
MEETING	EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND ADVISORY PANEL
DATE	21 OCTOBER 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS HEALEY (CHAIR), MOORE (EXECUTIVE MEMBER), PIERCE (VICE-CHAIR), GUNNELL AND MORLEY (SUB FOR CLLR FIRTH)
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR FIRTH

20. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed Cllr Moore to the meeting as the newly appointed Executive Member for Corporate Services.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

22. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2008 be approved and signed by the Chair and Executive Member as a correct record.

23. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

24. FORWARD PLAN UPDATE

Members received an update on the Resources Directorate items currently listed on the Forward Plan.

Members referred to the IT Strategy 2007-2012 and the IT Development Plan 2009/10, listed as items 1 and 2, and requested copies of these reports to enable them to feed in their comments.¹

Action Required

1. Copy of IT reports to be emailed to EMAP members.

SA

25. CORPORATE CUSTOMER STRATEGY

Members considered a report which presented the draft Corporate Customer Strategy, setting out a proposed 'vision' for the future delivery of efficient, customer focused services.

The draft Strategy was attached as Annex A to the report, together with a revised Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy. The Strategy was intended to revise and replace the former Customer Access Strategy, reflecting the development of the customer service agenda within local government and building upon the work of the [easy@york](#) project. The revised Policy would replace the current Complaints Policy, which was outdated and did not reflect the importance of using customer feedback to help shape future service delivery. Both documents had already been considered by the Executive at their meeting on 7 October and approved as the basis for further consultation prior to consideration of a final version in December 2008.

Members' views were invited on the draft Strategy and the consultation plan outlined in paragraph 17 of the report.

Members questioned and commented on the following points:

- Page 22 under heading 'Designed for you' to read "We will engage with **our** customers"
- Requested confirmation that there would be feedback to consultees post consultation;
- Questioned necessity and use of information collected on the Equalities and Diversity form;
- Explanation requested of Customer Insight No. 1. Customer Identification, Annex 5, page 75 of 'We have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of our current and potential customer groups based on recent and reliable information';
- The inclusion of a question 'Was the complaint dealt with to your satisfaction?' in the Monitoring the Customer Feedback Procedure in Appendix 2 of the report, page 57;
- Questioned any risk to the Strategies success with the Council HQ delays?

One Member expressed concern at the language used in the Strategy and stated that he felt by reshaping the vision that this could lead to a deterioration and an impersonal customer service. He also suggested that a shortened version of the Strategy would be more appropriate for consultation.

Officers confirmed that the aim of the Strategy was to identify areas of excellence and to improve on them and that this also involved taking account of any feedback received.

Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member be advised to note the above points on the Draft Customer Strategy and the outline consultation plan.¹

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To ensure that Members views are taken into account when shaping the Corporate Customer Strategy.

Action Required

1. Members feedback on the Strategy to be noted. SA

26. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES, SUNDRY DEBTORS, COUNCIL TAX & OVERPAID HOUSING BENEFIT AND CAR PARK CHARGES - ACCOUNTS SUBMITTED FOR WRITE-OFF

Members considered a report which provided details of irrecoverable accounts under £2,000 that had been written off under delegated authority in the current financial year, up to September 2008.

A total of £357,866 had been written off to date, comprising:

- £41,748 under national non-domestic rates
- £17,178 under sundry debtors
- £249,158 under council tax
- £49,782 under overpaid housing benefit.

Details were set out in paragraph 4 of the report. It was noted that the values for write-off fell well within the provision made for bad debt in the Council's accounts.

Officers stated that the following amendments were required to the report:

- Page 81, in the table, the fifth heading amend from 'Total in 07/08' to 'Total in **08/09**'.
- Paragraph 18, page 83, the reference to para. 30 amend to read para.16.

Members questioned the staffing levels and resource costs involved in following up these debts.

Following further discussion

Advice of the Advisory Panel

- (i) That the Executive Member be advised to note the amount of £357,866 of accounts valued at less than £2,000 written off in the 2008/09 financial year under the Head of Finance's delegated authority;
- (ii) That Officers be thanked for their successful and effective work in keeping arrears at a low level.

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: For information, and to enable the Executive Member to monitor action taken under delegated powers.

27. UPDATE ON GERSHON EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

Members considered a report which provided an update on progress made against the Gershon efficiency targets, in light of the final 2007/08 out-turn, and outlined the steps being taken to ensure that the Council achieved the harder targets.

The Gershon efficiency agenda was a three-year national programme aimed at delivering a cumulative saving of £6.45 billion within local government by the end of 2007/08. The final out-turn position was set out in paragraph 11 of the report. This showed that the 3 year target of £8.8m had been achieved, plus additional efficiencies of £2.136m.

The Council was now working towards a more formalised and structured way of managing the efficiency agenda. Action to date included the establishment of an invest to save fund to pump prime efficiency projects and the planned appointment of a private sector partner to bring in additional capacity and skills to drive through efficiency savings. Positive steps were being taken to review operations to ensure they were performing as efficiently as possible, and the Council would continue to strive to meet the harder efficiency targets.

In answer to Members questions regarding the additional efficiencies found, Officers confirmed that, in reality, most Authorities had achieved greater efficiencies in order to balance their budgets but that they this sum would be carried forward towards the City of York's 2008/09 efficiency target of £4.2m.

Members also referred to the procurement process currently underway to appoint a private sector partner to work with the Council to bring in additional capacity and skills to drive through the efficiency savings. They questioned how the partner would be used, fee levels and the risks involved. Members requested feedback on the procurement process to a future EMAP meeting.¹

Advice of the Advisory Panel

- (i) That the Executive Member be advised to note the progress against the Gershon efficiency targets and the steps being taken to ensure that the Council achieves the harder targets;
- (ii) That all staff be thanked for their efforts in achieving the efficiency savings made throughout the Authority.

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To update the Executive Member on progress against the Gershon efficiency targets

Action Required

1. Report on the procurement process to be prepared for a future EMAP meeting. SA

CLLR P HEALEY, Chair

CLLR R MOORE, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.40 pm].