

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday 17 June 2009

- Present:** Councillors:
Steve Hall (Chairman)
Frances Newth (Vice Chairman)
Roger Boote
David Chapman
Vivien Duval Steer
Douglas Hull
Tony Reed
Brenda Taylor
Ken Potter
- Officers:** Simon Davey – Head of Finance
Christopher Holland – Democratic Services Officer
Kate Little – Head of Planning and Countryside Services
Denise Lyon – Corporate Director and Deputy Chief Executive
- Also Present** Councillors:
Paul Diviani
Jill Elson
Stuart Hughes
Andrew Moulding
Helen Parr
Pauline Stott
- Apologies:** David Key
Bob Peachey

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.45pm.

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

***1 Public question time**

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

***2 Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Remit and Constitutional Changes to Improve the Scrutiny Function**

The Committee was timetabled to meet five times per year, and the broad remit described as: "right sized establishment, systems thinking and on-target delivery"

Members of the Committee discussed the work involved within the broad remit, and the commitment needed to help facilitate actions to achieve this. The Chairman reminded Members that one of the corporate priorities was to achieve an excellent service for the customers of the Council. He stressed that with new and up to date systems thinking review data it was possible to monitor the performance of individual services like never before.

*2

Service Delivery and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Remit and Constitutional Changes to Improve the Scrutiny Function (cont'd)

Members expressed concern that there may not be a single point of contact regarding the scrutiny function as discussed at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2008. The Chairman of the new Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee explained that one of the key aims of the Co-ordinating Committee was to avoid duplication of workloads between the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees and would effectively be the main point of contact.

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) that the constitutional changes to the overview and Scrutiny Function be noted.
 - 2) that the original report to Scrutiny Committee of 12 November 2008 on Improvements to the Scrutiny Function be provided to the Committee for its next meeting.

*3

Draft Performance Management Strategy

Members were to asked to consider the development of performance management and monitoring measures from government national indicator led services to performance measures, which would assist the Council in understanding how services and systems work and how to improve them. Attached for Members' information was the performance indicator policy together with an outline of a new proposed policy.

- RESOLVED:** that the Draft Performance Management Strategy outline be approved and that the final detailed version be reported to a future committee.

*4

Measures Reports

Members were to asked to consider the measures reports for Benefits and Planning which covered the first three months of 2009. The Deputy Chief Executive stressed that the Committee was the first to be able to scrutinise this type of information on service areas and that it was important for them to question if there was anything in them that they found interesting or didn't understand.

Benefits

It was noted that the systems review in Benefits had resulted in many improvements to the service including:

- Better recovery of benefit subsidy through more efficient service (worth £116,000 in 2008/09 subsidy claim)
- More rapid processing of benefit claims (from 36 down to 22 days) and changes of circumstances. (from 20 days to 9.5 days)
- Improved efficiency had created the capacity to cope with a 36% increase in workload with a 3.5% reduced staffing level.

Planning

The systems review in Planning had also resulted in improvements to the service including:

- Time spent on applications reduced by 27 days
- 95% of customers and 82% of Parish and Town Clerks were satisfied with the service provided.
- Improved efficiency had resulted in increased capacity – able to provide a comprehensive pre-application service to benefit applicants, the planning authority and the wider community
- All information submitted with a planning application was available on the Council's website.

*4 **Measures Reports (cont'd)**

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) that the quarterly reporting format of service data be welcomed.
 - 2) that the Benefits and Planning Services be congratulated on the marked improvements to each service area

*5 **Better Communication of all the good things we do**

The Chairman asked Members to consider whether the Council was communicating good news and good practice effectively to the public. He commented that the Council needed to promote itself when good news or best practice was apparent.

Councillor Stuart Hughes, Portfolio Holder for Communications, gave a short presentation on the work of the Communications team outlining the major events of the past year and improvements made to the Council website. He explained that the Communications team could only publicise information of which they were made aware. It was every Member's responsibility to inform the team if they felt something was newsworthy.

Councillor Ann Liverton, Member Development Champion commented that the Council could always work on informing Members more using mediums such as the website and the Knowledge newsletter. It was important that Ward Members passed on information and that they themselves were kept informed of developments in their area.

*6 **Quarterly Monitoring of Service Plans – Fourth Quarter 2008/09**

Members were asked to highlight any service plans where they had concerns or required further information. Some Members asked that the plans were printed in colour in future. Although this idea was supported it was pointed out that printing costs were extremely high and that the Council was trying to reduce these costs.

*7 **Service Hierarchy Charts**

The Chairman asked for hierarchy charts for all the Council's services which would give Members the complete staffing structures. Members agreed they would find these useful for future meetings.

- RESOLVED:** that the production of hierarchy charts for all the Council's services be approved.

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

Members agreed that focus should be on priority areas within the remit, the aim being to work on a few issues to reach results, rather than look at many issues without reaching satisfactory conclusions. It was stressed that all Members could forward items for discussion to the Committee

Possible areas for discussion were suggested as:

- Communications – Telephone system and demands made – why do people telephone the Council – could the number be reduced?
- Remit of the Committee to be clarified/developed
- Neighbourhood assessment – eg: Dog fouling, Speeding, Street cleaning

Chairman Date.....