

POLICY & REVIEW (PERFORMANCE) PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of Policy & Review (Performance) Panel held in the Civic Offices at 4.00pm on Wednesday 13 April 2005.

(NB: These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting)

Present

Councillors Tom Blair (Chair)
Malcolm Hey
Leo Madden
Hugh Mason

22. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Lee Mason, Councillor Simon Boshier and from Derek Good.

23. Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 2)

No interests were declared.

24. Minutes of the Last Meeting – 9 March 2005 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Review (Performance) Panel held on 9 March 2005 be confirmed as a correct record.

25. Corporate Parenting Review Update (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Strategy updating the Panel on the Corporate Parenting Review outlining progress made with implementing recommendations from the 2002 Scrutiny review of the Council's role as corporate parent (a copy of which is attached to the Minute Book as Appendix "A").

Miss Kathryn Smale, Strategy Adviser informed the Panel that progress is being made regarding the provision of a Report Card for 100% Looked After Children in Portsmouth and also in relation to the provision of Personal Education Plans.

The Panel also heard that although the three extra social workers approved by the Executive have not yet been recruited, the money to do so had been set aside and the current pressures on existing staff were being adequately covered. Owing to a change of training procedures locally, there were recruitment difficulties as there will be a one year gap

in newly qualified graduate social workers in 2006 caused by the completion of the old style training course and the introduction of the new training course.

RESOLVED that progress against recommendations since the last update report to the Panel in September 2004 (set out in Appendix 1 to the Report) be noted.

26. Selecting Indicators for Corporate Monitoring in 2005/6 (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Strategy which suggested a set of indicators for regular corporate monitoring in 2005/6 a copy of which is attached to the Minute Book as Appendix "B".

The Panel noted that there were 51 performance indicators and that the number had increased because new ones had been taken from National Indicator Sets and from the Second Generation Local Public Sector Agreement.

The Panel heard that the monitoring frequency has not yet been agreed for a number of indicators and that these will be updated when there is a clearer indication (as decided by the Directorates) of how often data can be provided on these measures.

In response to a question from a Member, Paddy Bradley, Head of School Standards and Effectiveness, explained that the five indicators under the heading Education and Lifelong Learning in Appendix 3 of the report were adequate as these were also checked against the national average and the top quartile of results in these areas. Concern was expressed by Members regarding the need to monitor employee numbers and salary levels and the need for benchmarking against other local authorities to take place.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The proposed list of indicators as set out in Appendix 3 of the attached report for monitoring through the Corporate Scorecard is endorsed and that this should go forward to the Executive for their approval.**
- 2. The Panel should continue to receive updates on indicators within the Corporate Scorecard on a quarterly basis.**
- 3. Proposed work on developing methods for tracking customer satisfaction and value for money as well as wider quality of life issues, be reported back to the**

Panel

4. **Strategic Directors be encouraged to report regularly on performance to Executive Members and opposition spokespersons.**

27. **Follow up to the Annual Audit & Inspection Letter 2004 (AI 6)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Valerie Lane, Head of Financial Services, introduced the report (a copy of which is attached to the Minute Book as Appendix "C") which had been considered by the Strategic Directors Board and the Executive and been approved by both. Ms Lane asked the Panel how they would like to monitor the actions proposed in the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.

In response to a question from a Member, the Panel heard that overcoming inconsistency in the way that business plans take account of the Community Strategy and corporate priorities and ensuring that objectives are cascaded to individuals, was a concern identified by the Audit Commission and relates to the third quarter of the last financial year. Ms Lane confirmed that this issue is being addressed by services in their current year's Business Plans.

RESOLVED that the progress made against addressing the actions proposed by the Audit Commission in the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter should be monitored by the Panel in six months time.

28. **Health & Safety Policy and Annual Report of Joint Health & Safety Forum (AI 7)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Panel were advised that the Health & Safety Policy and Annual Report of Joint Health & Safety Forum report was referred to this Panel by the General Purposes Committee at their meeting on 28th February 2005 (a copy of the report is attached in the Minute Book as Appendix "D"). The report outlines the overall health and safety performance of the Council between April 2003 and March 2004.

In response to a question, Ted Williams, Principal Safety Officer, explained that although the level of violent incidents(i.e. any incident where an employee is verbally or physically abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of or in the

course of his/her employment) appears to have increased dramatically, one reason for this may be that there has been a vigorous awareness campaign to encourage the reporting of violence in all forms.

In response to questions about the four targets in the Outcomes of the key actions for 2003/2004 which have not yet been achieved, the Panel heard that the following actions were being taken

- i) Target Date July 2005 - Action to develop Directorate Health and Safety Policies to be in line with the Corporate Policy in consultation with directorates. This is on target to be completed in July 2005.
- ii) Target Date August 2005 - Stress evaluations across departments utilising the HSE's Stress Management Standards. This is in progress and will be an ongoing assessment.
- iii) Target Date August 2005 - The development of generic risk assessments for schools. These are 60% complete.
- iv) Target Date March 2005 - The move to develop and post Health and Safety Documents on the Intranet. The target date of March 2005 has already slipped and there is no revised target date for completion.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

29. Pupil Achievement at Key Stage 3 (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Consideration was given to the report from Paddy Bradley Head of School Standards and Effectiveness , which outlines the trend in pupil achievement at age 14 since 2000, the strategies implemented to raise standards and the impact of this area of work on relevant Corporate Plan targets (a copy of which is attached to the Minute Book as Appendix "E")

Mr Bradley explained that there had been a general improvement in English and Mathematics but that Science results were worsening. The Panel heard that there is difficulty in recruiting subject advisers generally, but particularly in Science and ICT. These difficulties are exacerbated because the funding available means that the LEA are only able to offer temporary two year contracts and those recruited often tend to look for permanent positions elsewhere. In response to a question, Mr Bradley explained that funding for subject advisers is available up to 2007, but beyond that date the funding position is uncertain. These recruiting difficulties have in turn led to interruptions in the

education of pupils and the resulting lack of continuity has fed through into the results achieved.

The Panel heard that the teachers of science in secondary schools start at a certain level and sometimes this is lower than that which the pupil has already reached. However there is now improved access to all pupils' information and the focus is changing to plugging gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The Panel were advised that there was now greater accuracy in the teachers' forecasting of attainment levels and those actually achieved and that this was as a result of improved tracking processes. However the Panel also heard that there was still room for improvement in this area.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The anticipated improvement in results be noted**
- 2. The proposed revision to the corporate plan targets of 77% attaining level 5 or higher in English and Mathematics by 2008 be supported and**
- 3. Officers to update the Panel of progress once provisional national data is available for 2005**

30. Lifelong Learning - Best Value Review Progress Report

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Consideration was given to a report from Robin Johns, Head of Community Learning, which outlines the progress to date with the Best Value Review of Lifelong Learning (a copy of which is attached to the Minute Book as Appendix "F")

Mr Johns drew the Panel's attention to the following issues which have emerged during the review period to date as requiring more work:-

- Existing success criteria needs to be reviewed
- Data to enhance area-based research should be amplified
- Links with the University, Trade Unions and the Primary Care Trust need to be strengthened
- How to establish value for money comparators and examples of good practice need consideration and should be reported to the next meeting of the Steering Group

Mr Johns explained that short term funding has been a problem in tackling these issues.

The Government has now published directives which

demonstrate that these matters are being addressed. In addition, a Workforce Plan is due to be published by the City Council's Human Resources Department which will also address some of these issues. The Panel heard that there is an expectation that by July some evidence of progress made will be apparent. Work had been undertaken by the Review Working Group to ensure that the trades unions are adequately represented. Mr Johns confirmed that the review should be completed by the end of July.

RESOLVED that the conduct of the Review be endorsed

31. Date of Next Meeting

Members agreed that the next meeting of the Panel would be held at 4.00pm on Thursday 26 May.

Meeting closed at 5.05pm

Chair