



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

15 February 2012

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Bent, Darling (Vice-Chair), Kingscote, Parrott, Pentney, Pountney, Hill and Hytche

(Also in attendance: Councillors Davies and Cowell)

559 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from one of the Board's co-opted members, Penny Burnside.

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended for this meeting to include Councillor Hytche instead of Councillor Barnby. It was also noted that the membership had been amended permanently to include Councillor Hill instead of Councillor Butt.

560 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Board held on 13, 17, 20 and 25 January 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

561 Citizens Advice Bureau - Challenges Facing Torbay Residents

The District Manager of Torbay Citizens Advice Bureau (John Cooper) attended the meeting to present his report "Challenges Facing Torbay Residents". The Board heard that Torbay Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) had seen a significant increase in demand over the past couple of years. CAB felt that this increased demand was undoubtedly the result of the ongoing financial crisis which had had a significant impact on households.

The report highlighted in more detail some of the key issues facing Torbay residents from information extracted from CAB records, the experience of its caseworkers and highlighted how access to advice services can help people overcome some of the issues they are facing.

The Board asked a number of questions in relation to information sharing with The Executive, resourcing of CAB and complaints about landlords.

The Board thanked John Cooper and his colleagues at CAB for the good work they all do.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Poverty Strategy should be added to the Forward Plan.
- (ii) That feedback from monitoring of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Service Level Agreement be used to shape Council Services.
- (iii) That evidence of how the Authority is shaping provision for under 35's benefit changes by ward be added to the next Overview and Scrutiny Board agenda.
- (iv) That the Citizens Advice Bureau report is brought to the Mayor's attention.

562 Performance Overview and Monitoring 2011/12 - Quarter 3

The Board considered reports setting out the performance of the Council for the third quarter of 2010/2011 and the current position of the Revenue Budget and the Capital Plan Budget.

The Board asked the Executive Lead for Children, Schools and Families about those areas in the Performance Overview and Monitoring Report which were highlighted as "Well Below Target". There were concerns from some members of the Board that performance was still not improving.

The Executive Lead informed them that there were more areas showing as either "Well Above Target", "Above Target" or "On Target" that there were "Well Below Target" but that there was a recovery plan in place for the future.

The Board highlighted that performance in relation to vulnerable children had deteriorated this year. The Executive Lead informed the Board that there are a record number of Looked After Children in Torbay. It would take time for the improvements within the Recovery Plan to take place but that performance was monitored at the Improvement Board with monthly reports also being made to the Minister. The Board also heard that new social workers had been recruited and they were performing well.

The Board questioned which areas identified as below target were prioritised for immediate improvement. It was noted that every area would receive attention and that the service was doing its best to improve.

In relation to the Human Resources section of the Performance Report, the Board requested more information on the benchmarking of staff sickness and questioned why staffing numbers have decreased in some areas but that costs had increased.

The Board went on to question the reasons for the overspend of £70,000 at Parkfield. The Executive Lead for Children, Schools and Families explained that additional costs were accrued due to the moving of the BMX track because of badgers making their home in the planned area.

It was suggested by a Member of the Board that more information should be sent out to homes regarding the new recycling scheme and that this could possibly be done by sending leaflets with Council Tax bills. The Board was informed that this would be costly, that the Council had already sent out 80,000 leaflets and that residents could get more information from Community Partnerships.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommend:

- (i) That there be improved management of the Capital Programme.
- (ii) That Capital Slippage be brought to the Mayors attention for improvement.
- (iii) That information be provided on how the overspend on the Parkfield project is being financed from funds originally allocated to Ellacombe and further request this information is provided to the Board.

Chairman