

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Chamber,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday,
25 March 2008

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor A. Gray (Chairman) and

Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, D. Farry, T.F. Forrest, Mrs. J. Gray, T. Hogan,
Ms. I. Jackson and B.M. Ord

In Attendance: Councillors G.C. Gray, D.M. Hancock, J.G. Huntington, B. Lamb and
Mrs. E. Maddison

Apologies: Councillors D.R. Brown, V. Chapman and B. Haigh

SL.33/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received.

SL.34/07 MINUTES
The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th February, 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SL.35/07 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CRM) UPDATE
Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive regarding the above. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Jeremy Miller, Customer Services Manager, was present at the meeting to update Members on the progress of the rollout of the Customer Relationship Management System across the authority.

It was explained that as from 29th February 2008, 67 service requests were available on the system. The number would have been more, however, four service requests had been removed as drainage work following the housing partnership with Mears, was being dealt with through the Orchard system.

It was also noted that the CRM software had been upgraded during the Easter weekend and the new version had gone live that morning. Work was ongoing with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team and the system would go live on 1st April 2008.

Members were informed that work was progressing to fit a system to all refuse vehicles that would allow the raising or closing down of service requests in the vehicle.

Reference was made to the work currently being carried out regarding the integration of the Environmental Health System Flair and the use of the GIS system for reporting data in graphical format. It was anticipated that development work would, however, slow down over the next twelve months as work commenced on bringing together the systems/processes for the new unitary authority, however, no decision had yet been made on which systems would be used. It was, however, pointed out that residents of Sedgefield Borough should receive at least the same service as they were getting now.

Members expressed concern regarding the number of large items that they saw left in gardens awaiting collection. It was explained that if anybody requested a special collection, they were given a date and time for that collection and therefore large goods should not be left outside properties for any considerable length of time.

It was pointed out that the County Council CRM system allocated all customers a reference number and was suggested that the Sedgefield Borough Council should do the same.

J. Miller reported that the Council's system did generate a unique reference number for each customer and he would look at the possibility of instructing his staff to notify customers of those numbers.

With regard to the extension of the system to cover anti-social behaviour incidents, it was pointed out that a lot of residents did not report anti-social behaviour problems and therefore any reports produced by the CRM system would not accurately reflect the problems being experienced in many areas.

Members welcomed the improvements to be made to the Council's Refuse Collection Service, which they considered was already a very good service.

AGREED : That the progress on the roll out of the CRM system be noted and that the progress in meeting the Council's Customer Service Customer Service Modernisation Programme targets continues to be monitored.

SL.36/07

BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 11a - PROGRESS UPDATE

Helen Darby, Human Resources Manager (Strategy), attended the meeting to outline the progress being made in meeting the above Best Value Performance Indicator. A copy of her presentation had been previously circulated to the Committee. (For copy see file of Minutes).

The presentation covered the following:

- Performance Indicator (PI definition)

- Current Position
- Recruitment
- Current Practices
- Future Developments

Members noted that the number of women in senior posts had not changed during 2007/08, however, the percentage had appeared to decline from 11.48% at the end of the financial year 2006/07 to 5% at the beginning of March 2008 as the total number of Council employees had changed.

It was explained that the Council also had a very stable senior management structure and therefore staff turnover was very low. Since April 2007 only two posts above the 5% threshold (PO3) had become vacant. Both of which had been held by men. Only one of the posts had been filled following an internal advert, which had resulted in two applications, both from men.

It was noted that the Joint Recruitment Protocol adopted by all County Durham Councils governed the filling of senior high risk posts and the approval of the Joint Implementation Team may need to be sought in some cases.

Specific reference was made to the Council's commitment to training and development. It was noted that 55 managers (24 women) had recently undertaken Excellence Managers Programme, which had been provided at no cost to the Council.

It was pointed out that the Audit Commission no longer required Council's to calculate BVPI11a, however, the Council would continue to monitor the position and from April 2008 figures would be available on the top 10% of local authority staff, who were women.

Members asked how the Council compared with other local authorities. It was explained that the Council's performance level was similar to other District Councils, however, it was low when compared with unitary authorities as they had a higher percentage of traditionally female dominated sectors such as social work and education.

Members also queried whether young people were still being attracted to seek employment within the Council. It was explained that the Council operated a Modern Apprentice Scheme for Administration and Business. Six Modern Apprentices were appointed each year.

RECOMMENDED : *That the current performance level be noted and that best practices continued to be explored in relation to improving the Council's performance with regard to BVPI11a.*

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. (For copy see file of Minutes).

It was explained that the State of the Borough Review was to be undertaken, which would examine achievements within each of the Council's four corporate ambitions. The Review would provide a benchmark for future assessment, highlight areas for improvement and make recommendations to the new Council where appropriate.

It was proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees should establish Review Groups to examine each of the Council's ambitions. The Prosperous and Attractive Borough Overview and Scrutiny Committee would set up reviews relating to Prosperous Borough and Attractive Borough ambitions and the Healthy Borough with Strong Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would set up reviews relating to Healthy Borough and Strong Communities ambitions.

It was noted that Strategic Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee had responsibility for issues such as Corporate Governance and Resource Management, rather than direct responsibility for the scrutiny of the Council's ambitions. The Committee would, therefore, not be required to establish review groups to undertake the State of the Borough Review.

It was explained that to ensure that all scrutiny members have the opportunity to contribute to the reviews, it was proposed that the practice of co-option to review groups be extended to allow all members to contribute to a Review of their choice. A letter would be sent out shortly informing Members of the review groups and asking them to indicate in order of preference, which group they would like to a member of.

AGREED: That the work programme be noted.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. Gillian Garrigan Tel 01388 816166 ext 4240 email ggarrigan@sedgefield.gov.uk