

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Corporate Management Issues** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 25 February 2008** at **10.00 a.m.**

Present

Councillor K Henderson in the Chair

Members of the Sub-Committee:

Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Burlison, Davies, Holroyd, Mason, Pye, Stradling, Tennant and Wright.

Co-opted Memebrs:

Mr Bates and Mrs Brown

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bowman and Robinson and Mrs Richardson and Mrs Robinson.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2007 were confirmed by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (for copy see file of Minutes)

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that agenda items 2 and 3 were to be considered as one Item, because Item No. 3 contained the performance information contained in Item No. 2.

2. Quarter 3 2007/08 – Performance

3. Quarter 3 2007/08 – Joint Performance and Finance

The Sub-Committee noted a joint report of the Head of Corporate Policy and County Treasurer which provided an update on performance and financial matters at quarter 3 and alerted chief officers to areas of concern and good progress (for copy see file of Minutes)

The Chairman referred to paragraph 3 of Appendix 3 of Item No. 3 and asked about the underspend in pay increase provision. The County Treasurer replied that this was because the pay increase had not yet come to settlement. Under the same paragraph, the Chairman then asked about the underspend in energy costs. The Treasurer replied that although energy costs had been less than estimated, this was a very fluid cost.

Councillor Davies, referring to page 47 of Appendix 3, asked about the aged debtor analysis, which showed 23% of debts being over 1 year old. The Treasurer replied that in most areas there were good reasons for the age of the debt, and he was quite comfortable with the situation.

Councillor Wright asked how the performance figures related to stretch targets with other agencies. The Head of Corporate Policy replied that there was some concern about reaching some of the LAA stretch targets, and that although the Healthy School Award target was not being achieved as anticipated, it was expected to catch up. The Head of Corporate Policy agreed to produce a separate summary of the LAA targets for Members. Referring to the stretch targets, the Head of Corporate Policy informed Members that these were three-year targets to be met by the end of March 2009. If the targets were met, then this attracted increased funding, and if 60% of the target was achieved then some reward grant was made.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny recommended that as this would be the last meeting of the Corporate Management Scrutiny Sub-Committee, then it would be sensible to produce a summary on LAA targets to be circulated to Members. Councillor Wright added that it was important to keep stretch targets on the agenda for scrutiny Members to monitor.

The Chairman asked whether the targets in the report were compared with previous years. The Head of Corporate Policy replied that the targets set were based on the previous year to improve on performance. Performance of the previous year and performance at the same time of the previous year were both looked at for explanations of performance. Referring to the final column of the table on page two of the report which showed predictions for the year end, the Head of Corporate Policy informed Members that Services were pressed for explanations for their failure to reach targets.

The Chairman observed that some targets were constantly not met. The Head of Corporate Policy replied that some of these were national targets, and although performance did improve, they were marginally not met.

Councillor Brown asked whether any discussions were being held with the District Councils regarding sickness absence, which would be useful for LGR purposes. Councillor Armstrong replied that all HR managers of the County and Districts were meeting to discuss such matters, and the Head of Corporate Policy added that a performance audit with the District Councils had already started as a LGR workstream.