

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON THURSDAY 12 JUNE 2008**

Present: Councillor G. Pinkney (Chair)  
Councillors B. Bates, E. Bell, R. Davison,  
G. Johnson, B. Quinn and P. Stradling

Apology: Councillor Mrs G. Bleasdale

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 22 May 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REVIEW/BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN**

Consideration was given to the report of the Principle Corporate Development Officer which gave an overview of the Council's performance during 2007/8, reported on the progress of the Performance Improvement Teams, and sought agreement to the publication of the Council's annual Best Value Performance Plan. A copy of the report had been circulated to each Member.

M. Readman, Principal Corporate Development Officer advised that the report provided the end of year results for the BVPIs, local PIs and outcomes from within the Council's Transitional Plan, covering the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008, together with a high level summary of performance across these areas. In addition it also presented an appraisal of the Performance Improvement Teams set up to tackle the areas of under performance identified from the previous year's results.

In overall terms, the Council had achieved a high rate of improvement over the last four years which was demonstrated in the graph at section 5.3 in the report. A full BVPI performance table was attached at Appendix 1.

Each year the Council agreed a set of targets for each performance indicator which were used to determine the Council's local aspiration for improvement within that particular service area. Details of how the targets were set were described in the report.

In the last couple of years a more considered approach had been taken to target setting to ensure that the targets were both realistic and reflected the Council's desire to improve its services. The table in the report at 5.7 demonstrated that as a result of the work on improving the target setting process, the Council had done better at achieving the targets set.

In terms of quartile positioning, it was pleasing to note that from 2005/6, the number of indicators in top and middle quartile positions had significantly improved and the numbers in the bottom quartile had reduced, showing that the Council had driven up performance and was achieving service improvements at a significant rate.

During 2007/8 the Council had moved into the top quartile on the following indicators:-

## **Audit Committee – 12 June 2008**

BVPI 66c - tenants of Council owned homes in rent arrears with notices seeking possession served  
BVPI 79a - accuracy of benefits calculation  
BVPI 199c - percentage of land with unacceptable levels of fly posting  
BVPI 204 - percentage of appeals allowed against the Council's decision to refuse planning applications  
BVPI 213 - number of homelessness cases prevented  
BVPI 79b(ii) - housing benefits overpayments recovered  
BVPI 106 - percentage of new homes built on brownfield land  
BVPI 127b - robberies per 1,000 population

With regard to the eight areas of performance identified to receive particular attention during 2007/8 by way of Performance Improvement Teams, the report summarised the actions taken and the resulting outcomes for those BVPIs, as follows:-

BV82a and BV 82b – percentage of total tonnage of household waste arising, which had been recycled and sent for composting  
BV 84 - number of kgs of household waste collected per head  
BV 109 - planning application turnaround  
BV 156 - accessibility to public buildings for people with a disability  
BV 66b - Council housing tenants with more than seven weeks rent arrears  
BV 66c - Council housing tenants in rent arrears with notices of seeking possession  
BV 212 - average re-let times for Council owned homes  
BV 80g - overall satisfaction with the Benefits Service

Six of the eight poor performing indicators had improved, five had achieved, and most significantly exceeded the targets set for them. Four had moved from bottom quartile positions and one had moved from bottom to top quartile positioning.

M. Readman discussed the fourteen PIs in the bottom quartile in 2007/8, which compared to twenty-six last year. Those indicators were listed in the report with an explanation given for those with a decline in performance.

In terms of the Local Performance Indicators, the Council's set reflected the key areas of work for Easington, either where there were no applicable national BVPIs or where it was felt that local indicators would give more context to the national indicators. Of the 29 indicators within the data set, 18 had improved, 8 had declined in performance, 2 had stayed at last years level and there was 1 new indicator (wheeled bin arson). The full set was detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

M. Readman highlighted areas of success worth noting which included a reduction in secondary and deliberate fires, total crime, criminal damage, homelessness presentations and housing applications from those fleeing domestic violence. Whilst performance had improved in relation to indicator DSC 1 - percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days, this remained a concern and would be monitored over the next year.

Last year's Corporate Plan described the focus of work for the next three years for the Council. M. Readman highlighted to Members some of the key areas that had been delivered against the Corporate Plan which included the introduction of a Dog Control Order and a Side Waste Policy, a review of parks/open spaces operations, the introduction of pilot Neighbourhood Forums in the north of the

## **Audit Committee – 12 June 2008**

District, a significant reduction in litter and detritus, the integration of additional services into the Customer Services Centre, the implementation of a number of regeneration schemes and the provision of assistance to new business start ups and apprenticeships across the District.

Following the onset of the local government review, the Council had approved a Transitional Plan to accommodate the work of setting up the new Unitary Council, highlighting priorities and key areas of focus for the transitional year. A review of the Plan was currently taking place.

Progress on achieving the actions was monitored on a monthly basis by Management Team, and any action to address shortfalls in targets or delivery was subsequently managed through Corporate Support Team.

Delivery of key areas and the detailed operational activity needed to enable the Council to meet its targets, were described within Service Plans. Progress would be reported to scrutiny on a regular basis.

The information contained within the report was required for the Best Value Performance Plan which must be published by 30 June 2008, and Members were asked to agree that the report be used as the basis for the publication of this year's Plan.

A Member made reference to the figures for recycling and the impact the new Greencycle Scheme would have on performance. M. Readman advised that improved figures should be reflected in the first National Indicator quarterly progress report, as these new figures would incorporate both the Greencycle Scheme and the extension of the green waste scheme.

With regard to fly-tipping a Member suggested that collection time would be a more appropriate indicator of the Council's performance than percentage collected. The Member was advised that this indicator remained part of the new national indicator set but that the Council could develop local indicators to reflect how fly-tipping was dealt with and enforcement activity around this.

In response to a Members concerns regarding BV 156 - public buildings accessible to disabled people, M. Readman briefly outlined the position to date stating that with the exception of Dene Villas in Horden, DDA works to all the Aged Persons Units were completed. The Day Centres had not been completed as they required full condition/structural surveys which had highlighted a number of remedial works required before DDA compliance work could be carried out. Decisions were also needed around the long-term sustainability of some of these premises. However, she acknowledged Members concerns and it was suggested that the Asset and Property Manager be invited to the next meeting to discuss progress.

A Member referred to BV 86 cost of waste collection per household which had increased by 21%. M Readman explained that costs would increase year on year but acknowledged that the increase seemed high and would investigate the reasons for this.

Reference was also made to the Local Indicators and in particular the targets set for ENV 9, PERS 1 and ECR 8. Members felt that a narrative should accompany the information provided which should explain the reasons for the targets set. M. Readman assured Members that this information would be

## **Audit Committee – 12 June 2008**

available by the end of June 2008 when the BVPP was published and a narrative would be provided for each Local Indicator.

To conclude Members felt that this was a positive report and were pleased with the overall results which also demonstrated that specific attention to under performing areas did achieve improved performance. M Readman advised that the main focus for improvement over the next year would be in housing (decent homes standard) and in environmental services, particularly waste management and fly-tipping. BV 156 - public buildings accessible to disabled people would also continue to be a priority.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (a) the information given in relation to the performance against the BVPIs, local PIs and Corporate Plan, be noted;
- (b) the Best Value Performance Plan be published in accordance with the statutory deadline and guidance;
- (c) the Asset and Property Manager be invited to the next meeting to give an update on BV 156 – public buildings accessible to the disabled.

JE/CB/COM/AUDIT/080602  
17 June 2008