced month on month to a record low of just 2%. Reducing the number of abandoned calls was a key driver for the introduction of the contact centre.

4.6 Financial Issues

There is no financial summary in this quarter due to the close down of accounts. A full report will be made to the next meeting of the Executive.

4.7 Staffing Issues

See commentary on sickness and turnover summaries. Turnover shows a third successive year of improvement. Sickness levels are being investigated by the Scrutiny Committee.

4.8 Risk Management

The review of the corporate risk register is due in the next quarter.

Terry Stock
Tim Sadler
Steve Bishop
Brian McAndrew
DIRECTORS GROUP

Background Papers: Corporate Governance Report of the Directors Group