

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

Meeting Held on 26th April, 2004

Membership:

Councillors: T.M. James (Chairman), Mrs. P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman), B.F. Ashton, W.L.S. Bowen, A.C.R. Chappell, J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J.Stone, J.P. Thomas, W.J.S. Thomas.

PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT UPDATE

1. The Committee has received the latest monitoring report on the position regarding the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets. The Committee has noted that many of the targets are on course to achieve a significant element of the Performance Reward Grant. It has re-emphasised the need for individual Scrutiny Committees to monitor in more detail performance against those targets falling within their terms of reference.
2. It has been noted that it is difficult to forecast the likely overall financial benefit to the Authority as the majority of the targets are only measurable in the last year. However, in discussing the overall benefit to the Council it has been recognised that in providing a focus for successful partnership working leading to real performance improvement the LPSA process has generated some significant gains for the Council.
3. The Committee has previously been advised of concerns services have had in progressing towards targets where either statutory targets or definitions for performance indicators have been changed by the Government and the negligible success in redefining some of the more problematic issues. It had requested that in any negotiations for a second LPSA, lessons learned from the negotiations for the first LPSA should be borne in mind.
4. The Committee has been informed of work underway with some partners including the Learning and Skills Council and the Primary Care Trust and the Government Office for the West Midlands exploring the possibility of formulating a different type of LPSA. This might consider only a few targets relating to some major themes or targets which have outcomes of a longer-term nature.

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

5. The Committee has noted the Council's revised Risk Management Strategy and arrangements for the development, promotion and monitoring of Risk Management within the Authority

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2003/04

6. The monitoring report based on spending as at 31st January, 2004 projected a net underspending for 2003/2004. The County Treasurer informed the Committee that the latest indications were that the position was better than had been estimated.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING

7. The Committee has noted the capital programme forecast and the expectation that no resources available to the Council on the condition that they are spent in the current year will be lost. It has, however, been advised that expenditure had been a little slower than considered desirable and that this would be reviewed.

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE INSPECTION ADVICE AND LIAISON SERVICE

8. The Committee has endorsed the recommendation of the Education Scrutiny Committee on the Stage 3 report of the Best Value Review of the Inspection, Advice and School Performance Service that the Service be retained within the Council but restructured and managed through a Local Partnership Board.
9. In doing so it has, however, also recommended that in considering his response to the Review and its recommendations and the formulation of an Improvement Plan the Cabinet Member (Education) consider how best to ensure that the Council's and the Executive's authority over the running of the Service and the Service's independence is maintained. It has also suggested that consideration be given to the Gershon efficiency review of Government Services.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING – CORPORATE HEALTH

10. The Committee has noted the Council's corporate performance in relation to the Best Value Indicators. Three of these indicators relate to processing housing benefits and show a need for improvement in the Revenues and Benefits Service. The Committee has received a further detailed report on the Service. It has noted the ongoing changes at national level to the way benefits must be administered, their impact on performance in the short term and action being taken to minimise the effects. It has also noted measures in place to deliver improved performance in the longer term.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE INDIVIDUAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

11. The work of the Committees is analysed below as far as practicable under the following five roles for overview and scrutiny: holding the executive to account, best value reviews, policy development and review, external scrutiny, and improvement (performance management and review), the first four of which are identified as key roles in report on "The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister". Issues considered by the Strategic Monitoring Committee not all of which are dealt with above because they arise from its role in fulfilling its remit to scrutinise the Policy and Finance Programme area, rather than being of Council-wide significance, are listed for completeness.

Summary By Programme Area

Education

12. The Education Scrutiny Committee met on 5th April 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Inspection Advice and School performance Service Stage 3 report
Policy Development and Review	School Transport – Interim report Pupil Admissions – Transfer of year 6 Pupils to High Schools
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Herefordshire Childcare Information Service School Opinion Survey – Quality of LEA Services Ofsted School Inspections Race Relations Act 200 – Monitoring of Incidents in Schools Monitoring of Capital and Revenue

	Expenditure Sure Start – 2 Year Plan Early Years Education – “Communication Matters”
Other	

13. The Environment Scrutiny Committee met on 2nd April, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	Implementation of Improvement Plans
Policy Development and Review	Car parking Strategy Polytunnels
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Capital Budget Monitoring Revenue Budget Monitoring Performance Indicators
Other	Work Programme

14. The Health Scrutiny Committee met on 6th and 29th April, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	
Policy Development and Review	
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	West Midlands Regional Overview and Scrutiny Survey
Other	Ear Nose and Throat Service Consultation Health And Social Care Involvement Strategy Event

15. The Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee met on 8th April, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Adoption and Fostering Services – update Physical Disability Services – Stage 1 Report
Policy Development and Review	
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Supporting People Programme Budget/Performance Monitoring
Other	Work Programme

16. The Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee met on 15th April, 2004 and considered the following issues:

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	
Best Value Reviews	

Policy Development and Review	
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Performance Indicators Revenue Budget
Other	Work Programme

17. The business conducted by the Strategic Monitoring Committee at its meeting on 26th April, 2004 is summarised below.

Theme	Reports
Holding the Executive to Account	-
Best Value Reviews	Inspection Advice and Performance Service Transport Revenues and Benefits Service Improvement Plan
Policy Development and Review	Property Management Risk Management Strategy
External Scrutiny	
Improvement (Performance Management and Review)	Capital Programme Monitoring Revenue Budget Monitoring Local Public Service Agreement Performance Monitoring – Corporate Health Housing Benefits Land Charges
Other	Work Programmes.

18. In discussing the work programmes it was suggested that there would be benefit to the Council as a whole in having a seminar on the Council's emergency planning arrangements in the Autumn once the new Emergency Planning Officer was in post and the Civil Contingencies Bill, currently under consideration by Parliament, enacted.

**T.M. JAMES
CHAIRMAN
STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Agenda Papers of the Meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 26th April, 2004.