

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

31st July 2006

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Lane (Chair), Councillor Bambrick (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Mrs. Mead.

Conservative Group

Councillors Bladen and Lemmon.

In Attendance

Councillor Richards.

CYS/3. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th June 2006 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

CYS/4. **ACHIEVING TARGETS 2006/09 – WASTE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING**

A report on Achieving Targets 2006/09 - Waste Management and Planning was circulated to all Members of the Committee. The purpose of the report was to enable the Scrutiny Committee to consider a request from the Environmental and Development Services Committee to examine the issues around the achievement of Best Value Performance Indicator targets for aspects of the Waste Management Service and the processing of planning applications.

The Improvement Panel at its Meeting on 14th June 2006, considered proposals for the setting and achievement of Best Value Performance Indicator targets for the period 2006/09. As part of the target setting regime, the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) were divided into two groups:-

- Priority indicators (these contributed to delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities relating to safer and healthier communities, a cleaner and greener South Derbyshire and more efficient customer focused services.
- Other, non-priority indicators.

The Scrutiny Committee was advised that in setting targets, the Improvement Panel had adopted a number of general principles:-

- Achieving all national standards in 2006/07 and beyond.
- No bottom quartile performance by March 2007.
- All performance to improve year on year (except where performance would remain in the top quartile and this enabled resources to be focused on other areas for improvement).
- All to achieve top quartile performance by March 2009.
- For non-priority indicators, there should be continuous improvement i.e. targets must equal or exceed 2005/06 performance (unless performance would remain in the top quartile).

Members were informed that targets had been set based on the above principles for all BVPI's apart from a small number where Managers had concerns about the feasibility of delivering the required levels of improvement. A number of exceptions had been highlighted by the Improvement Panel relating to the following priority indicators:-

- BVPI 109 a-c (time taken to determine planning applications) which were expected to be in the second quartile by March 2009.
- BVPI 82 a (proportion of waste recycled) what was also expected to be in the second quartile.
- BVPI 84 a (waste collected per household) which was likely to move into the bottom quartile.

The Improvement Panel referred the above three BVPI's to the Environmental and Development Services Committee for detailed consideration. That Committee, at its Meeting on 13th July 2006, resolved to refer the issue for detailed examination to this Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair requested that BVPI 86 (cost per head of waste collection) be included in the list of BVPI's to be scrutinised by this Committee. There was unanimous support from the Committee for this proposal.

The Committee decided to consider the BVPI's in respect of waste management separately to those in respect of the processing of planning applications.

Waste Management BVPI's

Mr. P. McEvoy (Head of Environmental Services) advised Members that when considering the Waste Management BVPI's, a number of strategic questions/issues needed to be considered, including:-

- Does the Council wish to aim for Audit Commission targets or is it going to set its own local targets or follow DEFRA targets?
- Does the Council wish to be a leader in recycling of waste or a decent follower?
- Is customer satisfaction a key measure or does the Council wish to be an ambassador for the environment?
- The need to balance the various waste management options against their relative costs.

It was agreed:-

- ***That BVPI 86 (cost per head of waste collection) be included in the list of waste management performance targets to be scrutinised by this Committee.***
- ***That the Head of Environmental Services be requested to circulate a briefing paper to each Member of this Committee on the strategic options for waste management, including information on:-***
 - ***How the relevant BVPI's are determined.***
 - ***Relevant Best Value Performance plans/information.***
 - ***The latest Service Plan performance for household waste management.***

- ***Information on customer requirements for household waste management.***
- ***That, following the circulation of the briefing paper referred to above, an informal meeting of Members of this Committee be held on 14th August 2006 at a time and venue to be agreed to consider in detail the strategic options for household waste management.***
- ***That Officers be requested to arrange a number of site visits during August 2006 to appropriate high performing Councils for the Committee to assess how those deal with waste management.***
- ***That, following the consideration of the briefing paper and the site visits referred to above, a detailed report be submitted to a future Meeting of this Committee on Waste Management BVPI's to enable a report to be prepared for consideration by the Environmental and Development Services Committee.***

BVPI 109 a-c

The Committee considered the second part of the report in respect of BVPI 109 a-c (time taken to determine planning applications) which was expected to be in the second quartile by March 2009.

It was agreed:-

- ***That all Members of the Committee be invited to attend the project meeting in respect of BVPI 109 a-c to be held on 10th August 2006.***
- ***That BVPI 109 a-c be considered in detail at the informal meeting of Members of the Committee to be held on 14th August 2006.***

CYS/5. **LOW FREQUENCY NOISE**

Members were advised that in accordance with the decision from the Meeting of the Committee on 8th May 2006, an item on low frequency noise had been included in a bulletin circulated to all Members to provide background information on the matter.

CYS/6. **RURAL POST OFFICE CLOSURES**

A copy of a report entitled "Possible Changes to the Rural Post Office Network" was circulated to all Members present at the Meeting. Members were advised that a Postcomm report "State of the Network: Recommendations for the future of the Social Post Office network" had been published in July 2006. The purpose of the report was to provide stakeholders with an awareness of the role of the post office network and its future challenges and to inform government decision-making on the future of the Post Office network.

The report contained twenty-seven recommendations. These were summarised as follows:-

- What is the role of the UK's Post Office network?
- How can Post Office services remain accessible?

- How can customers and communities inform Government decision-making?
- How should change to the network be delivered?

In addition to the above recommendations contained in the report, a further recommendation was that the Government should engage local authority representatives such as the Local Government Association, National Association of Local Councils, the SPARSE grouping of local authorities and regional development agencies in its efforts to determine the future of the Post Office network.

The Committee was advised that Post Office stakeholders would have a six weeks consultation period to respond to any major changes planned for rural post offices. Members were advised that Government funding for Post Office Limited for the rural post office network would finish in March 2008 and the Department of Work and Pensions had added further uncertainty to the viability of the Post Office network by stating that it would no longer fund the recently introduced Post Office Card Account after 2010.

It was agreed:-

- ***That Officers be requested to arrange a Meeting between Members of this Committee and the Local Member of Parliament to discuss any possible changes to the Rural Post Office network and in particular, Members' concerns about any proposals to withdraw funding for the Post Office Card Account after 2010.***
- ***That, following the meeting between Members of the Committee and the Local Member of Parliament referred to above, the Committee consider a report at a future Meeting on the following:-***
 - ***Arrangements to consult with internal and external stakeholders on any changes proposed to the rural post office network.***
 - ***Arrangements for the reporting of findings of this Committee to the relevant policy committee on the base line position in respect of any changes proposed to the rural post office network.***
 - ***Ways of supporting and developing services provided by the Council and its partners for delivery by the rural post office network to improve the viability of the network.***

CYS/7. **HOUSING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS BVPI 183 A-B**

The Committee received a report on the status of Housing Performance Indicators BVPI 183a and BVPI 183b and the actions required to achieve the 2006/07 targets.

The report advised that the Council had a statutory obligation to provide a homelessness prevention function. Housing performance indicator BV183a – Length of stay in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation had declined. This was due mainly to one family which had been accepted initially onto the waiting list in error. This case had distorted the Council's figures and had an adverse impact on the performance indicator.

The Committee was informed that Housing Performance Indicator BV183 (length of time in temporary accommodation [Hostel]) had improved in the last twelve months. Members noted that action had been taken to improve performance in respect of BVPI 183a and BVPI 183b, as the monitoring of bed and breakfast usage was now in all Officers' Personal Development Reviews and individuals were required to report weekly to their Line Manager on progress with individual cases. A new post of Housing Options Advisor had been created which would reduce the need for both bed and breakfast and hostel usage.

It was agreed:-

- ***That the content of the report on Housing Performance Indicators BVPI 183 a and 183 b be received.***
- ***That a Housing Officer be requested to attend the next Meeting of this Committee to provide an updated report on Housing Performance Indicators BVP183a and 183 b and to provide background information and the approach to homelessness issues.***

CYS/8. **HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE INSPECTION**

The Committee received a report, which provided background information on the Audit Commission's inspection of the Council's Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service.

The Audit Commission inspection was carried out in June 2005 and covered the following areas:-

- access, customer care and user focus
- diversity
- capital improvement, planned and cyclical major repairs to the Council's 3,235 homes.
- responsive and void repairs
- gas servicing
- aids and adaptations for people with disabilities
- resident involvement and value for money

The inspection report was published in October 2005 and the Audit Commission's overall judgement was that the Council provided a "fair" one star service with promising prospects for improvement.

It was agreed:-

- ***That the content of the report on the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Inspection be received.***
- ***That a Housing Officer be requested to give a presentation/ report on the up to date position in respect of the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service to the next Meeting of the Committee on 11th September 2006.***
- ***That the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Inspection Service be included as an item for discussion at the informal meeting of Members of this Committee to be held on 14th August 2006 and that***

any questions on this report be forwarded to the Head of Policy and Economic Regeneration.

CYS/9. **INTERNET USAGE**

A copy of a report on accessing the internet and contacting the Council - February 2006 survey results was circulated to all Members present at the Meeting.

It was agreed:-

- ***That the content of the February 2006 survey results in respect of accessing the internet and contacting the Council be noted and its statistics be considered in the future.***
- ***That any questions from Members on the report be forwarded to Mr. M. Greenway in the Council's Policy and Economic Regeneration Unit.***

CYS/10. **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2006/07**

A copy of a report which detailed the Work Programme of this Committee, together with that of the Overview Committee was circulated to all Members present at the Meeting.

It was agreed:-

- ***That the following projects be included in the Committee's Work Programme for 2006/07:-***
 - ***Low frequency noise***
 - ***PCT issues and District Council liaison***
 - ***Rural Post Office closures including withdrawal of the pensioner card***
 - ***Housing Service BVPI bottom quartile performance***
 - ***Corporate Plan three priorities***
 - ***Street scene review***
 - ***Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service Performance Management***
 - ***Waste Management – delivering better services BVPI***
 - ***Planning Applications – delivering better services BVPI***
 - ***E-enablement – scrutinising our outward looking agenda***
- ***That the Committee's Work Programme for 2006/07 be updated and reported to the Environmental and Development Services and Housing and Community Services Committee meetings in August 2006.***

R. LANE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 5.45 pm

