

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

22nd June, 2007

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in Belle Vue Community, Sports and Youth Centre, Kendal Road, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Pam Hargreaves (Performance Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive
Liz Crookston, Principal Strategy and Research Officer
Ralph Harrison, Head of Public Protection
Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Officer (for part of meeting)
Rachel Clark, HR Advisor
Nicola Bailey, Director of Adult and Community Services (for part of meeting)
Pat Watson, Democratic Services Officer

6. Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2007/08 *(Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To report to the Portfolio Holder the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan containing the key objectives and actions for 2007/08.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report and appended Chief Executives Departmental Plan 2007/08 set out the key objectives and actions within an Action Plan that showed what was to be achieved by the department in the coming year. The Plan also described how the department would contribute to the Organisational Development objectives as identified in the 2007/08 Corporate Plan which would be published in June 2007.

The Plan included proposals from all four divisions within the Chief Executives Department, as well as procurement issues that fall within the remit of the Procurement and Property Services Division within the Neighbourhood Services Department. The plan had also been considered by the Finance

Portfolio Holder at the meeting on 15 May 2007.

The Portfolio Holder was advised that the Plan would be used as the basis for the quarterly monitoring reports.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the Council's A to Z of Council Services which was scheduled for completion in March 2008 and asked if this could be made available earlier. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that the completion date had been planned to fit in with Council Tax billing and inclusion of the A to Z in the distribution of bills.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2007/08 for distribution.

7. Extended Career Grade Scheme for Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers (EHOs and TSOs) *(Head of Public Protection and Chief Personnel Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To request the Portfolio Holder to review the extended Career Grade Scheme for Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers and verify its effectiveness in the recruitment and retention of EHOs and TSOs.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report detailed the history and reviewed the progress of the scheme that had been agreed by the then Performance Management Portfolio Holder in September 2005, and updated on the current position on the retention and recruitment of EHOs and TSOs within Public Protection. The Performance Management Portfolio Holder had considered a report on the matter on 27 November 2006 and had requested a further review be undertaken at the financial year-end.

The Head of Public Protection advised that the Council currently has four trainee posts on the establishment (two EHOs and two TSOs). These posts had been 50% part funded from external sources such as the ODP. However, this source of funding was no longer available to the Council and it was proposed to reduce the number of future trainee posts to two (one in each professional discipline), thereby maintaining the annual budget at current levels (£20k). Whilst the need to reduce the number of trainee posts was unfortunate, especially as this had previously been a rich source of qualified staff to the authority, nevertheless four student posts was an unusually large

commitment for a small authority. Due to the variances in time scales for officers to successfully achieve professional status, there would be periods when more than two students are on the Council's employment register. However, this would be managed to avoid any financial overspend.

The Portfolio Holder expressed some uncertainty about reducing the number of trainee posts to two. She understood the financial situation but felt, in the longer term it may be more beneficial to retain the existing arrangement. The Head of Public Protection advised that in addition to the resource implications the training also takes up staff time.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:

- (a) noted the position with regard to recruitment and retention of Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers;
- (b) agreed that a minimum of two (one in each professional discipline) and up to four trainee posts be approved subject to funding which the Head of Public Protection should actively pursue;
- (c) agreed that the scheme be reviewed after March 2008 and a report be prepared for the consideration of the Performance Portfolio Holder.

8. BVPI General Satisfaction Survey 2006 – Final Report *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To report to the Portfolio Holder on the final report of the Best Value Performance Indicator General Survey carried out in 2006.

Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder

The report to the Portfolio indicated that, in February 2007, the headline results of the BVPI General Survey had been reported to the then Performance Management Portfolio Holder with a recommendation that a more detailed report be made when full analysis of the data became available. The purpose of this report was to inform the Portfolio Holder of the results of a survey over 1004 Hartlepool residents which looked at residents' satisfaction with Council services. The survey provided information for a range of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and contributed to the ongoing assessment of the Council's performance.

The report indicated that in relation to BVPI surveys, every three years all local authorities are required, by central government, to carry out a range of satisfaction surveys with local residents and service users. These surveys collect data for monitoring the Council's performance through BVPIs and enable the authority to look at trends in satisfaction and attitudes to the local area. There are four surveys which must be carried out:

- General Survey – a postal survey of a random sample of residents. Carried out in October and November 2006.
- Planning application service users - a postal survey of applicants. Carried out in October and November 2006.
- Library Users - a self completion survey of people visiting libraries. Carried out in September 2006.
- Benefits claimants – a postal survey of two samples of claimants. Carried out in September/October 2006 and January/February 2007.

The report contained summary information from the General Survey, under the following headings:

- Background;
- Overall satisfaction with Council services;
- The local area;
- Environmental services;
- Public transport;
- Culture and recreation;
- Communicating with the Council;
- Local decision making;

A copy of the full survey report was attached in Appendix 1.

In conclusion the report indicated that the BVPI General Survey covered a wide and varied range of services and issues relating to the Council and how it operates. Looking across the full range, satisfaction levels with Council services were generally good. In some areas, such as culture and recreation, satisfaction had increased and others such as environmental services, satisfaction had dropped for some services and risen for others. The challenge would now be to use the survey information to help scrutinise the quality of services, continue service improvements and raise standards. In some cases, the survey may act to highlight an area for further investigation, for example, looking more closely at the reasons behind dissatisfaction with a service. The report had been circulated to all departments for their attention and use.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the report and appendix.

9. Corporate Complaints *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To report to the Portfolio Holder on corporate complaints performance.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report covered performance information on formal complaints for 2006/7 and contained details relating to the following:

- Formal complaints information – 2006-07;
- Meeting targets;
- Outcomes of complaints investigations;
- Remedies for complainants;
- Learning from complaints;
- Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Appendix 1 to the report provided departmental numbers and comparison of complaints information in 2006/06.

The Portfolio Holder had concerns that, in terms of comparing rates to previous years, they were up. She asked if the targets/results were ambitious enough and whether they had been compared with what other local authorities did. The Principal Strategy and Research Officer advised that it was difficult to tell as there were no national standards laid down for complaints performance. She agreed to enquire of neighbouring authorities to see if they had comparable data.

Decision

That the report be noted.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 28th June 2007