

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Thursday 24 September 2009

- Present:** Councillors:
Steve Hall (Chairman)
Frances Newth (Vice Chairman)
Roger Boote
David Chapman
Brenda Taylor
- Officers:** Mark Williams – Chief Executive
Chris Lane – Democratic Services Officer
Karen Jenkins – Head of Organisational Development
Denise Lyon – Corporate Director and Deputy Chief Executive
- Also Present** Councillors:
Paul Diviani
Ray Bloxham
Iain Chubb
David Cox
Mike Green
Andrew Moulding
- Apologies:** Councillors:
Derek Button
Geoff Chamberlain
Vivien Duval Steer
Jill Elson
Douglas Hull
David Key
Ken Potter
Tony Reed

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.20pm.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

***9 Public question time**

There were no questions from the public raised at this point of the meeting.

***10 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2009 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

***11 Improvements to the Scrutiny Function**

The Committee received the report originally made to the Scrutiny Committee on 12 November 2008, on the proposed improvements to the scrutiny function for consideration, as requested by this Committee on 17 June 2009 (minute no *2 refers).

*11 **Improvements to the Scrutiny Function**

Members noted the improvements to the scrutiny function that had been made as a result of the recommendations adopted by the Scrutiny Committee at its November meeting.

The Committee recognised that the Member Development Programme was working very well and giving Members a better understanding of how to undertake their various roles through wider development.

New members of the Development Management Committee would receive mandatory planning training. This training would be in house in early October. The Member Development Working Group had discussed the issue of training for new Development Management Committee members at its meeting on 21 September and had recommended that a system of 'buddying' be adopted for new members of the Development Management Committee. This would give further support for new members alongside training sessions.

It was noted that Town/Parish Councillors also needed training on planning issues, but that there was no plan to extend training to them at present. The Head of Planning & Countryside Services discussed planning issues at the Town/Parish Council evenings held at Knowle.

The recommendation contained in the report to consider the appointment of a dedicated Scrutiny Officer was raised, but it was recognised that in the current economic climate and with the continuing uncertainties over Local Government reorganisation it was not a practical possibility.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted;

RECOMMENDED that mandatory training for new Members and Members on the Development Management Committee and other quasi judicial bodies be organized immediately after the election.

*12 **Preventable demand in the Customer Service Centre**

Consideration was given to the report of the Customer Service Manager, which explained the volume levels of customer contact with the Customer Service Centre (CSC) from 1 April 2008 to 30 June 2009 in relation to preventable demand which had been captured on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system during this period. This key information was introduced during the systems thinking reviews and had also been collected nationally from 1 April 2008 as National Indicator 14 (avoidable contacts).

During discussions the following points were raised;

- the correlation between the roll out of the new recycling contracts and contacts to the Customer Service Centre;
- many of the calls to the Customer Service Centre were in relation to missed rubbish bins and recycling boxes;
- preventable demand was an issue which would be discussed at the next meeting on 21 October;
- the Council had adopted an approach whereby it did not seek to discourage telephone calls and that there was a member of staff available to answer all calls;
- there were pressure peaks that the Customer Service Centre needed to overcome, such as when a new recycling contract was rolled out and early mornings.

*12 **Preventable demand in the Customer Service Centre (Cont)**

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) that the Committee revisit the issue of preventable demand in the Customer Service Centre (CSC) at the next meeting, with the information to be presented including the 2nd quarter data if available, and with the relevant Streetscene Officers and the Portfolio Holder – Streetscene being invited to attend the meeting to up-date the Committee on proposed action;
 - 2) that any Heads of Service responsible for services where the CSC deals with preventable demand review their processes in order to reduce this demand and help ensure that an improved service is provided to the residents of East Devon.

*13 **Draft Performance Management Strategy**

Consideration was given to the Draft Performance Management Strategy presented by the Head of Organisational Development. Members noted that this strategy had been developed in August 2009 and had superseded the monitoring of Government related Performance Indicators policy, the contents of which were now incorporated into the strategy.

The Council wished to move to a culture of systems thinking which it was felt had benefits for its customers, the Council was looking to improve the customer experience. The Strategy was trying to bring together National Performance Indicators and the systems thinking approach. Members indicated that that they were happy with the way the strategy had evolved and accepted that this would take the Council forward for the future. It was acknowledged that there could be conflict between this approach and reporting Performance Indicators; the Audit Commission may be in opposition to this approach. The Council may need to justify its action.

The Strategy was an attempt to make sure we manage and design services in a way that meets the customer demand. The data provided was of a good quality, but Members questioned whether there would be two ways of reporting, one for those services who had adopted a systems thinking approach adopted and those who had not yet. Denise Lyon, Corporate Director reported that it was planned to systems think all services through 2010.

RECOMMENDED: that the Draft Performance Management Strategy as presented, be adopted as Council policy.

*14 **Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – 1st Quarter 2009/10**

Consideration was given to the report of the Communications and Improvement Manager on performance information for the period 1 April 2008 – 30 June 2009, which had been attached to the report to allow Members to monitor overall performance and identify any areas where improvement may be necessary.

The Head of Organisational Development took Members through some of the indicators where graphs on comparative performance had been provided. The way this information had been presented had been changed and improved to make it clearer for Members; the information had been arranged around the Council's corporate priorities. During discussions the following points were raised;

- the comments made by the Officers on each Performance Indicator were appreciated by Members;
- Councillors should have all the information to form their own opinions on Performance Indicators;

*14 **Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – 1st Quarter 2009/10** (Cont)

- highlighting indicators in colour helped Members consider the performance information;
- Officers who had been working to present the information in this new way be congratulated as it made it much clearer to read;
- consideration should be given to linking the narrative contained in the report to the summary on the front page of the report.

- RESOLVED:**
1. that the report be noted;
 2. that the proposed method of reporting Performance information in relation to the council's corporate priorities be adopted.

*15 **Absence Report Quarter One 2009/10**

Members were asked to consider the sickness absence report for the first quarter of 2009/10. This indicated that the average number of days lost per person for the first quarter of 2009/10 was 2.47 days per person. If the absence rate continued at the same rate as the first quarter the final outturn figure would be 9.88 days lost per person.

The Head of Organisational Development confirmed that everything possible was being done to reduce absence through sickness amongst staff, but that things such as swine flu may increase the number of days lost per person. Interviews were held with absentees on a regular basis and all staff returning from sickness had a return to work interview. Members were reassured that the absence situation was being closely monitored.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted;

*16 **Service Hierarchy Chart**

Members received the current chart outlining the current management structure for the Council. Members noted that more detailed charts were available and these may become more relevant when outcomes had been achieved as a result of the Transformation process. Officers were thanked for producing the Service Hierarchy Charts .

RESOLVED: that the Service Hierarchy chart be noted.

*17 **Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

Members considered the Service Delivery Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan 2009/10.

Members noted that an item entitled "Performance Measures for planning". would be added to the meeting on 21 October from the Head of Planning and Countryside Services

- RESOLVED**
1. that Forward Plan be noted;
 2. that consideration be given to having a pre meeting half an hour before Committee meetings to discuss issues to be raised at the meetings, when this was considered appropriate.

Chairman Date.....