

Report to: **Resources Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **19th February 2008**
Report of: **Assistant Chief Executive**
Subject: **Corporate Development Unit quarterly performance report**
Ward: **All**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide information on the performance of the Corporate Development Unit for the period November 2007 to January 2008.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 Consultation has taken place with colleagues in the team and with the Executive Member for Improvement.

3.0 Background

3.1 This report shows progress against the team's work programme (Appendix A).

4.0 Summary

4.1 The last performance report of the team was in October 2007. Since that time, the Unit has continued to undertake and deliver on a number of key projects as part of the planned workload. Key achievements in the period November 2007 to January 2008 include:

4.2 Performance and Improvement

- The team has analysed the new National Indicator Set which replaces BVPIs from April 2008. In discussion with Management Team, a proposal is being developed for the implementation of the new indicators
- The team has coordinated the Council's input to two countywide Audit Commission inspections on Sickness Absence management (this is an informal piece of work to identify good practice) and Access to Services. For the latter the self assessment was submitted on 4th February and the team will coordinate activities for the site visits which will take place in March/April. Feedback on the results of these inspections will be made through the normal channels
- Quarterly Performance reporting has continued to Management Team, Executive and Audit Committee. The latest report, reflecting the results from the third quarter is in the process of going through the reporting processes, and shows a positive picture of improvement since the outturn results from 2006/7. The Council is currently on track to achieve a larger than ever number of BVPI's in top quartile at year end. Particularly notable are achievements in Planning, Benefits, Recycling and Street Cleanliness.
- Work has progressed well with the Performance Improvement Teams set up for 2007/8. The areas of Planning, Tenants in rent arrears, housing re-let times, Public Buildings and DDA compliance and Recycling have all shown improvement. Two of the indicators (Tenants in arrears with notices seeking possession and composting recycling) are now in top quartile position.
- Following the Best Value Review of Support Services, the agreed actions and review of services have been implemented
- The Value for Money review of Horticultural Services is now almost complete, with work focussing on costing analysis, benchmarking, soft market testing with East Durham Homes and a customer satisfaction survey, using APSE. The progress of the VFM team will continue to be reported through to the Scrutiny Committees.

4.3 Policy

- The team has coordinated the development of the Transitional Plan which sets out the Council's key priorities (based on the Corporate Plan) for the transitional year 2008/9 leading up to local government reorganisation.
- Work on the revised Community Strategy has continued to progress, with an initial draft document being completed.

4.4 Work at the subregional and regional level

- Local Government Reorganisation has begun to feature heavily in the work of the team. The Assistant Chief Executive is co-leading the countywide Areas and Participation workstream, and other team members are involved in the Customers and Access, Equality and Cohesion and Policy and Performance workstreams.
- The team has supported the Political Management Working Group in exploring the potential impact of LGR for this Council during the transitional year
- A continued lead role continues to be taken within the team in support of the Countywide Local Area Agreement project team. Work is now reaching completion on the next Local Area Agreement, which begins in April 2008. The Assistant Chief Executive continues to lead the Governance workstream, and the work in this quarter has focused on Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure and thematic partnership working. The team also supports the County Durham Partnership in terms of risk management.
- The Equality and Diversity Officer has worked with the North East Centre of Excellence on the harmonisation of tendering documents across the region, to ensure that they properly reflect Council's Equality and Diversity duties.
- Following the departure of the District Vision Coordinator and with the consideration of the issues around Local Government Review, discussions are taking place in relation to the continuation of the District Vision support programme.

4.5 Community engagement

- The review of our approach to Community Engagement is being implemented. Particular focus has been given to:
 - Developing the Community Advisory Panel. The Communications Manager and the Head of Customer Services are leading this work. During January, questionnaires were sent out to seek more members for the Panel with a view to reaching a total of 1,000
 - Involvement in Service Design continues, with work on Waste policy and Dog Control Orders influencing the policy papers which have come through the Council.
 - Work to pilot the new Neighbourhood Forums approach is being led by the Heads of Democratic Services and Neighbourhood Initiatives with input from the Community trust. Discussions have been held with Members and partners including Town and Parish Councils on how we take this forward.
 - Work with the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder on piloting "performance through residents' eyes" has progressed, local residents have worked on agreeing a set of priority indicators and these are being communicated on a regular basis. Further feedback will demonstrate how worthwhile this exercise has been.

4.6 Equality and Diversity

- Delivery of the programme of Equality Impact Needs Assessments training has now been completed and teams are undertaking the Assessments across a number of policy and delivery areas in both the Council and east Durham Homes
- Support continues to be provided to East Durham Homes with recent work focusing on a review of their training requirements, and the delivery of training.
- Support has been provided to the Polish Residents Group, and input given to the introduction of a 'Welcome to the District of Easington' pack to any person who is new to the District.
- A revised Equality and Diversity Monitoring form has been developed and piloted, and briefing of Members has been provided. This is to be rolled out for use throughout County Durham as part of the Customer Relationship Management system.

4.7 Organisational Development

- The team has analysed feedback from appraisals conducted in the Autumn and used this information alongside needs related to Local Government Reorganisation to begin shaping the corporate training programme for 2008/9.

4.8 Unplanned work and slippage

- LGR work, whilst anticipated, is engaging some of the team's capacity
- Additional support continues to be provided to East Durham Homes
- However there has been no unplanned slippage on the team's work programme during this quarter

5. Implications

Financial

5.1 There are no financial implications to this report

Legal

5.2 There are no legal implications to this report

Policy

5.3 Progress on several key areas of corporate policy is included in this report

Risk

5.4 A risk assessment has been carried out and action put in place to manage these risks.

Communication

5.5 There are no direct communication issues in relation to this report

Corporate implications

5.6 Corporate Plan and Priorities

The work of the Corporate Development Unit is directly related to the ability of the Council to fulfil its corporate priorities.

5.7 Equality and Diversity

The work programme of the Equalities and Diversity Officer within the Unit is aimed at enabling the Authority to achieve level 3 of the equality standard by 2009

5.8 E Government

There are no specific e government implications.

5.9 Procurement

There are no specific procurement issues.

5.10 Local Government Reorganisation

This report has no implications for Local Government Reorganisation but it outlines the contribution of the team to this process. The team is supporting the Council in developing its approaches to transition.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That Members note the content of the report, the progress made by the Unit and the work plans for the coming months

Background papers/documents referred to

Performance Washup Report June 2007

Corporate Plan report June 2007

Best Value Performance Plan 2007

Value for Money Report August 2007