

Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday, 7 February 2006

Present: Councillor Mrs S Walsh (Chair) and Councillors A Cullens, Mrs D Dickinson, M Lees, P Malpas, Miss J Molyneaux, G Russell, E Smith and Mrs J Snape

06.CUS.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor C Snow, Councillor J Wilson (Executive Leader and Executive Member for Capacity and Resources) and Councillor D Edgerley (Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Customers, Policy and Performance).

06.CUS.02 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

06.CUS.03 MINUTES

The Panel received an update from the Head of Information and Communication Technology Services in response to a query from the previous meeting with regard to the collection of payment for staff personal telephone calls.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 9 November 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

06.CUS.04 REVIEW OF THE REVENUE AND BENEFITS SERVICES BUDGET

The Panel received the report of the Director of Finance detailing the Revenues and Benefits service budget. The purpose of the report was to enable the Panel to study the findings of the recent Audit Commission review of costs; this was part of the use of resources value for money review. The report would allow Members to scrutinise whether the Council's policy objectives were being met and if the bench mark findings were a true reflection of Members and Stakeholders experience.

A number of questions were put to the Director of Finance. The questions and responses would form the basis of a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 16 February.

The analysis showed that Chorley was providing a good service to the Revenues and Benefits customers. Developments such as home visits and the redesign of back office elements of the service were providing a more efficient and enhanced service. However, there was a lack of benchmarking information.

The Panel noted the need to balance the cost/service provided to the customer. Elements of the service, such as forms being in plain English were important to the customer. It was highlighted that the training scheme and training materials that have been developed within the service were positive.

RESOLVED - That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee submit the following comments to the Executive Cabinet.

- 1. The Executive Cabinet is requested to take action to pursue the provision of more detailed comparative data from the Audit Commission's 'family tree' authorities, particularly in relation to the**

output, cost and quality of services, in order to enable a more reasonable value for money assessment of the whole of the Revenues and Benefits service.

2. What steps will the Executive Cabinet take to ensure that the high-quality service the public is receiving from the Benefits service is maintained when the service moves into the Contact Centre?
3. The Executive Cabinet is requested to undertake a consistent and measured review of all services via the Procurement strategy for the delivery of value for money services.

06.CUS.05 UPDATE ON CUSTOMER PROMISE

The Chair accepted as urgent consideration of this item, not included on the agenda for the information of the Panel members.

The Governments Priority Outcome programme for electronic Government set the objective to respond to email enquiries within one working day. Following consultation with the Chair, the Council implemented an automatic response to the email address used by Customer Services: contact@chorley.gov.uk

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

Chair