

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny
Date:	12 February 2008
Subject:	References from Performance and Finance Committee
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Ed Hammond, Scrutiny Unit
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Osborn, Strategy and Business Support
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out issues arising from the last two quarterly meetings of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to:

- 1) Note the report.
- 2) Make recommendations as appropriate on any items which might require further consideration, as identified in the main body of the report.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Brief background

Under the Performance and Finance Committee Protocol, which Overview and Scrutiny endorsed in September 2007, after every meeting of the Performance and Finance Committee a report is submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, outlining issues considered and, where appropriate, making recommendations for the further study of performance issues through the means of a challenge panel, or as an element in a light-touch or in-depth review.

No report was submitted following the meeting of the sub-committee in November 2007, as updates were requested on particular items for the January meeting. It was thought more prudent to provide a single, fuller report to Overview and Scrutiny once these updates had been agreed.

Issue to be determined

The following matters were discussed at Performance and Finance.

Agenda item	Highlights of discussion	Further action (with reason for recommendation)
Resident satisfaction (Nov 07)	Discussions centred on resident satisfaction as it was recorded on the CPA scorecard, and in the annual MORI survey. Members heard that there was always a time lag between improvements in services and improvements in satisfaction figures, and discussed the need for customers to be better informed on Council services.	No further action. The chairman and vice-chairman will look at the results of the MORI survey when they become available, whereupon a decision will be made on further action.
Housing (Nov 07 and Jan 08)	Discussions centred on the performance of Kier in the delivery of the Decent Homes programme. Members heard that 827 units would be renovated by the end of March 2008, requiring significant changes in operational practices. Additional financial expenditure would be borne by Kier. Officers were confident that this ambitious target could be achieved. In response to a question from the committee regarding the existence of a 'penalty' clause should Kier not deliver the required number of decent homes to a specified timescale, the	Monthly performance information will be made available at the Chairman's Meetings. A summary of the discussion will be provided to the relevant Improvement Board.

	<p>committee was advised that penalty clauses as such are not enforceable but that the contract contained provision for the Council to recover additional costs should it become necessary to request work to be undertaken by others. This would be a major step to take, with the Council's losses difficult to quantify.</p> <p>The committee was also advised that the Council have control over the amount of work given to Kier currently and in the future over all areas of the contract. Consequently the Council could award any remaining decent homes work outside the Kier partnership. In doing this the Council would, however, incur considerable procurement costs and disruption to the delivery programme and this would need to be considered before taking such a decision. It is also likely that Kier would be well placed given the injection of additional resources to make a rapid start on the 08/09 programme and this potential would also have to be taken into account before deciding to place work elsewhere.</p> <p>The Chairman expressed concern that if the target for decent homes delivery for 07/08 is missed this could contribute adversely to the Council's CPA rating. The potential to damage the Council's reputation was noted by officers and Kier.</p>	
<p>Recycling and waste (Nov 07)</p>	<p>Discussions related to recycling in flats, which was at 14%. It was hoped that it could be improved to 18% by the end of 2007/08.</p> <p>Members also learned that the review of public realm services (not a scrutiny review) has just been completed. The review made recommendations for a number of savings in respect of recycling and waste.</p>	<p>Agreed to consider in more detail a future date, as a result of some of the concerns raised. It is expected that this will be considered at the meeting in April, along with the conclusions of the public realm review.</p>

Options for further consideration

Where the Committee considers that further action may be necessary, the following options are open.

Scrutiny lead consideration – the scrutiny lead for performance, and the lead for policy, can liaise to look at the issue in more depth, and to report to committee at a given time to advise further.

Challenge panel – a detailed consideration of the policy and performance issues surrounding the service area(s) in question.

Light touch / in-depth reviews – members can recommend that the issue be considered as an element for inclusion in a wider review of a given subject. However, members are reminded that such reviews cannot be instigated immediately, and are subject to the separate work programme and Scrutiny Protocol rules for agenda planning.

The option is not open to members of the sub-committee to request a substantive single agenda item on a given issue at a future meeting of Performance and Finance, except under certain very specific circumstances laid out in the P&F Protocol.

Risks and constraints

If it is decided that further work needs to be carried out on a particularly pressing performance-related issue, members will need to consider the time-critical nature of work pertaining to performance improvement. In most instances, scrutiny can add the most value by being able to make recommendations on a topic as soon as possible, while the matter is still relevant and before circumstances change. For this reason it will probably be most appropriate to select a short and streamlined solution. More in-depth reviews will often not be the most appropriate solution (although in some circumstances they can assist in more systemic performance-related problems).

Resources / cost implications

There are no specific resource or cost implications to this report. Any additional scrutiny work carried out as a result is done as part of normal operation in the Scrutiny Unit, and decisions to carry out work are made in the context of the Scrutiny Principles and the overriding principle of ensuring value for money.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Name: Stephen Dorrian	<input type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 29 January 2008		
Name: Sheela Thakrar	<input type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 1 February 2008		

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Ed Hammond, Scrutiny Unit, Strategy and Performance
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Background Papers:

None