

Decisions of the Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 March 2013

Members Present:-

Councillor Anthony Finn (Chairman)
Councillor Joan Scannell (Vice-Chairman)

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| Councillor Geof Cooke | Councillor Hugh Rayner |
| Councillor Brian Gordon | Councillor Alan Schneiderman |
| Councillor John Marshall | Councillor Reuben Thompstone |
| Councillor Arjun Mittra | Councillor Barry Rawlings (In place of Alison Moore) |

Also in attendance

Councillor Daniel Thomas – Deputy Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member
for Resources and Performance
Councillor David Longstaff – Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Alison Moore
Councillor Andrew Harper – Cabinet Member for Education,
Children and Families
Councillor Robert Rams – Cabinet Member for
Customer Access and Partnerships

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee noted that the minutes of the special meeting held on 20 February 2013 had not been finalised and would be reported to the next meeting.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence had been from Councillor Alison Moore who was substituted for by Councillor Barry Rawlings.

Apologies for absence had also been received from Councillors Andrew Harper and Robert Rams who had been invited to attend for items on the agenda which related to their portfolios.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

| Member | Subject | Interest declared |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Councillor John Marshall | Agenda Item 9 (Initiatives to Contribute to the Safer Communities Strategy) | Non-pecuniary interest as Councillor Marshall was a Member of the Board of Barnet Home Start which was involved in the Community Coaches scheme. |

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None.

5. MEMBERS' ITEMS

None.

6. QUARTER 3 2012/13 FINANCIAL AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, Councillor Daniel Thomas, the Deputy Chief Operating Officer, John Hooton, and the Head of Programme and Resources, Tom Pike presented the Quarter Three 2012/13 Finance and Corporate Performance report.

The Chairman highlighted the importance of Members identifying areas for scrutiny in advance of the meeting to enable relevant Cabinet Members and officers to be invited to give account to the Committee.

In relation to CPIs 2000 (A) and 2000 (B) relating to the achievement gap for pupils eligible for free school meals, the Committee questioned how these indicators would be assessed following the introduction of the pupil premium. Officers undertook to review the methodology for reporting in future years and noted that data relating to free school meals and the pupil premium may need to run concurrently.

Referring to Debt Management in Key Finance Indicators, the Committee questioned why debt had increased. Officers reported that debt levels were variable and were dependent on payments between the council and its partners (such as NHS North Central London). The Committee noted that some NHS institutions would cease to exist from 1 April 2013 and questioned whether there would be a liability to the Council.

A Member noted an overspend of £0.215 million in Commercial Services as planned savings in Corporate Procurement had not been achieved. The Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance emphasised that a stretching target of 10% had been set. He added that whilst the 10% target had not been met, savings of 6.1% against contracts due for renewal had been achieved. The Committee noted that New Support and Customer Services Organisation contractor had guaranteed procurement savings of 5%

across the authority, adding these savings were guaranteed even if Capita failed to deliver them.

The Committee noted that car parking income had a forecast overspend of £0.273 million even after tariff changes (paragraph 9.2.6). The Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance advised Members that the North Finchley Parking Pilot scheme would inform parking policy across the borough, adding that the scheme still needed to be evaluated. The shortfall in parking income had been reducing for both on and off street parking.

A Member moved a motion that the One Barnet Programme be scrapped to in favour of in-house service transformation. The motion was duly seconded. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Officers be requested to clarify the definition of MSP (Appendix A, Section 2.6).**
- 2. Officers be requested to provide additional information regarding why debt levels had increased as referred to in the preamble above.**
- 3. the Committee request that the North Finchley Parking Pilot Scheme evaluation be reported to the next meeting of the Committee (20 June 2013) as part of the scheduled item on the Review of Parking Services Performance.**
- 4. Officers be requested to clarify the total costs of supporting the One Barnet Programme during 2012/13 (to include agency staff, consultant and other costs).**
- 5. Officers be requested to provide the Committee with a briefing on the £58,000 overspend in relation to canvassing costs (Appendix B – Revenue Monitoring by Directorate, Corporate Governance).**
- 6. Officers be requested to clarify why additional costs of £331,000 have been incurred in relation to Open Revenues licenses (Appendix B – Revenue Monitoring by Directorate, Commercial Services).**
- 7. Officers be requested to present a report to the Committee on the Mill Hill Depot Relocation project and the financial implications of the delay.**
- 8. Officers be requested to provide details of projects which are at risk of losing government grants due to slippage (paragraph 4.2).**
- 9. Officers be requested to provide an update on the sub-letting of Barnet House and details of any other Council accommodation which is surplus to requirements.**

7. ADOPTION SERVICE PERFORMANCE

The Committee welcomed the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, Ann Graham, who was in attendance to present the report on Barnet's Adoption Service Performance.

In presenting the item, the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care highlighted that the Government were currently focussed on improving the performance of adoption services nationally. The Committee noted that, in relation to the average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive parents, the Barnet average had been 718 days in 2009 – 2001 (79 days over the performance threshold) which had increased to 809 days in 2009 – 2012 (170 days over the performance threshold). Members noted that individual cases had impacted on overall performance (including a change from a special guardianship to adoption, an adoptive home which had broken down and difficulties in placing siblings). It was emphasised that the decreased performance had been for valid reasons and without these cases Barnet's performance would be below target. The Committee noted that the Department for Education had recently visited Barnet's Adoption Service and had undertaken an adoption diagnostic which had been positive.

Referring to the analysis of the four cases which had impacted on overall performance, the Committee noted the following reasons for delays in children being placed with their adoptive family:

- Delays in care proceedings progressing through the courts – the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care highlighted that the officers from Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Children's Services were meeting with courts service in an effort to reduce the current case average timescale for care proceedings cases to progress through the court from 52 to 26 weeks.
- Family members opting to adopt – in some cases family members had opted to adopt children late in the process having originally been approved for kinship carer status.
- Care Planning Panel – the Panel had been scrutinising the care process through the courts which had led to the introduction of a principal officer for court work. It was noted that the Panel reviewed and RAG rated each case individually.

The Committee were advised that, following the national drive to improve performance, Barnet were expected to receive additional funding of £780,000 from a national pot of £150 million.

Members acknowledged that the length of the process was the main barrier to improved performance. The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care advised the Committee that there were specialist staff in the adoption team split between finding potential adoptive parents and assessment. It was noted that the team were working towards meeting the Government target within six months. It was expected that placing an increased emphasis on self-assessment for prospective adopters would assist in achieving this target.

The Committee questioned whether the Housing Benefit changes would have an impact on the performance of the adoption service. The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care advised the Committee that the changes were more likely to impact on those seeking a special guardianship order rather than adoptive parents.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1. Officers be requested to provide details of the number of children currently on the adoption waiting list.**
- 2. the Committee note the changes coming into force in relation to adoption and support the Council's proposed response as outlined in the report.**

During consideration of the item above, Councillor Gordon entered the meeting at 8.13pm.

8. ONE BARNET PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHT REPORT

The Committee considered the One Barnet Programme Highlight report which provided a summary of the programme status up to February 2013.

Members questioned what impact a successful judicial would have on the One Barnet Programme. Officers reported that actions would vary depending on the outcome of the judicial review. Members noted that the financial impacts of the judicial review had been detailed in the 'Risk Management' section of the Business Planning 2013/14 – 2015/16 report to Council on 6 March 2013.

In relation to the Sport and Physical Activity project, the Committee questioned the ability of the Council to negotiate savings with the current leisure service provider, GLL, as the current contract ran until 2016/17. Officers reported that the project was a holistic review which had been considering needs and opportunities, the health of Barnet residents and assessing the leisure market in the borough. The findings of this review would determine how the review could achieve financial benefits.

Referring to the Your Choice Barnet, the Committee questioned whether the project would deliver the projected savings as the local authority trading company had projected a loss of £500,000 in its first year. Officers advised the Committee that the projected overspend was due to a change in the invoicing method and that overall local authority trading company was expected to achieve a balanced position overall.

A Member moved a motion that the Committee make recommendation to Cabinet that the One Barnet Programme be delayed until a full in-house bid is assessed. The motion was duly seconded. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1. Officers be requested to revise the One Barnet Risk Register to make explicit reference to the impact of the judicial review of the One Barnet Programme on programme.**
- 2. the Committee requested that an update on the Sports and Physical Activity review be presented to a future meeting.**
- 3. Officers be requested to provide an index table in future One Barnet Programme Highlight reports to provide details of the project terminology.**

4. **Officers be requested to provide an update on the financial position of Your Choice Barnet.**

9. INITIATIVES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

The Committee welcomed the Cabinet Member for Resident Safety and Engagement, Councillor David Longstaff, the Family & Community Lead Commissioner, James Mass, and the Project Manager, Ruth Murphy, to present a report which provided an update on project which detailed initiatives to contribute to the Safer Communities Strategy. Members were informed that an Outline Business Case would be presented to the Cabinet Resources Committee on 18 April 2013.

In relation to the CCTV review, Officers reported that upgrades were required to the technical platform to deliver images of a sufficient quality. The proposed upgrade would deliver better quality images (from new cameras and monitoring equipment) and a more flexible system (which would include cameras being movable). The Committee suggested that in determining locations for CCTV cameras, the Council should consult with residents to identify local need.

Referring to Neighbourhood Justice Panels, Officers reported that this initiative would involve restorative justice techniques which would include perpetrators and victims meeting face to face. This approach had been shown to result in high victim satisfaction, reduce reoffending rates and reduce costs in the criminal justice system. It was noted a pilot scheme would be funded using MOPAC (Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime) funding. If the scheme was successful, partners would be requested to sign a joint funding agreement for future years.

Responding to a question from the Committee, Officers advised that the Community Coaches scheme had been successful in reducing the risk of harm to others and contact with other statutory agencies and it was proposed that the scheme be rolled out more widely.

RESOLVED that:-

1. **the Committee support and endorse the Initiatives to Contribute to the Safer Communities Strategy as outlined in the report.**
2. **the Cabinet Resources Committee be requested to take into account the comments outlined above when considering the initiatives at their meeting on 18 April 2013.**

10. BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 2012/13 and 2013/14 as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1. the Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 2012/13 and 2013/14 be noted**
- 2. the following items be added to the Forward Work Programme:**
 - Include North Finchley Parking Pilot Evaluation as part of Review of Parking Services item (20 June 2013);**
 - One Barnet Programme Highlight Report (20 June 2013);**
 - Review of Capital Programme (20 June 2013); and**
 - Update on Sport and Physical Activity Review (Date TBC)**

The Committee thanked the Chairman, Councillor Anthony Finn, for his chairmanship during the 2012/13 municipal year.

11. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 9.36 pm