

CORPORATE AND POLICY DIRECTORATE

QUARTER 1 2008/09 – MONITORING REPORT

OVERALL SUMMARY

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to highlight any performance issues that have arisen during the first quarter of 2008/09.

Legal and Member Services and Human Resources

There are no significant areas of concern at this stage in the year, however, there is significant pressure on the HR team in dealing with issues relating to Job Evaluation (JE). These include dealing with the JE Appeals and Equal Pay Claims. This will continue for some time to come.

Income from searches needs to be carefully monitored, particularly in view of the downturn in the property market and increased competition.

Policy and Performance

There is only one area of particular concern and that relates to the achievement of outputs relating to ERDF grants. Following recent audits, some grants have had to be repaid due to ineligibility of spend. This will impact on overall performance.

Two issues will increase the workload in this area in particular. They are in:

- Responding to the requirements of the Local Government and Public Health Act and the White Paper “Communities in Control”.
- Introduction/implementation of the Comprehensive Area Assessment – replacing the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Financial Services

There are no significant areas of concern arising from the 1st Quarter of 2008/09.

It is pleasing to note that following the Audit Commission’s triennial review of the Council’s Audit Service, they concluded that “Internal Audit provides an effective review of major elements of internal control and the quality of work is good”.

The Annual Efficiency Statement was submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government which showed the Council had achieved £2.2m of efficiency gains in 2007/08. Overall, during the period 2005/06 – 2007/08 the Council achieved efficiency gains totalling £7.6m, of which £5.1m were cashable savings.

Exchequer and Customer Services

There are no particular areas for concern at present, although it is worth highlighting the potential impact the introduction of “Empty Property Rates” could have on the overall collection rate of business rates, based on the first quarter’s experience. The Council collected 99.9% of business rates in 2007/08. This will be closely monitored.

The introduction of the new national performance indicator which seeks to measure “Avoidable Contact” with the Council will require new systems to be introduced throughout the authority to ensure compliance. The HDL system has already been updated to measure this indicator.

ICT Services

A small number of service delivery performance indicators have not met their quarterly performance targets, due to high demand. These will be carefully monitored over the next quarter.

Pressures continue to fall on this service due to the ever increasing demands and expectations from IT as a key tool in the Council’s overall drive to improve services and achieve efficiencies.

Property Services

Pressure continues to be felt in this service, given the number of major land and property related projects the Council is running with. Capacity to deal with these issues continues to be a major challenge. Alternative delivery approaches to this service are currently being examined.

There are concerns about the level of income from industrial and commercial premises. This will be carefully monitored, particularly in view of the impact of the “credit crunch”.

The property team have successfully implemented the 1st phase of the Accommodation Strategy, with the Runcorn Town Hall project being delivered on time and on budget. The Strategy has led to significant revenue savings.