

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 27 MARCH 2006

Present: Councillor G Pinkney (Chair)
Councillors B Bates, E Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, A
Collinson, R Davison, H High, Mrs M Nugent, B Quinn
and P Stradling

Apology: Councillor D Myers

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 6 March 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
 - (i) **Quarterly Performance Report against Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's)**
(Minute numbered 4(iii) refers)

B Garside, Head of Democratic Services and Administration, and G Reed, Head of Planning and Building Control Services, were in attendance to discuss progress in relation to BVPI 179, Percentage of Standard Searches carried out in 10 working days. B Garside advised that the outturn for last year in relation to this BVPI was 99.8%. Historically the Council had always performed well on this BVPI. The last report for October to December quarter had fallen from 99% to 55% showing considerable slippage and he had attended a meeting of Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee on 23 January 2006 to explain why. The success of this BVPI depended upon information received from the Planning Department and capacity problems in that unit had prevented Democratic Services and Administration responding to solicitors within the target 10 days. As explained previously the main issue had been the introduction of the new paradox planning system. On 23 January onwards performance started to improve as the system was fully up and running and have hit 100% since. Therefore the problem had been resolved. Notwithstanding that the Performance Indicator for the fourth quarter would never recover and by the year end the target would be around 84% showing slippage.

In response to a Member's question in relation to dialogue between the two departments throughout, B Garside advised that there were internal local performance indicators which meant that Planning had to respond within four days. Therefore there had been dialogue as the Planning Unit had failed to meet this performance indicator.

G Reed advised that the problem encountered with the computer system was that it was difficult to establish why there had been a decline in the performance of the old system which was still used for Building Control. It was eventually established that it was a hardware problem and he accepted that it was an unacceptable length of time taken to resolve the matter.

A Member asked how this would affect our 'excellent' status in the forthcoming CPA framework. M Readman advised that as an 'excellent' authority, the Council would not be inspected but the Audit Commission would look at the BVPI's performance in areas where there was significant signs of weakening. She

considered that there would be no problems in relation to this particular indicator as it was back on track.

It was acknowledged that there had been personnel problems within the Planning Unit and a Member asked if any strategies were in place to consider such eventualities to ensure that it did not have a knock on effect on performance. G Reed advised that he had discussed this with Democratic Services and Administration Unit and were looking at seconding an officer to work in Planning for some of the week. G Reed advised he was also looking at generic working with staff in his own unit. In terms of whether there was a bank