

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 22nd June 2009

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Michael Lager

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Efficiency & Resources

Portfolio covers:-

- Financial and Treasury Management Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Information Technology
- Exchequer (Council Tax and Benefits)
- Risk Management/Business Continuity
- Business Efficiency Programme
- HR and Organisational Development
- Business Systems inc. performance
- Health and Safety

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 20th April 2009 AND ENDING 9th June 2009

MANAGING THIS PORTFOLIO

I have asked Cllr McKee to keep a particular watch on Procurement, Information Technology, Risk Management and Health & Safety matters, and Cllr Sandbrook on Exchequer and Organisational Development, the remainder being covered jointly.

We have regular sessions with senior managers to monitor service delivery, and provide a steer on priorities and approach towards future issues. In this we use the Forward Plan and Business Calendar.

The session with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that had to be cancelled last year has yet to be re-scheduled.

KEY ISSUES AHEAD

I believe these to be:

- maintaining service standards to benefit claimants
- delivering the planned financial performance in 2009-10 using the business review process overseen by the new Performance, Innovation

and Efficiency Programme Board

- **planning and delivering a balanced budget for 2010-11, and beyond**
- **resourcing the capital expenditure programme in 2009-10**
- **extending improvements in performance.**

BENEFITS

New claims are turned round in 21 days, better than target, with changes in circumstances processed in 7 days. Extra staff resources have been provided to meet a higher level of claims, paid from government grant.

Following work in the north of the District and Braintree town to increase awareness, a similar programme is planned for Witham in the autumn.

TREASURY

Interest income is now falling away as deposits placed at good rates are now re-deposited at current nominal levels.

The need to invest an appropriate proportion of the Council's capital to generate improved levels of income remains pressing. It is intended to seek advice from the Council's treasury management advisers, Arlingclose Ltd, on an investment strategy and process to diversify our holdings. At the same time, the commercial property portfolio, largely inherited in 1974, needs rationalising while retaining a strategic influence on the District's development. The town centre development projects will create significant value for the Council.

It now appears that the Icelandic bank deposits are not likely to have to be written off in full.

ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT

The detailed budget book for 2009-10 has been published showing the funding in detail for the Council's services. The 2008-9 accounts are being prepared ready for audit later in the year.

EFFICIENCY AND SAVINGS

The new Performance Innovation and Efficiency Programme Board had its first meeting on 27th May 2009. The project management process was discussed and some improvements requested. The Board will see highlight reports for all projects under its remit before deciding which to focus on at its next meeting. With a range of projects, Members wish to divide these among themselves for ease of monitoring.

The need to raise the savings target from £500k to £800k gave rise to Press interest and secured positive coverage. Risks around achieving this have been

identified and mitigation agreed.

The Board also reviewed the final 2008-9 performance report and targets for 2009-10.

IT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

GCH have taken up their new Witham office and BDC customers are now handled by ECC staff at Witham library. The CSC achieve record levels of speed and service in handling calls.

Work continues to establish the network security procedures necessary for a link to the government network.

The impact of document imaging is seen throughout the building in fewer filing cabinets and cupboards.

STAFF

TUPE transfers have taken place of parking service staff to Colchester BC and CSC to GCH.

The Programme Management Office or PMO is starting to make an impact as staff are recruited and start work.

Sickness absence is down (2008-9 average 8.24 days against 11.13).

A new staff suggestion scheme, "Brainwaves", has started.

More training hours were taken up by staff.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT CAN BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING:

Cllr Michael Lager