



MEETING OF THE ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

FRIDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2006 12.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Craft
Councillor Exton
Councillor Mrs Gaffigan
Councillor Radley

Councillor Shorrock
Councillor M Taylor (Chairman)
Councillor Webster
Councillor Mrs Williams

OFFICERS

Scrutiny Officer
Strategic Director
Service Manager, Business Transformation
& Information Management (notes 131&132)
Service Manager, Democracy (note 133)
Elections Officer (note 133)
Service Manager, HR & Diversity (note 134)
Corporate Head of Finance & Resources
Customer Services Manager (note 126)
Electoral Services Assistant (note 124)
Scrutiny Support Officer

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Carpenter – portfolio holder

118. MEMBERSHIP

The panel was informed that Councillor Exton was replacing Councillor Conboy and Councillor Craft was replacing Councillor Nadarajah for this meeting only.

119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

120. ACTION NOTES

The notes of the meetings on 21st September 2006 and 18th October 2006 were noted.

121. FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

There was nothing to report.

122. UPDATES FROM LAST MEETING

There was nothing to report.

123. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Democratic Review

Councillor Shorrock reported on feedback from the Democratic Review Working Group. He apologised for not having been able to present the group's report at the panel's last meeting. He thanked the group, which had included a range of stakeholders within the community, for their work on the report. In reporting to the panel, he focussed on those recommendations that had not been accepted.

In relation to recommendation 5, the group had found that a number of national projects, mainly involving young people, had received strong positive feedback and therefore these should not be ignored by the council. Regarding recommendation 9, members going into schools would be accompanied by a teacher and therefore should only require the minimum level criminal record check.

Conclusion:

That the council members of the Democratic Review Working Group reform to report back to the Engagement DSP with further evidence and clarification in support of those recommendations not accepted by the panel.

Access and Modernisation

Notes from the working group meetings on 27th September and 25th October 2006 were presented to the panel. The portfolio holder responded to questions from the panel. There was one recommendation from the working group and this was considered by the panel.

Conclusion:

To request the portfolio holder ensures that a risk assessment be undertaken to assess the way forward with UPS.

124. LOCAL FORUMS: A TOWN COUNCIL FOR GRANTHAM

At the request of the Grantham Local Forum, the panel considered a report on a town council for Grantham. The Electoral Services Assistant responded to members' questions on this subject. He explained that the Grantham Charter Trustees were to consider provisions within the recently published white paper, as the power to create town and parish councils would be devolved to district councils. The panel discussed in detail differing opinions on whether the people of Grantham wanted, or would benefit from, a town council. There was a general consensus that greater public consultation was necessary and that a

platform for public debate should be facilitated by the council. Councillor Craft requested that his abstention from the first conclusion be recorded.

Another member suggested that the monitoring of recommendations from all local forums be recorded.

Conclusion:

To recommend to cabinet that it facilitates the provision of a public assembly held in a venue such as the local leisure or arts centre, to discuss formulating a working party to consider a town council for Grantham.

That the Engagement DSP adds to its work programme the consideration of the role and function of councillors in the 21st century.

The portfolio holder be recommended that progress with feedback from all local forums be recorded on the council's website and/or community portals.

125. TRAVEL CONCESSIONS

The Strategic Director presented report MA2 on behalf of the service manager for Performance Management and Engagement. The report outlined payments made to bus operators for bus pass use, number of new bus passes issued to customers by month, and issues of travel vouchers. The director reported that this issue had mainly been reviewed by the Resources DSP and had been dealt with confidentially because of the scrutiny of commercial information.

A minimum of £400,000 would be required to start cross-border travel for bus passes and this would increase substantially in response to a number of variables. Central government had announced that cross-border travel would be implemented as a statutory minimum service from 2008. No recommendations had come from within the council to make cross-border travel available before 2008.

Cross-border travel, the benefits and costs were discussed by the panel. The fundamental problems with public transport were also considered. The Corporate Head of Finance and Resources reminded members on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) adopted by council that had identified a review of the budget pressures on travel. Only limited resources were available to vary the current policy of travel concessions. Guidance on the new statutory arrangements would be available in the autumn of 2007 and early indications showed that local authorities would be required to pay one-off costs.

The portfolio holder reported on his unbiased position on the matter and his ideals for equity within the service.

Conclusion:

To keep travel concessions under review by monitoring the take-up and costs of bus passes and travel vouchers.

126. UPDATE REPORT - FRONTFACING TELEPHONY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

The Business Management Services Partnership Project Officer presented report CSV46, which provided an update on front-facing telephone extensions and other customer service standards.

This information was now available on the intranet and a new performance reporting structure would be in place soon. The Talk to Me protocol would be introduced to senior managers at a forthcoming training day and so improvements following this were anticipated.

Conclusion:

To note the report.

The agenda item for gateway review 2 of service plans was moved to the end of the agenda as it was likely that this would be considered with the press and public excluded.

127. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY STEERING GROUP

The notes from the meetings of the Equalities and Diversity Steering Group on 31st August 2006 and 6th October 2006 were noted. The remit and membership of the group was clarified.

128. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The best value performance indicators were noted.

The Business Transformation and Information Management Service Manager reported on the indicator SK22 relating to transactions provided at area offices, which was currently under performing. He explained that the delays in establishing the customer service centre in Grantham had affected progress at the area offices but this could now proceed.

129. WORK PROGRAMME

Noted with updates.

130. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There was nothing to report.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

DECISION:

That in accordance with section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items of business because of the likelihood that otherwise exempt information, as described in paragraphs 1-4 of schedule 12A of the act, would be disclosed to the public.

131. GATEWAY REVIEW 2: CUSTOMER SERVICES

The Business Transformation and Information Management Service Manager gave a presentation on behalf of the Customer Services Manager on each section of the 2007/08 service plan.

Section 1 – Setting the scene: the context and drivers of the service were outlined.

Section 2 – Where are we now?: key achievements for the service were identified and explanation given on how the service compared to other providers. Members were concerned about the low customer satisfaction feedback identified in the plan. The officer understood that these figures had been recorded prior to the opening of the customer service centre and he would therefore expect these figures to significantly improve.

Section 3 – Where do we need to be?: the completed SWOT and PESTLE analyses were scrutinised. The main goal of the service was to provide the first point of contact for customers and deal with at least 80% of enquiries at first point of contact.

Section 4 – How do we get there?: an action plan with several objectives for the service was included in the plan. The officer was asked about customer service points at area offices and the long term plan for these. There was currently no planned investment for additional council-branded customer access points other than at the area offices.

Section 5 – Gershon & Efficiency: savings had been identified in the plan, mainly achieved from back office staff transfer.

Section 6 – Financial Summary: a financial analysis sheet was circulated at the meeting, but the financial summary did require completion.

Section 7 – Risk: several areas of risk were identified in the plan.

Conclusions:

Having reviewed the 2007/08 service plan for Customer Services against the Gateway Review 2 checklist (plus an additional question: where can savings be made?), the Engagement DSP found that:

1. All budget figures for the current year and future years had been identified in the service plan, although costs for support services were likely to be changed following compilation of all plans.
2. All staffing resources had been identified and costed in the service plan.
3. All other relevant costs had been identified and included in the service plan.
4. There was clear quantification of how the service contributed towards the council priorities.
5. Any relevant inflationary increases had been absorbed but this needed to be revisited at the next gateway review.
6. The balanced score card was complete but evidence was lacking.
7. There were currently no income streams to identify.
8. Gershon efficiency savings had been identified and evidenced.
9. Risks had been identified and actions for mitigation applied.
10. Major deviations to the current budget had been identified in staffing costs.
11. No issues requiring equality costs, other than training, had been identified.
12. Section 4 of the service plan had been adequately completed and resources costs identified.
13. The SWOT analysis had been completed.
14. The PESTLE analysis had been completed.
15. The financial summary had not been completed, although the analysis sheet had been completed.
16. Major procurement proposals for the next three years had been identified.
17. There was insufficient evidence to show that service staff had been consulted on compilation of the service plan.
18. There were currently no capital projects identified for the next 3-5 years.
19. Opportunities for savings would be considered in light of stringent budget restrictions.

132. GATEWAY REVIEW 2: BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Business Transformation and Information Management Service Manager gave a presentation on each section of his 2007/08 service plan.

Section 1 – Setting the scene: the context and drivers of the service and how it related to the council's category A priority: Access were outlined.

Section 2 – Where are we now?: responses from customer satisfaction surveys, key achievements and service comparisons were summarised in the plan.

Section 3 – Where do we need to be?: the completed SWOT and PESTLE analyses were scrutinised. The main goal of the service was to provide support

to the organisation in business transformation and ICT infrastructure.

Section 4 – How do we get there?: an action plan with detailed objectives for the service was included. Matters of clarification were provided for the panel.

Section 5 – Gershon & Efficiency: savings had been identified and detailed in the plan, mainly from modernisation of services, customer services and utilisation of remote software. Areas for potential savings were outlined.

Section 6 – Financial Summary: an updated financial summary sheet was circulated.

Section 7 – Risk: several areas of risk were identified in the plan.

Conclusions:

Having reviewed the 2007/08 service plan for Business Transformation and Information Management against the Gateway Review 2 checklist (plus an additional question: where can savings be made?), the Engagement DSP found that:

- 1. All budget figures for the current year and future years had been identified in the service plan.**
- 2. All staffing resources had been identified and costed in the service plan.**
- 3. All other relevant costs had been identified and included in the service plan.**
- 4. There was clear quantification of how the service contributed towards the council priorities.**
- 5. Any relevant inflationary increases had been absorbed.**
- 6. The balanced score card was not complete.**
- 7. There were currently no income streams to identify, although shared services were being explored.**
- 8. Gershon efficiency savings had been identified and evidenced.**
- 9. Risks had been identified and actions for mitigation applied, although the risk relating to LSVT could now be removed.**
- 10. Major deviations to the current budget had been identified in staffing costs.**
- 11. Equality costs were not relevant.**
- 12. Section 4 of the service plan had been adequately completed and resources costs identified.**
- 13. The SWOT analysis had been completed.**
- 14. The PESTLE analysis had been completed.**
- 15. The financial summary had been completed.**
- 16. No major procurement proposals for the next three years had been identified. Work on the area offices had been identified in the council's capital programme and so may be required to be identified in the service plan.**
- 17. Service staff had been consulted on compilation of the service plan.**
- 18. There were currently no capital projects identified for the next 3-5**

years.

19. Opportunities for savings had been considered as part of the Gershon savings.

133. GATEWAY REVIEW 2: DEMOCRACY

The Democracy Service Manager and Electoral Services Manager gave a presentation on each section of the 2007/08 Democracy service plan.

Section 1 – Setting the scene: the context and drivers of the service were outlined together with a current staff structure chart. The key issues facing the service were the district and parish elections in May 2007, significant change brought about by the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and the local government white paper. Preparation for the election would start in January 2007 and would be undertaken by the whole team alongside regular committee support work. The Electoral Administration Act had required significantly more work to ensure a higher response rate, personal identifiers for postal voters and enhanced duties on the electoral registration officer during the register canvass. Voters could now register up to eleven days before an election, thereby increasing pressures on election staff to keep candidates up to date. A “golden threads” diagram showed how the service supported the vision and priorities of the council. A completed balanced scorecard was circulated at the meeting.

Section 2 – Where are we now?: key achievements for the service were identified in the plan and the officer outlined a benchmarking exercise, which had revealed that the service operated with less than average staff but serviced a high number of meetings.

Section 3 – Where do we need to be?: the completed SWOT and PESTLE analyses were included in the plan.

Section 4 – How do we get there?: an action plan with several objectives were included.

Section 5 – Gershon & Efficiency: savings were identified.

Section 6 – Financial Summary: the financial summary was included together with business cases for deviations.

Section 7 – Risk: risks were identified in the plan, mainly associated with reduced staff resources.

Conclusions:

Having reviewed the 2007/08 service plan for Customer Services against the Gateway Review 2 checklist (plus an additional question: where can savings be made?), the Engagement DSP found that:

1. All budget figures for the current year and future years had been

identified in the service plan.

- 2. All staffing resources had been identified and costed in the service plan.
- 3. All other relevant costs had been identified and included in the plan.
- 4. There was clear quantification of how the service contributed towards the council priorities.
- 5. Inflationary increases, other than increased staffing costs, had been absorbed.
- 6. The balanced score card was complete and evidenced.
- 7. There were currently no income streams to identify.
- 8. Gershon efficiency savings had been identified and evidenced.
- 9. Risks had been identified and actions for mitigation applied.
- 10. Major deviations to the current budget had been identified.
- 11. Equality costs had been identified in relation to elections and were incorporated into the existing service.
- 12. Section 4 of the service plan had been adequately completed and resources costs identified.
- 13. The SWOT analysis had been completed.
- 14. The PESTLE analysis had been completed.
- 15. The financial summary had been completed.
- 16. Major procurement proposals for the next three years had been identified.
- 17. Service staff had been consulted on compilation of the service plan during team meetings and preparation stages.
- 18. There were currently no capital projects identified for the next 3-5 years.
- 19. The only opportunity for savings would be to reduce support to non-essential meetings such as working groups.

134. **GATEWAY REVIEW 2: HUMAN RESOURCES & CORPORATE EMPLOYEE SERVICES**

The HR&OD Service Manager gave a presentation on each section of her 2007/08 service plan.

Section 1 – Setting the scene: the context and drivers of the service were outlined. The service had been reviewed by the whole team, which had found that external drivers were dominant and self awareness was high.

Section 2 – Where are we now?: methods of meeting customer expectations were outlined, and feedback had been identified as generally positive. Key achievements and comparisons to other authorities were also identified. Benchmarking had showed that the council's service came at a 40% lower cost per employee than the benchmarking club average, and yet service requirements were high.

Section 3 – Where do we need to be?: the completed SWOT and PESTLE analyses were included in the plan.

Section 4 – How do we get there?: an action plan with several objectives for the

service was included in the plan. This had been streamlined since the previous gateway review and related to core human resources services. In relation to equalities, the service had the highest number of critical policies to be assessed. Further work was required on consultation and achievement of the equalities level 3 standard.

Section 5 – Gershon & Efficiency: savings had been identified in the plan and related mainly to reduced sickness absences. Estimates had been made for efficiencies with online recruitment.

Section 6 – Financial Summary: the financial summary reflected a zero-based approach but was yet to be completed.

Section 7 – Risk: three areas of risk were identified in the plan.

Conclusions:

Having reviewed the 2007/08 service plan for Human Resources and Corporate Employee Services against the Gateway Review 2 checklist (plus an additional question: where can savings be made?), the Engagement DSP found that:

- 1. All budget figures for the current year and future years had been identified in the service plan, although not yet allocated.**
- 2. All staffing resources had been identified and costed in the service plan.**
- 3. All other relevant costs had been identified and included in the service plan.**
- 4. There was clear quantification of how the service contributed towards the council priorities.**
- 5. Any relevant inflationary increases had been absorbed but not yet evidenced.**
- 6. The balanced score card was complete and evidenced.**
- 7. There were currently no income streams to identify.**
- 8. Gershon efficiency savings had been identified and evidenced.**
- 9. Risks had been identified and actions for mitigation applied.**
- 10. Major deviations to the current budget had been identified.**
- 11. Equality costs had been identified.**
- 12. Section 4 of the service plan had been adequately completed and resources costs identified.**
- 13. The SWOT analysis had been completed.**
- 14. The PESTLE analysis had been completed.**
- 15. The financial summary had not been completed.**
- 16. No major procurement proposals for the next three years had been identified.**
- 17. Service staff had been consulted on compilation of the service plan.**
- 18. There were currently no capital projects identified for the next 3-5 years.**
- 19. Opportunities for savings should be achieved through online recruitment.**

135. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 4.45p.m.