

## **Agenda Item: 9.2**

**Tuesday 18 January 2005, Council**

**Labour Group Opposition Policy Item**

### **Council Modernisation**

Council believes that urgent action is needed to ensure the effective modernisation of the authority with regard to employment relations, information systems, financial management, community engagement, and performance management before the Comprehensive Performance Assessment expected later this year.

Council thanks its staff for their efforts and perseverance despite the redundancies and restructuring of the past two years. Council regrets the impact on staff morale and health, and therefore upon services, caused by more than 300 posts being cut. Council regrets that large numbers of staff have had the stress of receiving redundancy notices and being forced to compete for the jobs remaining.

Council urges the Cabinet to ensure that:

- staff turnover is reduced from currently running above target at over 15%;
- current sickness levels in Community Care of 14.4 days, in the Borough Treasurer's service of 13.3 days, and in Environment Services of 11.9 days be brought down to the target of just 7 days,
- an investigation is conducted to discover the reasons for continuing high levels of sickness and what can be done to reduce sickness levels,
- the performance monitoring of Human Resources is improved from its current overall poor rating, and that
- unlike in December 2004, the staff trade union representatives are informed of budget cuts and redundancies before the media.

Council regrets that the implementation of SWIFT for the data capture and billing of home care services continues to be a problem with many residents left with huge bills hanging over their heads; unsure of how much they will have to pay and when.

Council regrets the delays in the implementation of the Modernising Core Systems (MCS) project, the operation of which, will - at the earliest - begin in August 2005, with chaos forecast for the initial changeover period.

Council regrets that, further to the chaos evident from the Section 11 notice, actual savings are lagging behind predicted savings on procurement, and that annual improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness are not being achieved. Council is concerned whether MCS will not deliver value for money, as promised as the justification for the project within the business case. In light of the proposed £11million of service cuts, Council believes now is the opportunity to re-evaluate the Council's future strategy.

Council further calls upon the Cabinet: to improve access to technology for staff and customers, to fully implement the consultation strategy proposed by the Labour Group, to better involve all councillors and residents in scrutiny, and to improve performance on major planning applications.

Council urges the Cabinet to vastly improve the timely access to and reliability of performance indicators and management information available to residents and all scrutiny members, which over the past year has been appalling. Council believes that the situation where just one performance indicator report was presented to the Performance, Partnerships and Best Value scrutiny committee (and its predecessor) last year cannot be repeated.