

Report to Council by Executive Member for Corporate Services

I am pleased to report that the overall performance of the Resources directorate has been steadily improving since I last reported to Council. Almost all performance indicators have improved significantly and key projects have progressed well. My priority is therefore to consolidate this improvement and to ensure that we embed the improvements and concentrate those areas where the performance has not yet reached the required standard.

We reached the end of the last financial year within budget and in this financial year are within the budget at the first monitor report. I have highlighted below a number of significant achievements beyond the day to day work for which I thank officers for their dedicated work.

I am pleased to be able to report that sickness levels in Resources have fallen significantly. The outturn figure for 2005/06 was 9.46 days, well below the council's target maximum of 11.5 days. After 4 months of this year the figure is 2.27 days and if this trend continues, the outturn figure could be under 7 days.

Executive recently approved the new Capital Strategy for the years 2006 to 2011. The Capital Strategy is closely linked to the approach to Asset Management Planning. It requires each service area to be clear about its own direction and the Resources it needs, including property, to support its services now and into the future. At the same time the CRAM process has been updated to ensure that it properly guides the allocation of funding in line with corporate aims and objectives.

Revenue collection (in year) is still slightly below target although it has improved from last year. It is one of the areas where service improvement is required, as we are not yet in the Unitary upper quartile. A debt collection manager has recently been appointed and the results are very promising. I am pleased to report that he approaches this task with the tact and diplomacy required in what can sometimes be difficult personal circumstances for the individuals involved.

The times for processing of Housing and Council Tax Benefits continue to fall. The outturn figure for BVPI 78a (processing new claims) has fallen significantly over the lifetime of this administration. The past figures were:

2003/04 – 86 days, 2004/05 – 73.23 days, 2005/06 – 40.22 days.

The downward trend is continuing and at 31st July 2006 the figure of 36 days had been reached. The target for this year is 34 days which I believe should be bettered as we hit 31 days for the month of August.

Corporate risk management goes from strength to strength. The new software tool to support this work is being used in earnest. We have seen a significant reduction in insurance premiums when the contract was relet this year, despite the fact that premiums in general are forever rising. Much of that was down to managing risk better and hence making fewer claims. Risk management techniques have been particularly successful in the easy @ york project where the risks are being fully identified and understood with mitigation measures being put in place to ensure success.

Work has been ongoing to achieve full DDA compliance in Council Buildings. There are 58 properties involved and at 2002/03 outturn we were only 13% compliant. I can report that we have performed very well and at 2005/6 outturn were 72% compliant which has put us in the upper quartile for local authorities. Much of the remaining work will be completed in this year with some carrying over to the next year.

The Administration Accommodation project continues to progress well. The land assembly work is complete and the sale and lease back arrangements of major buildings such as St. Leonard's Place and 2-4 Museum Street is progressing well. Work continues less visibly in all other areas of the project. The documentation is being prepared seeking bids from architects and other design teams for appointment to undertake the work of designing the council's new home. Appointments are expected to be made early in the new year.

The Easy @ York project is progressing well. The York Contact Centre was established in late June 2006 by bringing the York Pride Action Line and the Switchboard into a single office in Back Swinegate. The response times have improved significantly and the Service Level Agreement targets are being achieved consistently. At the moment the two services still function separately but that will change later this year. It will then be possible to add other services to the contact centre. Announcements about the new services and the commencement dates will be made much nearer to the to the commissioning dates.

We enter the autumn period with very significant pressure on some of the staff. In addition to the annual task of setting and agreeing the budget, which is well in hand, we face the significant workload of supporting the programme for the implementation of equal pay and job evaluation across the council, which has to be achieved by the financial year end.

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