



MEETING OF THE HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2006 1.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Elizabeth Channell
Councillor Nick Craft (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Bryan Helyar

Councillor Fereshteh Hurst
Councillor Stan Pease
Councillor Mrs Margery Radley
Councillor Jeff Thompson (Chairman)

OFFICERS

Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Support Officer
Service Manager, Environmental Protection
Service Manager, Healthy Communities
Guildhall Arts Centre Manager
Performance Management Supervisor
Sustainable Waste Management Policy
Officer

2 members of the local press

32. MEMBERSHIP

The Panel were notified that Councillor Exton would be substituting for Councillor Brailsford for this meeting only.

33. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Fisher.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

35. GATEWAY REVIEW 1: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Service Manager, Environmental Protection explained that the former Environmental Health Services had been divided and only part of the service plan for 2006/07 was relevant to the new service. He gave a presentation which covered progress against relevant elements of the Environmental Health Services service plan:

- *Where the service needed to be:* Departmental changes needed consolidation;

there would be a change from paper to electronic document storage, licensing applicants would be offered access to services via the website, the out of hours service needed to be revised, the licensing of gambling premises would have to be undertaken as would statutory functions under a range of environmental and licensing legislation, contingency arrangements for staff cover and recruitment problems had to be arranged and the equalities policy needed to be implemented.

- *Service strengths:* A committed and enthusiastic staff, established systems and procedures, a flexible working approach, continually meeting all key targets and provision of a good quality service.
- *Service weaknesses:* High dependency on some key members of staff, a national shortage of qualified staff and staff members nearing retirement.
- *Service opportunities:* Shared working and partnerships, exploration of increased opportunities for flexible working arrangements and the inclusion of additional regulatory functions within the structure that was in place.
- *Threats to the service:* potential reorganisation of local government and regionalisation, loss of staff, capacity and skills of existing staff to cope with change, increased workloads following the introduction of the call centre, new legislation and maintenance of the 'out of hours' service should there be insufficient staff to man the rota.
- *Progress towards delivering service outcomes:* new working arrangements needed proper development and fine-tuning to build on achievements; progress made towards the operation of a paperless office; downloadable application forms and the new 101 non-emergency service could impact on the operation of the service.
- *Suitability for purpose:* The service tied in with many of the council's category A and category B priorities.
- *Income and expenditure compared with budget:* This was on target. Exceptions were the licensing of taxis, alcohol and local licensing initiatives. The budgeted income for taxi licensing was below target because of a change in the duration of licences. Additional finances had been used to repay taxi drivers' deposits. Subsistence payments for licensing were scheduled for November; there had been more take up for this service than was anticipated. Expenditure had been incurred during consultation on consent streets. Additional income was received for air pollution work conducted for Rutland County Council. Equipment related to the public health function was nearing the end of its life. The section had recently acquired a housing function which needed to be sufficiently staffed.
- *Performance indicators:* the target for enforcement and best practice would be achieved with the introduction of the corporate user survey.
- *Gershon:* Non-cashable savings had been achieved through the operation of the out of hours service, the customer service centre and remote working. The same staffing quota was dealing with an increased number of service requests. Cashable savings were achieved by the maintained loss of office space, some of the function relating to fly tipping had been returned to the service with no additional staff being employed, the loss of the head of service, the scale down of dog warden contracts and full disinvestment in pest control and dog warden ancillary services.
- *Potential requests for additional resources:* Retention of the out of hours service, IT hardware, the promotion of out of office working which could result in longer term savings and staff training.
- *Other achievements:* the service obtained Government money for Air Quality leaflets as part of a joint-working venture between South Kesteven, Lincoln City Council and Boston Borough Council; joint working with Assets and Facilities to

obtain contaminated land funding; maintenance of the contract with Rutland County Council and subsequent income; air quality information was made available on the website for all major population centres and the placement of licence details on the website.

Panel members asked the Service Manager, Environmental Protection questions on the 2006/07 service plan and the presentation he had given. Topics covered by questions included:

- Powers available to the District Council when pursuing complaints about companies. The council's Environment Team were able to make representations during the planning process. It was possible for the council to deal with some complaints, others needed to be referred to the Environment Agency. If the problem was deemed to be sufficiently serious, the council could seek to prosecute under the Environmental Protection Act; any case made under this legislation needed to be proven beyond reasonable doubt.
- Training was required so that staff were able to fulfil new functions. Contingency planning was necessary for service continuation and that statutory obligations were fulfilled in the absence of key staff members.
- The service addressed the category A priority of anti-social behaviour in conjunction with other services including housing, waste and contract services and the anti-social behaviour team.
- The annual cost of annual taxi licences was higher than the average annual cost of a three year licence.
- Required equipment would be included in the budget for 2007/08.
- The dog warden service had been scaled down because their only statutory function was the collection of stray dogs. Dog fouling was enforced by Street Scene Services under the Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.
- It was too early to identify any impact of disinvestment in pest control services because the national population of rats had increased; winter conditions also had a potential impact. There had been an increased number of calls to the service about rats.

CONCLUSION:

The amount of officer time spent on calls about rats should be recorded and brought to the Gateway 2 meeting on 21st November 2006.

36. GATEWAY REVIEW 1: HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The Service Manager, Healthy Communities circulated a summary of items relevant to the service for the period April to September 2006. Activities consisted of "commercial" parts of the former Environmental Health and Licensing section and sports and community development parts of the former Leisure and Cultural section. The service was on target for an underspend.

Actions that positively impacted on overall costs included the outsourcing of low to medium risk food inspections to a private contractor achieving reduced costs and a mixed economy; the net transfer of admin support to the call centre; business re-engineering to streamline processes; income generation through seminars; an unfilled staff vacancy; corporate restructure and redundancy of the former head of service and the non-appointment of Corporate Head for Healthy Environment.

Most functions of the Healthy Communities section were statutory. The service had been configured to reflect council priorities through measures including the development of an Engagement Strategy. Local Play Schemes which operated during the summer holidays minimised anti-social behaviour.

The period of the report saw an increase in the number of service requests and complaints received and actioned. A leisure directory was produced listing clubs; this was promoted to schools and via the web. Leaflets on funding bodies were produced and promoted and the Lincolnshire Youth Games co-ordinated with schools.

Gershon savings were achieved through additional projects which were carried out within the existing budget. These included the production and issue of a food news letter; safer food and better business workshops with follow up consultancy visits; health and safety seminars and the production of a self-audit document for businesses; the implementation of a web based register of food premises inspection details to satisfy the Freedom of Information Act; the creation and implementation of a Food Hygiene Star Award with associated marketing and publicity and the promotion of the Food Hygiene Star Awards via a sponsored web-based competition for school children and visits to several schools, for which a national award was received.

Copies of performance indicators relevant to leisure, sport and play were circulated with a summary of achievements carried forward from Environmental Health Services.

Questions were asked by members of the panel. The main issue highlighted was the turnout for the youth games. Participation had decreased overall, however participation from target wards (Earlesfield and Harrowby in Grantham) had increased to 12%.

37. GATEWAY REVIEW 1: STREET SCENE

A presentation was given on the Street Scene service plan by the Performance Management Supervisor. The plan targeted decreasing levels of litter and detritus, the detection and removal of fly-tipping, increased customer satisfaction, education and enforcement and the removal and de-pollution of abandoned vehicles.

The service was downgraded during the 2006 review of priorities from category A to category B. The service was on track to meet performance targets, particularly for litter, graffiti, customer satisfaction with the town centres and the issuing of fixed penalty notices.

Areas identified for future development were: increased enforcement and prosecution, increased education, maintenance of customer satisfaction, promotion of South Kesteven's street scene campaign, partnership initiatives related to businesses and utilities, the expansion of the community cleaner scheme and community clean hit squad initiatives. Steps to achieve continued service improvement included continual performance monitoring to target resources, partnership working, identification of weaker areas and solutions to them, work with park forums, Town Centre Management Partnerships and business clubs and targeting other funding sources.

Cashable Gershon savings had been achieved by bringing vehicle maintenance in-house. Non-cashable savings included exceeding street scene targets set by DEFRA.

A miscalculation of employee on-costs meant an overspend on the salary budget for 2005/06. All other spending matched the budget. There had been some coding anomalies because of new systems and the transfer of employees from an external contractor to an in-house workshop.

No increase in budget was anticipated for 2006/07. The budget for 2007/08 had not been determined but the salary budget was likely to increase to take account of restructuring, new services and new government legislation.

The Performance Management Supervisor addressed issues raised by panel members. The increase in litter fines was partly attributed to the name and shame campaign run in conjunction with local newspapers, however the enforcement rangers had made a significant impact as had the increase in the number of officers who were authorised to issue fixed penalty notices. Money collected through fines was ring-fenced within the budget for the service.

Nineteen villages in the district had opted to take up community cleaning staff. The service wanted to increase the number of opportunities to twenty-five. The overspend on the salaries budget affected both street scene and waste management services. The full extent of the overspend would become clear at Gateway 2.

Discussion ensued on the Council's policy to charge for the removal of bulky goods and the possible impact of this on fly-tipping and subsequent costs for its removal. Costing information was requested for the removal of bulky goods including fuel and staff hours compared to income from charges levied. Costing figures were also requested for the removal of fly tipping.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. *Costing information should be provided on the removal of bulky goods and income received for the Gateway 2 meeting on Tuesday 21st November 2006;*
2. *Costing information on the removal of fly-tipped rubbish, which should be provided for the Gateway 2 meeting on Tuesday 21st November 2006.*

38. GATEWAY REVIEW 1: WASTE COLLECTION

The Sustainable Waste Management Policy Officer gave a brief presentation on waste collection and recycling services. The most significant event in service for the 2006/07 year was the roll out of the twin bin scheme.

The recycling and composting target set by the government was 18% of waste collected, the target in South Kesteven was 33%. The level achieved was estimated at 30% to 33%. The service aimed to provide all households with alternate weekly collections of waste and recycling by July 2007. The amount of household waste produced decreased when the number of black bags issued per household was lowered.

Service strengths included the recycling rate per head of the population and the average cost per head for waste collection. There was a good working relationship between waste collection crews and office staff. There had been public support as many people wanted to recycle and be more environmentally aware.

Weaknesses included low levels of customer satisfaction. It was anticipated that customer satisfaction would increase when a full kerbside recycling service was available for all households. Resources were stretched because of the rural nature of the district.

Opportunities for development included the development of trade waste recycling collections, which would fill a gap in the market; the expansion of bulk waste collections for recyclables, increased education, green procurement and pursuit of external funding.

Threats identified were: the tender process for a materials recycling facility –there was no guarantee of location or cost; pressure from increased targets for recycling, reduction in landfill allowances and misunderstandings over microchips placed in wheeled bins.

Eleven collection rounds serviced 56,000 properties, however a twelfth round needed to be added to service new houses. Vehicles would be monitored to increase the resource effectiveness of working practices. Need for an additional round could be met through the reassignment of existing resources.

Despite an overspend on the salaries budget, actual spending was on target. Collection, disposal and recycling banks were on budget. Savings had been achieved by bringing vehicle maintenance in-house. Capital expenditure was under budget. The introduction of the twin bin scheme has led to a non-cashable Gershon saving: more properties received a full recycling service without any increase in resources, taking recycling figures above statutory targets.

It was estimated that targets were being achieved. It was suggested that it might be more appropriate for figures to be reported on a quarterly basis instead of monthly. Information was not received sufficiently early for monthly reporting, which meant that totals were based on estimates.

Waste Management Services aimed to gain Beacon status for waste and environmental services by 2010. This process would begin in 2008. The service sought to offer rewards for good recyclers. Local companies had been approached about supporting the scheme.

Discussion followed, based on points raised in the presentation. Any trade waste recycling scheme would be operated within existing resources. Wheeled bin procurement had been under budget because of the high cost of plastic when the tender process started. When the tender was commissioned, the cost of plastic had fallen.

39. GATEWAY REVIEW 1: CULTURAL SERVICES

The Guildhall Arts Centre Manager summarised the Cultural Services service plan. The plan for the former leisure and cultural services became redundant when the service split. Points included:

- *Establishment of a leisure trust:* There were no plans for a single banner trust for sport and the arts. The leisure trust option was one of several to be considered. The leisure trust for the arts had been deferred but would continue to be investigated.
- *Consolidation of cultural activities with social targets:* A large number of projects had been undertaken to promote diversity and cultural harmony through the arts development programme. Projects started in February 2006 and work was done with fourteen schools. There had been youth music projects directed at preventing anti-social behaviour. These were targeted at pre-school children and 13-19 year olds. Anti-social behaviour work had been undertaken in twenty-eight schools. The target for the number of young people

attending diversity events was 400. The total after six months was in excess of 300.

- *Implement TAES (towards an excellent service)*: This was sports based. Cultural services were looking to create a toolkit specifically for the arts.
- *Introduction of smart cards for leisure and arts centres*: No progress had been made. There had been an examination of initiatives that had been trialled elsewhere.
- *Equalities audit and risk assessments*: One Equalities Impact Assessment needed to be done on the Cultural Strategy. This needed to be rewritten to make it fit for purpose following the restructure.

User satisfaction for the Guildhall Arts Centre, Grantham was 90%. There were survey specific performance documents; these were not available. The service was on target to meet or exceed all performance indicators. Gershon savings still had to be identified. There was potential for an increase in partnership projects based on relationships developed through previous work. There was the potential for the service to work more closely with Economic Development.

Questions from the panel followed. Funding for the youth music enterprise to tackle anti-social behaviour came from Sound 52. Funding covered pre-school children and 13-19 year olds because other programmes targeted 5-13 year olds.

Members felt that the arts should not be a Category M service because of its integral role in addressing Category A priorities including anti-social behaviour and economic development. There was concern that funding for corporate priorities was boxed within specific services. It was considered that the use of resources would be more effective if priority-related funding was allocated in terms of broader themes.

Work on a leisure trust for the arts had ceased. It was suggested that the Panel should visit a council where a successful leisure trust was in operation.

CONCLUSION:

The DSP recommends to Cabinet that Cultural Services should be promoted from a Category M service.

Members were grateful to the officers who attended the meeting. There was concern that only two relevant service managers attended the meeting. Panel members also agreed that the budget setting process should have taken priority over the service manager away day. The proper officer for two of the service areas could not attend the meeting.

40. DATE AND TIME OF GATEWAY 2 AND GATEWAY 3

Gateway 2

Tuesday 21st November 2006 at 9:30am

Gateway 3

Tuesday 5th December 2006 at 10:00am

41. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 16:39.