

**PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
12th September, 2008**

Present:- Councillor McNeely (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor G. A. Russell)
Councillors Austen, Barron, Burton, Gilding, Jack, P. A. Russell and Swift.

Also in attendance for item 66 below (Post Offices Closures in Rotherham) were:

Councillors Blair, Donaldson, Hodgkiss, Hughes, Hussain, Kaye, Lakin, Pickering,
Wootton, St. Wright and Wyatt.

Messrs M. Silcott and A. Steele (Post Office Ltd.)

Mr. D. Cottingham (Postwatch)

Members of the public representing the affected proposed post office closure areas.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Boyes, J. Hamilton and
Whelbourn.

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

63. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

64. QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2008/09

Tim Littlewood, Principal Officer Performance Management, presented the
submitted report relating to the above which focused on the new national
indicator set containing 198 indicators introduced in April, 2008.

The report was an exception report based on the measures contained
within the Corporate Plan, paying particular attention to the areas of
greater risk and also highlighted areas of strong performance.

The report addressed the main areas of performance across the Council
and examined issues relating to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and
Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Service Block scores.

The report covered:-

- Corporate Plan performance
- Direction of Travel (DOT)
- Performance Clinics

- Data Quality
- Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

At this stage it was not possible to report on the vast majority of the new measures. The submitted paperwork identified the ownership of each measure, who would report on each measure, and, where possible, whether or not mechanisms were in place to facilitate such report, when the data and mechanisms would be available and whether the measure was included in the Corporate Plan and under what theme. Work was ongoing to provide the missing information, particularly with regard to when the performance data would be available.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- indicators no longer available
- risks
- bed availability in the new care homes
- waiting lists for assessment for care

Resolved:- That the following be noted:

(1) overall position and direction of travel in relation to both overall performance and to the Audit Commission's CPA Direction of Travel Indicators performance

(2) performance clinics to be conducted in Quarter 1 be based on existing areas of concern and a risk assessment of the new national indicator set

(3) information contained within Appendix A of the submitted report requires more information in relation to responsible performance indicator managers and specific dates when performance data would be available from individual directorates for the measures they are responsible for

(4) the performance reporting schedule be reviewed to accommodate the performance reporting timescales of the Council and its partners.

65. OUR FUTURE GROUPS - SCRUTINY MEMBERSHIP

Resolved:- That scrutiny membership of the reconstituted Our Future Groups be as follows:-

GROUP 1 Strategic Capacity Governance and Structural Review

Councillor Whelbourn

GROUP 2 Strategic Partnership and Procurement Strategy

Councillors Jack and G. A. Russell (Councillor Burton to substitute for the Mayor when necessary)

GROUP 3 Devolution, Empowerment and Communities

Councillors Whelbourn and McNeely

GROUP 4 VFM/Resources Strategy

Councillor Boyes

GROUP 5 Innovation, ICT and Workstyle

Councillor Austen

66. POSTAL OFFICE CLOSURES IN ROTHERHAM

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Cath Saltis, Head of Scrutiny Services, who presented briefly the submitted report indicating that, as part of the Government's Network Change Programme to secure the long term future of the post office network, an announcement was made on 5th August, 2008 to close the following six post offices in Rotherham :

(a) Salisbury Road Post Office, 66a Salisbury Road, Maltby

(b) St. Ann's Post Office, 45 St. Ann's Road

(c) Toll Bar Post Office, 500 Wortley Road

(d) Whinney Hill Post Office, 14 Old Gate Lane, Thrybergh

(e) Parkgate Post Office, 96 Broad Street, Parkgate

(f) Harley Post Office, 11 Harley Road, Harley

The report set out the background to the Network Change Programme, details of the post offices identified for closure in Rotherham, demographics of the affected communities and considered the impact that planning applications in those areas could have on post office provision.

The report covered:-

- background
- access criteria
- situation in Rotherham
- impact on the community
- alternative provision
- future of local post offices

Also submitted was :-

- a petition containing over 500 signatures opposing the closure of Harley Post Office
- a response from John Healey, M.P., to the proposed closure of the post office branches within his constituency at Parkgate, Harley and Whinney Hill

It was noted that the consultation deadline on the proposed closures was 22nd September, 2008.

Following presentation of the report, the Chairman invited representations/comments/questions from the meeting.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the Post Office Ltd. representative answered, where possible, question from Ward Councillors, elected Members and members of the public/representatives on behalf of the proposed affected post offices.

General issues raised included:

- a feeling that the closure programme was a 'fait accompli' and that the consultation exercise was a waste of time
- clarification that, due to the overall closure programme requirement, withdrawal of a post office from the closure programme in Rotherham would result in another post office within the defined area (of which Rotherham was a part) being drawn into the closure programme
- changing nature of the use of post offices and reasons for closures
- not Government employees working in post offices but bought as businesses and clarification of the compensation arrangements
- alternative provision arrangements and costings for such

- Post Office research into the condition of Rotherham's post offices and the criteria for proposing closure
- concerns generally regarding apparent lack of consideration of the social impact of post office closures
- concerns generally regarding the accessibility of alternative provision
- concerns regarding lack of additional budgets i.e. PTE to improve local services to alternative provision facilities
- general concerns regarding weighting or lack of weighting of criteria for closure
- general concerns regarding the consultation process in that residents had not been consulted
- general concerns regarding the 'flawed' findings from the consultation process
- given that Post Office Ltd. was driven by the effort to save money, what alternative factors to closure had been considered
- clarification of the Council's contact/consultation with the affected post offices
- need not to fall foul of the Government's own disability rules regarding accessibility of wheelchairs on buses

Specific issues raised included:-

(a) St. Ann's Post Office

- need to look seriously at the alternative proposed provisions in more detail
- town centre not appropriate : already very busy
- St. Ann's uniquely caters for a diverse community language mix which is not available at other locations
- previous closure on Fitzwilliam Road increased usage of St. Ann's which already has queues
- not possible to provide alternative post office that would cater for the St. Ann's customers
- disadvantage from a travel perspective particularly to the elderly, infirm and disabled

- no consideration given to the impact of closure on the long serving loyal employees

(b) Parkgate Post Office

- proposed alternative provision a problem from an access point of view in that the community is in the top 5% area of deprivation nationally with low degree of car ownership and a heavy reliance on public transport
- the nearest alternative on Bellows Road itself likely to close for at least a year as part of the centre's redevelopment
- the route to Bellows Road is up a steep hill and Parkgate is a high level incapacity benefit community

(c) Harley Post Office

- a village community already isolated would be more isolated with the closure
- consultation process flawed in that no member of the public aware of consultation
- consultation information flawed in that there are only 2 buses per day to Wentworth (alternative proposed post office) and following the one at 12.25 p.m. there is no return bus from Wentworth until 9.15 a.m. the following day
- concerns regarding discrimination against disabled people in that they are unable to access the alternative proposed provisions at Wentworth (see above) and Chapeltown
- there is an half a mile walk to the bus stop to travel to Chapeltown, again a problem for the elderly infirm, disabled, mothers with young children
- residents are mainly elderly with 20% disabled and would be denied easy access to buy postal products
- the human element/social contact via the post office and knowing the pattern of customers to alert about potential problems would be lost
- post office being denied the facility to sell certain services i.e. travel insurance and to increase services must have them in the first place

(d) Whinney Hill Post Office

- area of deprivation with high number of disabled people and residents on benefits, low car usage
- journey to Hollings Lane Post Office on a hill
- no direct bus service to the East Herringthorpe Post Office therefore not a viable alternative
- town centre not a viable alternative as already full to bursting

(e) Salisbury Road Post Office

- used by a lot of elderly/disabled people
- alternative post office on hill and car parking issues

In concluding the discussion, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

Reference was made to the comments and concerns that had been submitted to the Council in letters, on line and in person by residents and to additional information that had been gathered by communities regarding more accurate information about local scenarios.

The strong representations made in respect of Harley, Parkgate and St. Ann's post offices were particularly acknowledged.

Resolved:- That, in view of the various representations, as referred to above, made to the Council, the information now submitted and representations received by the Council be referred to Postwatch and Post Office Ltd. and Post Office Ltd. be requested to re-consider their proposed post office closure programme for Rotherham in the light of such representations.

67. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 5 of the meeting of this Committee held on 23rd May, 2008, Sarah McCall, Performance Officer, presented the submitted report detailing how the Council's Corporate Procurement Strategy was based around the 4 key visions of the National Procurement Strategy:

- Vision for leadership, management and capacity
- Vision for partnering, collaboration and supplier management
- Vision for systems that allow business to be done electronically
- Vision for stimulating markets and achieving community benefits

Implementation of the Strategy was via four action plans corresponding to

the visions and the report provided an update on progress against those action plans.

The action plan produced following the base budget review of third sector funding had now been incorporated into reporting of the Strategy Action Plan.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- assessment and future reporting of outcomes
- CYPS Joint Commissioning Framework 2008/11
- awareness training regarding what could be procured from/provided by VCS

Resolved:- That the actions to implement the Procurement Strategy be noted and the ongoing actions be supported.

68. PROCUREMENT LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Further to Minute No. 6 of the meeting of this Committee held on 23rd May, 2008, Sarah McCall, Performance Officer, presented the submitted report setting out the details of the indicators developed to date, targets and performance for the first quarter of the current year.

Of the eighteen indicators (details of which were appended to the report) :

- two were status green with performance above target
- five were status amber with performance on target
- two were still under development
- two were for information/monitoring only without targets
- one had reporting yet to commence
- five were annual indicators with reporting due later in the year
- one had been superseded by changing legislation

Resolved:- That the current performance against the indicators be noted.

69. PAYMENT OF INVOICES WITHIN 30 DAYS (FORMER BVPI8)

Further to Minute No. 4 of the meeting of this Committee held on 23rd May, 2008, Sarah McCall, Performance Officer, presented the submitted report which detailed BVPI 8 and how it measured the payment of

undisputed invoices within 30 days.

The Council had agreed the following average annual targets for performance of BVPI 8 with RBT :

2007/08	96.3%
2008/09	97.0%
2009/10	97.5%

Outturn performance for 2007/08 achieved 94% which demonstrated an improvement on the 2006/07 outturn performance of 91%.

Performance against BVPI 8 was not as consistent as it should be and it was recognised that the Council should act to instil and embed good practice in this area and work was ongoing to this effect. Recent performance had achieved :

April 95%
May 92%
June 88%
July 90%
August 91%

Average performance against BVPI 8 for the year to date was 91.2%.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- impact on vulnerable small suppliers
- ROCC system

Resolved:- That the current position in respect of BVPI 8 be noted with concern and mitigating actions be supported.

70. RBT PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Mark Gannon, Transformation and Strategic Partnerships Manager, presented the submitted report summarising the performance of RBT against contractual measures and key service delivery issues for the first quarter of the current financial year across the areas of Customer Access, Human Resources and Payroll, ICT, Procurement and Revenues and Benefits.

Following the recent renegotiation of the RBT contract, a new performance management framework was developed to provide a way to measure and manage performance effectively, which would indicate not only the health of the services but also the health and performance of the Partnership overall.

The framework included:-

- Strategic Measures : a set of 5 key measures for each service area which were of the greatest strategic significance for the Partnership plus 5 cross cutting Partnership measures (details were submitted)
- Operational Measures : a set of measures for each service area which assess the effectiveness of service delivery. These replace the service level agreements and are to be used in conjunction with the service credit model (details were submitted).
- Management Measures : local performance indicators for each work stream which allow additional key service information to be monitored and assessed

Work had been ongoing during Quarter 1 to implement the new suite of measures, including the preparation of detailed methodology statements for each measure which set out what the measure was, how data would be gathered etc. As a number of measures were new and required new reporting mechanisms to be implemented, not all measures were able to be reported on at the present time. All measures were on target to be reported fully from next month onwards.

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- value for money
- Council Tax collection recovery procedures
- resourcing of calls that previously went to the Maltby and Wath district offices which were now being dealt with through Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Assessment Direct Service
- Tell Us Once project

Resolved:- That the information be noted.

71. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th July, 2008 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

72. WORK IN PROGRESS

Members of the Committee reported as follows:-

(a) Councillor Burton reported that the latest meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel had considered a report on children's centres and had had the opportunity to comment on the draft parenting strategy,

(b) Councillor Austen reported that the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel had held a themed meeting on equalities with interesting presentations from the BME Young People's Forum. Also discussed was the duty of schools to promote community cohesion.

It was also noted that the review of parish councils had begun.

(c) Councillor Jack reported that the latest meeting of the Adult Services and Health Scrutiny Panel had received a presentation regarding prostate cancer screening.

Forthcoming items included a report concerning changes to the mental health service and that the review into breastfeeding was to commence in the next few weeks.

73. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no formal call in requests.