

# Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Efficiency Gains Sub-Group

Wednesday, 30 January 2008

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Stella Walsh (Chair) and Councillors David Dickinson, Keith Iddon, Kevin Joyce, June Molyneaux and Geoffrey Russell

**Also in attendance:** James Douglas (Business Improvement Manager), Sarah Dobson (Performance Advisor - Corporate and Customer) and Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

## 08.17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Henry Caunce, Mick Davies, Mike Devaney, Thomas McGowan and Mick Muncaster.

## 08.18 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by Members relating to the items on the agenda.

## 08.19 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No members of the public requested to speak at the meeting.

## 08.20 MINUTES

**RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Efficiency Gains Sub-Group held on 28 November 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 08.21 QUESTION SETTING FOR THE REMAINING FEEDBACK SESSIONS WITH IDENTIFIED WITNESSES

Members considered questions for the remaining witnesses at the sessions on 4, 5 and 8 February.

**RESOVLED – That the questions be set as below:**

### Corporate Director (Business)

1. Please outline the services within the remit of your directorate.
2. How many full time equivalents are there in your directorate?
3. How well do you think the council has done in the achievement of its efficiency targets and what contribution has your directorate made to achieving those gains?
4. What areas of improved efficiency have you targeted for the future?
5. Is there any scope for joint working within your directorate?
6. How do you manage and improve efficiency within your directorate and how does it link with your business improvement plan and the corporate strategy?
7. What is your budget and what are the main heads of expenditure?

8. How do you ensure that any efficiency gains you achieve are corporately collected and reported?
9. What measures have you taken to ensure that effective procurement practice is in place within your directorate and can you give us examples of this in practice?
10. The use of the absence management policy can lead to efficiencies. Is the policy working in your directorate?
11. There have been developments on the council's website with the planning portal. Has this produced efficiency savings?

#### Corporate Procurement and Partnerships

1. Please could you outline the responsibilities within your role?
2. What contribution have corporate procurement made to the council's efficiency savings in the period covered by the 04 spending review.
3. Can you broadly tell us how these are made up and give us some more detail on the more notable examples?
4. The efficiency agenda continues as part of the comprehensive spending review 07. What future contribution do you feel corporate procurement can make to securing future efficiency gains?

#### Customer Access Officer

1. Please could you outline the responsibilities within your role?
2. Can you tell us what contribution the creation of the contact centre has made to delivering efficiency savings for the council?
3. A procurement saving of £300,000 has been identified through the Shared Services Contact Centre Partnership. Is this still a justifiable efficiency gain for the council for the remaining 4 partnership years?
4. We are aware that implementation of the customer relationship management system is currently underway. Can you please update us on progress and tell us what efficiency gains you think will be achieved through its implementation?
5. We understand that there is significant variation in the different methods of communicating with the council. Can you elaborate on this issue and tell us what plans there are for future channel optimisation.
6. Are there plans to deliver services for other partner organisations? Is there potential to generate income from this approach as well as improve the service to the customer?
7. How will the council measure the number of times members of the public contact the council to resolve an issue/request for service?
8. According to the Varney report there should be a reduction of 25% in running costs for contact centres in the future. Do you think this is a realistic target for Chorley?

#### Neighbourhoods

1. Please outline the services within the remit of the directorate.
2. How many full time equivalents are there in the directorate?
3. What contribution has the directorate made to achieving those gains?
4. What areas of improved efficiency have you targeted for the future?
5. Is there any scope for joint working within the directorate?
6. How is efficiency managed and improved within the directorate and how does it link with the business improvement plan and the corporate strategy?
7. What is the budget and what are the main heads of expenditure?
8. How is it ensured that any efficiency gains achieved are corporately collected and reported?
9. What measures have been taken to ensure that effective procurement practice is in place within the directorate and can you give us examples of this in practice?
10. The use of the absence management policy can lead to efficiencies. Is the policy working in the directorate?

11. We understand that there will be significant efficiency savings as a result of the mobile working project. How is the project progressing?

External auditor

1. Please could you outline the responsibilities within your role?
2. How do you feel this council has performed in relation to the delivery of its efficiency targets set for the 04 spending review period compared with other local authorities?
3. How would you assess our approach to delivering and improving value for money and are there any efficiency areas where you feel we might have had a greater focus on?
4. What are your views on the targets set by the Government for the comprehensive spending review 07 period?
5. How would you assess Chorley's readiness to deliver against these targets?

**08.22 CONSIDERING EVIDENCE**

Members considered the comparative information from other Local Authorities on reported efficiency gains and noted the information did not show any areas of concern or work for Chorley. A query was raised as to the average number of staff who worked at the other Local Authorities

Members felt it was unfortunate that the Government would not count non-cashable savings towards the target set for the comprehensive spending review 07.

Officers advised that performance indicator information for each directorate to enable any areas where performance has been affected by efficiency gains would be distributed as part of the agenda for the next meeting of the sub-group.

**08.23 INQUIRY DOCUMENTATION**

The Sub-Group considered the Inquiry documentation and AGREED the amendments to the Information and Witness checklists.

**08.24 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 4 February at 2.00pm
- 5 February at 2.30pm
- 8 February at 1.30pm

Chair