

Annual Report of the Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2009/10

The Scrutiny Committee has a role, as set out by the Council's constitution, to scrutinise decisions made by the Executive Board; and review topics when requested to do so by the Executive Board. A Scrutiny Committee should function using the following four main principles of scrutiny:

- Provide "critical" friend challenge to executive as well as external authorities and agencies;
- Reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public;
- Make an impact on the delivery of public services.

The remit of the Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee was agreed to focus on:

- Right sized establishment
- Systems thinking
- On-target delivery

In the past year, the Committee has begun to examine these areas of the Council's work and in particular the Systems Thinking Reviews being carried out. A forward plan has been compiled and is reviewed at each meeting. During the first year of operating the Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken the following work:

Quarterly Monitoring of Service Plans

The Committee regularly considers the Quarterly Monitoring Reports of Service Plans. At the first meeting of the Committee, Members agreed on the format of reporting. At each meeting Councillors can highlight any areas of concern to the relevant Head of Service. Some Members of the Committee have been meeting separately to help develop the format of the Quarterly Monitoring reports.

Systems Thinking Review and Performance Measures Report

Performance Measures Reports resulting from the systems thinking reviews are regularly considered by the Committee. Each of the services involved so far; Development Management, Housing Benefit Service and Housing Services have changed the way they work and continually monitor their performance, comparing it against the previous quarter's data. From this comparison, Members can judge for themselves how successful the new ways of working are. In 2009 each of the three service areas had enjoyed considerable improvement.

Preventable demand in the Customer Service Centre

In October consideration was given to the Customer Service Manager's report, which explained the volume levels of customer contact with the Customer Service Centre (CSC) in relation to preventable demand. This key information had been introduced during the systems thinking reviews and had also been collected nationally from 1 April 2008 as National Indicator 14 (avoidable contacts). Members also considered at their October meeting, the impact of the new waste handling contract on the CSC and have asked to be kept up to date with information following Phase Three of the roll out.

Benefits inspection

The Committee had the opportunity to examine the work of the Audit Commission, following their inspection of the Benefits service in October. Members examined both the criticisms and positive comments made by the Audit Commission and would continue to monitor the service area using the Performance Measurers reports and Quarterly Service Plan reports.

Ward Member Involvement and Communication

The Committee have more recently formed a Task and Finish Forum to consider and develop an operating protocol and convention which could be agreed between Officers and Members and used for future Council Communication between Officers and Members.