

**MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Committee held on 13 September 2011**

Present: Cllr R Gledhill (Chair); Cllr W Curtis (Deputy Chair); Cllr A Kiely; Cllr S Wootton; Cllr D Revell

Apologies: Cllr D Nicklen (substituted by Cllr S Wootton)
Cllr Y Gupta (substituted by Cllr A Kiely)

Attendance: R. Waterhouse – Director of Transformation
M. Hone –Director of Finance and Corporate Governance
J Olsson – Corporate Director, Children, Education and Families
B Newman – Corporate Director for Sustainable Communities
S. Welton –Performance and Risk Officer
C. Stephenson – Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager
D McLoughlin – Client Contracts Manager (Morrisons)
R. Harris – Head of Strategic Commissioning and Resources
J Mayer – Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) Interests

Cllr W Curtis declared a personal interest in respect of items 5 and 6 as her daughter works for Adult Social Care in Thurrock.

b) Whipping

None declared.

**2. MINUTES OF CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE OF 28 JUNE 2011**

The minutes of 28 June 2011 were approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business but the Chair asked that agenda Item 7 be considered as 'Urgent Business' as it had been actioned by the Chair and Deputy Chair ahead of the meeting.

RESOLVED

That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny recognise the Task and Finish Group established in support of strengthening community engagement in Thurrock.

The Chair changed the running order of the Agenda so that the Annual Performance Report could be taken next. As there were Directors in attendance, who were also required at additional meetings that evening, members noted that there might be some overlap in respect of the commentaries for items 5 and 6. This would ensure that the Directors could be released as soon as possible.

4. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Transformation presented this report, which advised Corporate Overview and Scrutiny of the outturn performance (for 2010/11) of key national and local performance indicators and gave an overview of the financial position for 2010/11.

Members noted that there were two different versions of the Annual report. The report on the agenda focussed on the facts and figures and the Annual Report, aimed at a wider audience, was being created by Thurrock's Communications Team.

The Director of Transformation highlighted the 2010/11 Performance headlines, as set out in paragraph 3 of the report and Directors were then invited to expand on their respective areas.

The Chair expressed a view, which was agreed by the Committee, that in order to avoid duplication, the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees look at their services in detail, with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny concentrating on the headlines.

Children and Education

Members were pleased to note that targeted interventions in schools had made a significant difference. For example, Lansdowne School had seen a 20% improvement and Grays a 5% improvement. The Director of Children, Education and Families praised the pro-active work of the School Improvement Team. Cabinet on 7 September had received an update on Thurrock's Exam Results and were very pleased at the rise in primary school attainment at KS2. GCSE results had shown a further rise of 3.2%, with many schools achieving great success. Last year, for the first time, GCSE results were above the national average and expected to remain so.

Environment

The Director was pleased to report that, across the board in Environment, performance against targets had been excellent. In response to a question from the Chair, members noted that there were further divisions within recycling streams; i.e. for the disposal of electrical goods. The Director agreed to send a note to members explaining this further.

Members also noted that, for transport, current statistics did not differentiate between paying and non-paying passengers but would in future reports.

Public Protection

Members noted the additional indicators (in the quarterly reports) that would show as peaks over the year; i.e. summer parties and barbecues, Guy Fawkes Night, Halloween and Christmas/New Year. The Chair and Director expressed a view that such peaks should be mitigated as they are relatively short in duration.

The Corporate Director agreed to brief members on the contents of the Service Plan that address the identified performance issue. This would be included as an Appendix to these Minutes.

Adult Social Care

Members were pleased to note that Basildon Hospital had a reduction in delayed transfers when people were ready to go home. They noted that Cabinet would receive a report on the Carers' Centre Strategy in the New Year.

Housing

The Client Contracts Manager (Morrisons) advised members that there had been some challenge in meeting targets for the longer term repairs. Members noted that the IT system's interface had been improved to provide real time updates.

Corporate Health

The Director of Transformation provided a summary on Corporate Health (as set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report). There was some discussion about sickness, which continued to be an issue. The Director outlined the proactive measures in place; i.e. the nurse contact centre, improved management information and training in managing absence and new policies for managing long term sickness.

Financial Summary

The Director of Finance and Corporate Governance was pleased to report an overall operational surplus of £2.931m but confirmed that the position must improve further. Members noted that a new Resources Board had been set up (Chaired by the Finance Director). This Board would monitor the Capital Programme and General Fund and ensure good financial housekeeping.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the level of performance achieved in respect of both priority and non priority performance indicators for 2010/11 be noted;**
- 2. That the overall financial position for 2010/11 be noted;**
- 3. That service staff be commended where the performance outturn had met or exceeded target;**
- 4. That the actions being taken in respect of areas of under-performance be noted;**
- 5. That the data within the report be presented to Cabinet in October as part of a wider document; including a narrative around the Council's Vision, Strategy, Regeneration Projects and Case Studies highlighting good performance; and**
- 6. That the service areas headlined in the Report and summarised in these minutes be referred to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees for more in depth scrutiny.**

5. CORPORATE SCORECARD PERFORMANCE REPORT – MONTH 3/QUARTER 1 (TO END OF JUNE 2011)

This report advised the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the key performance issues arising from the delivery of the 2011/12 Corporate Scorecard. The Director of Transformation was pleased to advise that, at the end of month 3, 40% of the indicators were meeting their targets and 50% had improved on last year.

In response to questions, the Corporate Director advised that the new Performance Board would determine which areas should be escalated to Directors Board and/or Cabinet for a more in depth analysis. There was some discussion about the maintenance of green targets, which can be challenging in the current economic climate.

As with the Annual Report, Directors were invited to expand on their respective areas. Members noted that some areas had been covered adequately under the previous item.

Regeneration

The Chair and Committee agreed expressed a view that efficient management of Section 106 funds should be a pan-Council issue. Members noted that this would fall within the remit of the new Resources Board, to ensure that sums due were either spent or re-claimed from previous projects.

Housing Management

There had been improvements on the indicators in July as a result of the improvement programme. In response to members' questions, the Contracts Manager explained that there had been a lack of resources in inspecting voids, but this was being addressed.

There was some discussion about the customer satisfaction cards. The Chair and some members felt it would be helpful if these could be made anonymous, as any means of identifying a client (i.e. by a job number) might make them less likely to give an honest appraisal. The Client manager agreed to investigate this further.

The Chair asked for a briefing note for members on the different types of voids, inspections etc. and an action plan, to be included as an Appendix to these minutes.

Library Service

Members noted that this was a radically changing service and currently under review. The Chair asked that future reports include an action plan, reflecting more accurate and modern use of libraries and that this be reflected in the forthcoming budget report.

Financial Management

There was some discussion about the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days, which had improved but was still under target. The Director explained that the recent austerity measures had limited signing-off authority to less than 20 officers and this had resulted in a backlog. Members also noted that this PI would fall within the remit of the new Resources Board. Furthermore, a new financial system would be in place within the next 8-10 months, which would automatically scan invoices and speed up processes considerably.

In response to comments made by members, the Director asked to be appraised of any local suppliers which might be having cash flow difficulties, as payments could be fast tracked in these circumstances.

The Chair expressed a view on the large amount of unachieved savings in Qtr 1 and would have expected these to have been dealt with as a priority. Members noted that the round of 'star chambers' had started for

next year's budget and an action plan would be produced in respect of non-delivery of in year savings targets.

General

There was some discussion about the new Volunteering indicator and members noted that, as the guidelines were emerging, this was likely to be focussed in the next report.

In response to comments from the Chair, the Corporate Performance and Improvement Officers advised that the Performance Board would be working with managers on the quality of data and commentaries provided in the reports.

RESOLVED

- 1. That services where there is good delivery against priorities be commended.**
- 2. That performance in areas of concern be noted and further areas of concern be focussed in future reports.**
- 3. That Cabinet note the recommendation of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a minimum standard be applied to all future reports and include:**
 - A Action Plan for improvement/retention of current levels**
 - Targets profiled for the time of year, where applicable**
 - Comparative data, where available.**

6. WORKPLAN

Members noted suggestions for additional items for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Workplan, which were allocated as follows:

- RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000)/Fraud Management – January**
- Vertex/Europa Contract Performance – January**

Members noted the Generic Overview and Scrutiny Budget meetings scheduled for November and January. The Chair suggested that these might include the Library Review and an analysis of the economic climate affecting homelessness and the forthcoming changes to housing benefit legislation.

The meeting finished at 9.20 pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Julie Mayer, telephone (01375) 652403,
or alternatively e-mail jmayer@thurrock.gov.uk**

APPENDIX

The following information was requested during the meeting

RECYCLING BREAKDOWN

In 10/11

46% of material collected is recycled, reused or composted

34% of material collected is sent to landfill

20% of material collected is sent for treatment (waste to energy plant to generate electricity)

PUBLIC PROTECTION ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Number of joint operations with the police	Where needed joint operations such as Operation PitStop are being set up and attended Police operations are attended where appropriate
Number of Partner Walk Around Days (PWAD)	Plan of PWADs for the year has been agreed by Thurrock Community Safety Partnership When running PWADs are supported and attended
Number of Proactive asb/ environmental Crime operations	Operations are being organised where needed targeting either specific areas or specific problems
Other items	Out of hours noise service has been running over the summer Work being looked at re reporting incidents Ongoing case work for officers Appropriate enforcement action taken where needed