

**Decisions of the Budget & Performance
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

25th November 2010

Members

- * Councillor Darrel Yawitch (Chairman)
- * Councillor Mark Shooter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| * Eva Greenspan
(substituting for John Marshall) | * Alison Moore |
| * Hugh Rayner | Julie Johnson |
| * Brian Salinger | * Alan Schneiderman |
| * Brian Schama | |
| * Daniel Seal | |

(* denotes member present)

Also attending:

Councillor Andrew Harper

Deputy Leader

for Cabinet Member for Resources & Performance

Councillor Robert Rams

Cabinet Member for Customer Access & Partnerships

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2010 be approved.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Julie Johnson, and from Councillor John Marshall, for whom Councillor Eva Greenspan substituted.

Apologies for absence were also received from the Leader of the Council (on Council business), from the Cabinet Member for Resources & Performance and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning & Regeneration

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS (INCLUDING WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS)

Councillor Hugh Rayner declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 8, Housing and Homelessness, by nature of housing the homeless being part of his core business.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None.

5. MEMBER'S ITEMS

None.

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee received the revised Treasury Management Strategy for pre-decision Scrutiny prior to it being considered by Cabinet Resources Committee on 30th November 2010.

The revised Strategy proposed tweaks to the current position regarding Treasury Management. These included the proposal to extend the permitted duration of investments from 92 to 364 days. In nothing that the current Strategy had become, particularly in comparison to other boroughs, somewhat restrictive, the Committee agreed that the approach to Treasury Management set out in the officers report was the correct one, allowing the authority to gain a better return with a minimal increase in risk.

The Committee were encouraged that the re-tendering of the authority's treasury management advisor contract to a different party had resulted in the use of a wider range of criteria for selecting approved counter parties for the placing of deposits. It was noted that whilst the advisors provided advice to the authority, the ultimate responsibility for the placing of deposits rested with the authority itself. The selection of the new treasury advisors had been as a result of written submissions and an interview process, with a three year contract for their services being agreed. Both the authority and the treasury advisors kept records of conversations and meetings between them as a matter of course.

Regarding specific institutions used by the authority, the Committee noted that the Co-Operative Bank was one of the largest suppliers of banking facilities to local authorities, and that Santander UK existed as a separate operation to the Spanish parent bank of that name. In viewing the list of counter parties, the Committee raised some concerns over the placing of deposits in Nordia Bank of Finland, due to a lack of widespread knowledge of that country.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the Committee agree that the approach to Treasury Management contained within the report is the correct one.**
- 2. That Treasury Management briefings be offered to the relevant opposition spokesman.**
- 3. That the concern of some Members of the Committee around depositing in Nordia bank be noted.**

7. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR QUARTER TWO: 2010/11

The Committee received the Corporate Performance Information, presenting progress against the Corporate Plan performance targets and improvement initiatives for quarter two.

The Committee were particularly pleased to note the education results in the borough. They requested to receive detailed reports on performance in the following areas at their meeting of 22nd February 2011:

- Value for Money
- The attainment gaps between children with special education needs and their peers, and children eligible for free school meals and their peers.

Members were encouraged to inform officers of any specific areas of Value for Money performance that they would like to see addressed in the officers' report.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the 22nd February 2011 meeting receive detailed performance reports on the above two topics.**

8. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The Committee received information on the performance of housing and homelessness delivered by the Council's Housing service, and of ongoing service developments.

It was noted that the amount of costly nightly purchase stock purchased by the authority had reduced significantly; the Committee requested that officers provide them with the average nightly rate for buying this type of accommodation. Work was ongoing on a inter-borough protocol to avoid differential incentives being offered across boroughs.

The Committee were pleased to learn about the LEAN processes work, which had reconfigured service delivery around the customer journey experience, rather than around the structure of the organisation.

Officers acknowledged that there was still some progress to be made to combat differential satisfaction with the service provided across ethnic groups.

RESOLVED-

- 1. That the Committee be provided with the average nightly rate for nightly purchased accommodation.**

2. **That the Committee be provided with a longitudinal analysis of housing lets.**
3. **That the Committee's comments be noted.**

9. CUSTOMER SERVICE PERFORMANCE

The Committee received information on Customer Service performance against Corporate Plan targets, and details of improvement actions currently being undertaken. The Committee noted significant improvement in some areas of customer services performance, and noted that further work was ongoing as part of the consolidation of Customer Services at Barnet. Officers were working on the use of detailed management information to improve the performance of the service. Officers had been liaising with other authorities such as Suffolk and Surrey where consolidation had been successfully carried out.

The Committee noted that elements of the Council's new website were due to go live in January, with a full site redesign following in April. The number of incomplete transactions on the website, together with the experience of some Members, suggested that there was work to do to make the site more user-friendly.

The Cabinet Member stated that he did not envisage that call centres would be sub-contracted to remote locations at the present time.

There was an acknowledgement between Members and officers that there was a role for the web, phone and e-mail, with each option being preferred by different people. It was pledged that these options would be maintained as points of contact for the authority.

RESOLVED-

1. **That the Committee's comments be noted.**

10. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

In receiving the Sustainable Communities Strategy for pre-decision Scrutiny, the Committee agreed to make the following comment formally to Cabinet, to be considered alongside its deliberations on the item:

Budget and Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the Sustainable Communities Strategy 2010-20. The Committee feels that for the Strategy to accurately reflect the area and plan for the future, account needs to be taken of the importance of Middlesex University, and the impact on the borough of its expansion in student numbers.

The concentration of the University in the Hendon campus, together with the corresponding increase in student population, is one of the major demographic changes taking place in the borough. This increase in student numbers, whilst

directly benefiting the economy of Barnet, also brings with it unique challenges, particularly around increased density of occupancy and population. The Committee thus requests that Cabinet amend the strategy to acknowledge the importance of Middlesex University to the borough, and to take account of the economic and demographic changes resulting from its expansion.

RESOLVED-

- 1. That the above comment of the Committee be conveyed to Cabinet.**

11. CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and agreed to receive the draft Corporate Plan at its meeting of 27th January 2011 for pre-decision Scrutiny.

RESOLVED-

- 1. That the draft Corporate Plan be considered at the meeting of 27th January 2011.**

12. BUDGET & PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED-

- 1. That the Work Programme be noted.**

13. ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were no such items.

The meeting concluded at 9:37pm.