

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

12th June 2008

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Harrison (Chairman), Councillor Wheeler (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Mrs. Coyle, Ford, Grant, Hewlett (substitute for Councillor Bladen), Mrs. Plenderleith and Mrs. Wheeler.

Labour Group

Councillors Mrs. Lane (substitute for Councillor Taylor), Pabla, Richards, Southerd and Wilkins.

In attendance

Councillors Mrs. Farrington and Timms (Conservative Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Bladen (Conservative Group) and Councillor Taylor (Labour Group).

FM/1. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st May 2008 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

FM/2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs. Coyle declared a personal interest in respect of a project included in the proposals for expenditure of Growth Point Funds, as Chairman of the Hilton Village Hall Committee.

FM/3. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Chairman had been advised of the need to consider an urgent item during the meeting and he was satisfied with the grounds for urgency. This related to the need to make urgent improvements to the drainage and drainage protection systems at the Council's Depot and to secure the necessary funding for this. It was agreed to consider this matter later in the Meeting.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/4. **AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee Meeting held on 23rd April 2008 be received and noted.

FM/5. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT (1ST APRIL 2007 – 31ST MARCH 2008)

A report was submitted to detail performance levels and achievements for the year ending 31st March 2008, in relation to this Committee's contribution to the four key strands of the Council's Performance Management Framework. The detail of the report looked at the key achievements made during the last quarter relating to the Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan. Next, actual/out-turn performance was reported, again for the Corporate and Improvement Plans, together with the Community Strategy Action Plan and Best Value Performance Indicators.

In receiving the report, Members discussed the Corporate Plan target under Theme 5, Rural South Derbyshire, that had not been achieved. This related to introducing a fair and streamlined funding regime for parish councils, which created a level playing field with non-parished areas. Members also recognised the high level of performance and in view of this, extended their thanks to the staff concerned.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee notes the key achievements and performance for the year ending 31st March 2008 within its areas of responsibility.***
- (2) That Members note where performance has failed to achieve the specified target and accept the responses submitted.***

FM/6. SERVICE PLANS 2008/09

It was reported that Service Plans were a key part of the Council's Performance Management Framework, acting as an important link between high-level plans and strategies and personal performance objectives established through the employee review and development scheme. The form and content of Service Plans had been reviewed and minor changes made, to capture a number of cross-cutting themes such as value for money, outcomes and linking priorities to budgets. Details were provided of the sections contained within each plan. The Service Plans reflected the current themes and priorities within the Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy. These would be reviewed when the new plans were published in 2009. For this reason, the plans covered a one-year period and monitoring reports would be provided on a quarterly basis.

Heads of Service were invited to present highlights from their respective Service Plans. On the Legal and Democratic Services Plan, there was discussion about the review of polling stations and Members' local knowledge was welcomed on securing the most suitable premises in each area.

With regard to the Customer Services Plan, there was a discussion about the Pension Service and delays, which were causing problems for some residents, particularly vulnerable people. An explanation was given of how the Council was working with the Pension Service to address the known problems. Further issues discussed were the speed of answering telephone calls, the ability to pay Council Tax via the internet or telephone and the Gold Card scheme.

The Committee received the Service Plan for IT and Business Improvement. Under this heading, Members discussed the current arrangements for accessing Minutes and reports via the intranet and asked how the new Committee Management Information System would impact.

RESOLVED:-

That the Service Plans for Legal and Democratic Services, Organisational Development, Customer Services, IT and Business Improvement and Finance and Property Services be approved as a basis for service delivery over the period to March 2009.

FM/7. **COMPLAINTS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS – 1ST OCTOBER 2007 TO 31ST MARCH 2008**

An informative report was submitted on the comments, compliments and complaints received during this period. These comprised 2 comments, 17 compliments and 23 complaints. Tables were included in the detail of the report showing the divisions to which each of these related. Statistics were then provided on the Freedom of Information requests received. In response to a question, it was confirmed there was a wide range of people and bodies who submitted such Freedom of Information requests. It was also questioned whether the number of vexatious complaints were reducing.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

FM/8. **CONSULTATION STRATEGY – ANNUAL REPORT**

A report was submitted to provide an overview of the key outcomes from the Council's Consultation Strategy and the revised action plan for the period 2008/11. Members were reminded of the 2006 White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" and the additional responsibilities it provided for local authorities. Undertaking effective consultation had become a key requirement for the Council, enhanced further by the new performance framework for local government, which focused on improving outcomes for local people and places. The consultation process was fundamental to delivering value for money services, which was central to the Council's vision. The Committee had approved the Consultation Strategy in July 2007, with the aim of improving the co-ordination of consultation between services in the Council and with key partners, to ensure that citizens' views were used effectively to inform Council decision-making.

The detail of the report looked at the achievements made in 2007/08. In particular, sections were provided on the Consultation Strategy, the Annual Plan of Consultation, the Consultation Toolkit, the Citizens' Panel and through provision of a dedicated area on the Council's website.

Looking forward, an action plan had been developed to cover the period 2008/11, which was appended to the report. A summary was then provided of the key actions for 2008/09, which comprised the consultation timetable for the Corporate Plan, the new place survey and customer satisfaction monitoring. Information was also provided on the consultation calendar and

the research database of results and outcomes. There were proposals to refresh the Citizens' Panel and information was given on employee consultation and engagement. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the refreshed Citizens' Panel would take account of the growing sector of the population in the over 50 and over 80 age groups.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee approves the Action Plan to guide the Council in undertaking consultation with service users, residents, partners and staff for the period 2008/11.***
- (2) That the key achievements for the year ending 31st March 2008 be noted.***

FM/9. **EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT AND ACTION PLAN 2008/09**

It was reported that the Council had a statutory responsibility to promote race, disability and gender equality. To meet the statutory provisions, the Council had developed a Race Equality Scheme, a Disability Equality Scheme and a Gender Equality Scheme. The schemes, with their associated action plans detailed how the Council's policies, functions and services impacted on disability, gender and race equality and how the Council would promote equality. The Council was required to report annually on each of the schemes and a combined report was submitted. The next annual report would be based on the single equality action plan developed for the Corporate Equality and Fairness Scheme.

The report provided details of the progress made during 2007/08, particularly on achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, the Corporate Equality and Fairness Scheme and the Gender Equality Scheme. Information was provided about the Values and Attitudes Group, the Corporate Equality and Fairness Group, together with equality impact risk assessments and equality needs risk assessments.

The Action Plan for 2008/09 was then reported and a table showed the key actions for the Corporate Equality and Fairness Scheme. The Plan would be revised to take account of the equality impact risk assessments and details were provided of how these would be reported and incorporated into the action plan. Work would be completed within Organisational Development to assess the actions needed to meet Level 3 of the National Equality Standard. The Values and Attitudes Group and Equality and Fairness Group would monitor the progress against this action plan and promote the key messages within the Council and to the wider community.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the priority actions outlined within the report to continue progress towards Level 3 of the National Equality Standard be approved.***
- (2) That the separate Race, Disability and Gender Equality Action Plans are combined into a single Corporate Equality Action Plan, as shown at Annexe SMB1 to the Signed Minute Book.***

FM/10. **ANNUAL TRAINING REPORT 2007/08 AND PRIORITIES FOR 2008/09**

A report was submitted to provide an overview of corporate training, learning and development activities completed during 2007/08. In line with previous years, priorities had been identified from a number of sources, including the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and individual Performance Development Reviews. A variety of learning interventions had been provided, with the focus being on leadership and management development, health and safety training, equalities and supporting employees with academic study relevant to their roles.

The detail of the report reviewed training activity during 2007/08 and a table showed the types of activity and number of staff trained. The Organisational Development Unit had delivered and supported 43 different training activities and the total number of training, learning and development days equated to 1,325.5 or 3.5 training days per employee. The report stated the importance of assessing the effectiveness of the learning provided and explained how the Organisational Development Unit continued to develop and provide in-house training solutions wherever possible. This section of the report also looked in detail at the review of training activity for 2007/08 and front line staff training. Information was submitted about National Vocational Qualifications, E-Learning, Modern Apprenticeships and work experience.

The report then looked at priorities for 2008/09. The Council's People Strategy aligned the development of people with the improvement of services. Under this section of the report, information was provided about leadership and management development, equality and fairness and health and safety. Further priorities were employment policy, e-learning resources, Member training and the assessment for re-accreditation of Investors in People (IIP). The outcome of the 2005 IIP Assessment identified the need to focus on a number of key areas, including first aid training.

In response to a Members' question, there was a discussion about first aid training and the increased coverage, particularly at the Council's Depot and for grounds maintenance staff. A Member commended the work undertaken on training and spoke about the benefits of developing staff. With regard to "e-learning", it was requested that all Member training information be made available via the Council's intranet. Further discussion took place about first aid, the provision of first aid to third parties and insurance arrangements. It was requested that Officers research liability issues and insurance. It was also noted that Councillor Lemmon was the Controlling Group's Member Champion for training and the Opposition Group was welcome to nominate a Member for this role.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee notes the range of training activities and actions provided during 2007/08.***
- (2) That in line with the Corporate Plan and other identified needs, the Committee approves the priority areas for training and development during 2008/09.***

FM/11. **ESTABLISHMENT OF DERBY HMA JOINT ADVISORY BOARD AND PROPOSALS FOR CAPITAL AND REVENUE GROWTH POINT FUNDS SPENDING 2008/09**

Members were reminded that the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) required the preparation of co-ordinated Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) across the Derby Housing Market Area (HMA). The Derby HMA had been declared a national growth point, which meant that local authorities were eligible to bid for funding to support the delivery of infrastructure needed to support new housing growth, arising from the RSSs. These areas of work relied on effective liaison between the County and District Councils involved. There was now a need to establish formal arrangements for Member liaison across the Derby HMA. A report was submitted with recommendations for the establishment of a Derby HMA Joint Advisory Board, together with capital and revenue spending programmes for 2008/09 and beyond. Ultimately, this matter would need to be determined by the Council.

A Meeting of relevant Members and chief executives from each of the four authorities was held, to consider the terms of reference for a Derby HMA Joint Advisory Board. The Chairman of the Environmental and Development Services Committee, Councillor Bladen had attended this Meeting. At the Meeting, the terms of reference were agreed for recommendation to individual authorities. Consideration was also given at that Meeting to the receipt and expenditure of growth point monies for 2008/09 and beyond. The background and recommendations on this were set out within the report.

A Member noted the availability of funding from the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership, but there was a short deadline for the submission of bids. The Council's Leader offered to pursue this matter.

RESOLVED:-

That Council be recommended:

- (1) That the terms of reference for the Derby Housing Market Area Joint Advisory Board be approved.***
- (2) That Councillor Bladen be nominated to the Derby HMA Joint Advisory Board.***
- (3) That National Growth Point Funding be received and spent on the Capital and Revenue Projects proposed within the report.***

FM/12. **FUNDING OF ESSENTIAL DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS AT THE DARKLANDS ROAD DEPOT**

The Committee was informed of the urgent need to make improvements to the drainage and drainage protection systems at the Council's Depot. A survey undertaken as part of the Council's Environmental Management System had revealed a problem and prices had been obtained for the necessary work. Additional funding of £14,500 would be required, but this expenditure was not included in the Environmental Services budget. It was proposed that the unexpected essential work be funded from reserves.

RESOLVED:-

That additional expenditure of £14,500 be authorised to make essential improvements to the drainage system at the Council's Depot.

FM/13. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st May 2008 were received.

LAND AT MELBOURNE (Paragraph 3)

The Committee authorised the disposal of an area of Council-owned land, subject to the inclusion of appropriate conditions.

REPLACEMENT ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION SOFTWARE SYSTEM (Paragraph 3)

The Committee authorised the purchase of a replacement Elections and Electoral Registration software system.

REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS (Paragraph 1)

The Committee approved the creation of a central Communications Team within the Organisational Development Unit, together with a number of consequential staffing matters.

FORMER TENANT ARREARS – WRITE-OFFS (Paragraphs 1 & 3)

The Committee authorised the write-off of sums due to the Council in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule D2.4(c).

CORPORATE PRINTING REQUIREMENT REVIEW – CONCLUSION (Paragraph 1)

The Committee considered the staffing implications arising from the Corporate Printing Requirement Review and agreed a course of action.

PLANNING SERVICE RE-ENGINEERING – SERVICE STRUCTURE REVIEW
(Paragraph 1)

The Committee considered the staffing implications arising from the Planning Service Re-engineering Service Structure Review and agreed a course of action.

J. HARRISON

CHAIRMAN