

Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions)



Councillor Pauleen Grahame
Chair of Scrutiny Board
(Central & Corporate
Functions)

Membership of the Board:

Councillor Pauleen Grahame (Chair)
Councillor John Bale
Councillor Sue Bentley
Councillor Ben Chastney
Councillor Penny Ewens
Councillor Martin Hamilton
Councillor Arif Hussain
Councillor Valerie Kendall
Councillor James Lewis
Councillor Alison Lowe
Councillor Andrea McKenna
Councillor Andy Parnham
Councillor David Schofield

The Chair's summary

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members of the Board for their support and hard work throughout the year. I would also like to thank our many witnesses.

I am pleased that this year we have been meeting with the Executive Board Member for Central and Corporate functions on a quarterly basis. This has coincided with our monitoring of the budget and performance management.

Members of the Board believe it important to consider financial information and performance data together and for the relevant Executive Member to be able to explain the Council's overall performance. I hope it's a pattern which will continue in 2010/11.

We have covered a wide range of topics this year. Our report on the use of consultants is detailed later in this report. Our working group looking at employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people has resulted in a commitment to provide better corporate co-ordination of activities.

As a forum for enabling the voice and concerns of the public to be heard, we were pleased to allow those opposed to BBQs on Woodhouse Moor to question the Council on the use of Bye-laws. In our monitoring role we have been tracking the recommendations of a number of previously made recommendations, particularly

those relating to Interpretation and Translation Services. We have also been championing the use of plain English.

Next year is likely to be very challenging in terms of service provision and reducing budgets. The Board has recommended therefore that we spend a proportion of our time in the new municipal year scrutinising the Council's wider business transformation proposals.

Cllr Pauleen Grahame, Chair of Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions)

Inquiry on the Use of Consultants.

Summary

The purpose of the Inquiry was to consider whether the Council had a clear definition of what a consultant was and the service provided. It was also to assess how consultants were used; the methods of monitoring and evaluating their use and to establish whether there were differences in practice between directorates.

Anticipated service benefits

We are of the view that the implementation of our recommendations will provide a framework within which best practice in the procurement of consultants can be shared across Council directorates.

Picture to be inserted

“Local Authorities collectively spend £1.8bn on external consultants. Saving just 1% on this could release £18m to invest in other services.”

Making savings through better procurement in professional services. (Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships, LGS and I&DeA – Members’ Guide)

Our main recommendations

That the Director of Resources and Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) develops a standard definition of what consultants are and what work they undertake. This definition should be adopted by all departments.

That the Director of Resources issues guidance to all departments on the correct expenditure code (s) to use for Consultants

That Directors/Assistant Chief Executives review expenditure on consultants within their Directorates to assess the extent to which they are used.

That the Director of Resources and Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) incorporates within Contract Procedure Rules/Guidance clear guidance regarding the use and appointment of consultants

Other work of the Board

Budget and Information Management Monitoring

On a quarterly basis the Executive Board Member (Central and Corporate) attended the Board to detail the Council's overall performance. This also provided Members with opportunity to quiz the Executive Board Member on other areas falling within his portfolio.

Woodhouse Moor Bye-laws

In October 2009 residents opposed to BBQs on Woodhouse Moor came to the Board alleging that park byelaws were not being implemented and that this was having a detrimental affect on the park.

Whilst not upholding the resident's view that Bye-laws were not being enforced, the session had afforded residents the opportunity to raise their concerns with Members. The Board received an assurance from the Executive Board Member r that the bylaws would be rigorously enforced, particularly during the period of the trail BBQ area.

The Board agreed to revisit this issue in the summer 2010

14-18 –Employment Opportunities

A Working Group was established to look at the initiatives undertaken by the Council to offer employment and apprenticeships to young people. This work has resulted in the commitment to provide better corporate co-ordination of activities.

Procurement and Scrutiny

The Board is leading on working with the Chief Procurement Officer on ensuring Council Departments are more aware of local considerations and Member interest areas when commissioning services.

Budget Strategy 2010/11.

The Board recognised that due to the financial difficulties which had developed in the world economy since 2008, the medium term financial plan had been overtaken by events and was effectively outdated. A fundamental review of likely income and Council priorities was now necessary against a backdrop of imminent severe restraints on public spending levels in the foreseeable future. The Board stated that budget making should be within a strong, policy-led rather than finance-led, corporate planning framework, which draws on other processes within the council, i.e. strategic planning and performance management arrangements.

It was the Board's view that it can be most effective if it can challenge some established assumptions. For example that budgets should automatically be rolled forward without the need for greater challenge to the base budget.

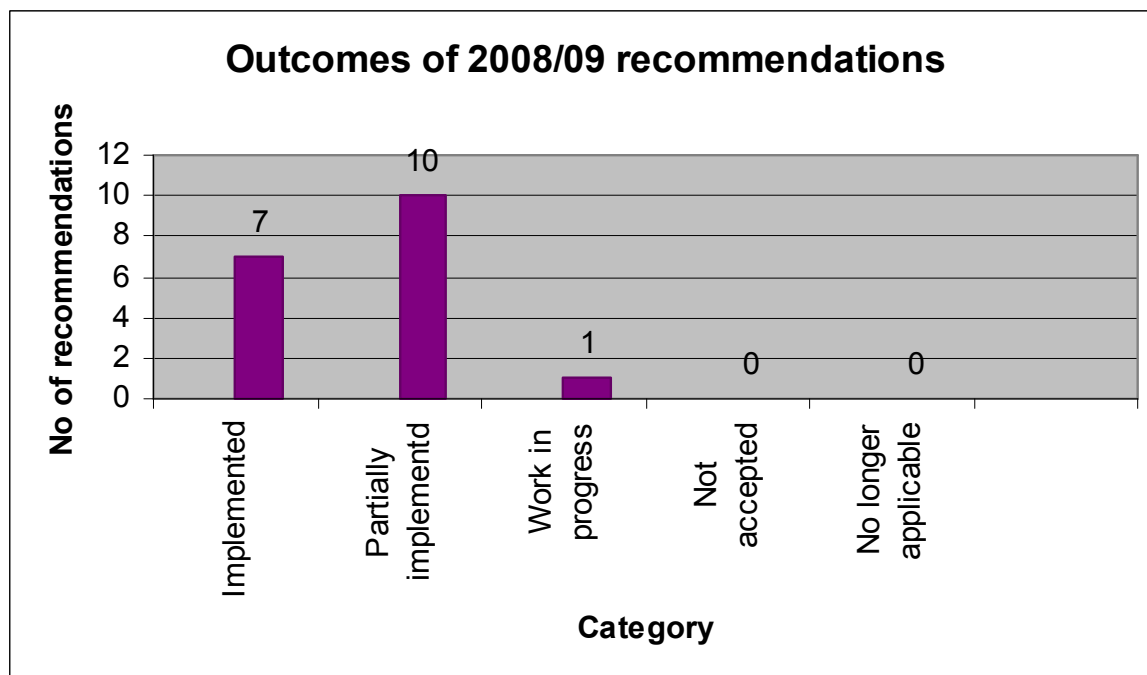
The Board noted that the council is undertaking efficiency savings to help to balance the budget. The Board will consider undertaking further work on this and the Council's wider business transformation proposals in the new municipal year

Outcome of recommendations made in 2008/09

The Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate) carried out three major inquiries in 2008/09, which resulted in 18 recommendations. This section highlights some key examples of where these recommendations have resulted in service benefits, or otherwise added value.

As part of our inquiry into Attendance Management we recommended that the Council continues with its pro-active approach to health and well-being under the Happy, Healthy and Here Programme. In particular, we requested careful evaluation of pilots such as Vielife and rehabilitation and return to work, to see if there is merit in rolling them out across the Council. This has resulted in a more cohesive wellbeing strategy for the organisation and the Council received a national award for its work on wellbeing and attendance from the Public Sector People Managers Association (PPMA) in April 2009.

As part of our Inquiry into Procurement we identified the need for contract management to be incorporated in the pre-contract phase of all projects and that complex or high risk services also include the development of a Contract Management Plan. On the back of this, and other recommendations, further research identified that many of the issues identified by the Scrutiny Board were common to many of the region's public sector organisations. Consequently this the Boards recommendations are being progressed in tandem with the RIEP 'Smarter Procurement' work programme.



The Board's full work programme 2009/10

Requests for scrutiny

- **Woodhouse Moor – Park Byelaws**

Review of existing policy

- **Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Licensing Policy - Consultation**
- **Inquiry into the Use of Consultants**
- **Interpretation and Translation Services**
- **Communications, Report writing and Plan English**
- **Review of Treasury management post Icelandic reports**
- **Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy**
- **14 – 18 Working Group – employment opportunities**
- **Budget Strategy**
- **Progress against Improvement Priorities relating to community engagement and involvement**

Development of new policy

- **Procurement and Scrutiny**

Monitoring scrutiny recommendations

- **Attendance management**
- **Member Development**
- **Procurement**

Performance management

- **Financial Performance Outturn 2008/09**
- **Council Business Plan Performance report – Quarter 4 2008/09**
- **Quarter 1 Performance Report**
- **Financial Health Monitoring – First Quarter Report**
- **Questions to the Executive – Financial Health Monitoring and Performance Information.**

Briefings

- **Input into Work Programme 2009/10 – sources of work and establishing the Boards priorities – meeting with Cllr Brett**
- **Changes to the Council's Constitution**
- **Executive Board Response to Final Scrutiny Board Reports**
- **KPMG – Scrutiny Review**

Call Ins

None undertaken