



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **31st July 2003**

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report seeks to update Members on various issues relating to the Resources portfolio since my last report to Council.

2. PERSONNEL AND EMPLOYMENT RELATED MATTERS

2.1 Hay Job Evaluation – Pay Strategy Phase 1

A paper was taken to Personnel Committee on 14th July approving delegated decision-making powers for the Chief Executive, in consultation with appropriate Members, over senior pay structure proposals. This would facilitate trade union consultation, but the staff side have been informed agreement to the Pay Structure is required by 22nd August.

2.2 Corporate Equalities Action Plan

Following discussions at Chief Officer and Corporate Joint Forum level, the Authority's corporate equalities action plan has been placed on the council's web site.

3. BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 Publication of the Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04

After approval of the BVPP by Council on 26th June the Plan was distributed to all libraries, departments, external partners and government agencies. The BVPP was available on the NCC Internet and Intranet web sites from Monday 30th June 2003.

3.2 External Audit of the annual out-turn of BVPIs

The external audit of performance information published in the BVPP and submitted to the Audit Commission has been completed. The external auditors have commended the Authority on the improvements made in the accuracy of calculation of Performance Indicators and completeness of audit trails. This improvement has been achieved by the efforts of internal auditors, CPG (Corporate Performance Group) representatives and officers working within each of the departments to establish controls, monitoring procedures and audit trails.

There were, however, a few late amendments to out-turn performance information that resulted in some incorrect data being published in the BVPP. There have also been some difficulties obtaining information from the police & Districts Councils resulting in a number of crime PIs not being reported and slightly inaccurate reporting of the recycling PIs. In all of these cases the Audit Commission and the external auditor have assured us that the audit of these PIs will not be qualified.

3.3 Best Value General Survey

The Government has identified a number of 'quality', survey-based performance indicators, which explicitly reflect users' experience of services. Every authority undertakes the 'Best Value General Survey' every three years. This September 3,500 households, randomly selected from the postcode address file, will receive a questionnaire from Nottinghamshire County Council asking them what they think of the services we provide.

We will inform Nottinghamshire residents that the survey is underway, identifying where we have made service improvements, with an article in the September edition of the Nottinghamshire County Council newspaper. We will stress the importance of the study and how their views, as residents of Nottinghamshire, help in shaping the future of local service provision.

We have contracted BMG to undertake the survey on behalf of the Nottinghamshire Consortia, which includes the City and six of the District Councils. BMG have advised us that they will design, in accordance with ODPM guidance, the questionnaire to be visually appealing and easy to complete in a booklet format. The questionnaire will be circulated to all Councillors when available.

3.4 Performance Indicators

Analysis of the Authority's performance in achieving the targets set for 2002/03 compared with performance in 2001/02 identifies a slight improvement in achieving the targets set, compared with performance in 2001/02, for national and Strategic Plan PIs.

	% of PIs below	% of PIs below
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	target 2001/02	target 2002/03
Targets set for all (local & national) BVPIs published in the BVPP	45%	46%
Targets set for national BVPIs reported to the Audit Commission	54%	52%
Targets set in the Strategic Plan	59%	52%

The suites of PIs referred to in the above table are amended each year in accordance with ODPM specification and department requirements. The analysis is therefore recorded as a percentage to enable meaningful comparison to be made year on year.

Performance targets set by the Authority are a commitment made in advance to achieve a stated level of service improvement and, for the Authority to attain Top 20 status, noticeable improvement will be essential. The CPA inspectors in their Corporate Assessment Report called for improved target setting, monitoring and corrective action if the Authority is to improve at the pace it wishes.

Seminars were held during July for key departmental staff to focus on performance recording and monitoring. These were facilitated by our auditors, PriceWaterhouse Coopers, and informed by a contribution from Internal Audit. The seminars allowed contributions and discussion intended to enable performance reporting to be understood and given due recognition within the Authority, using performance indicators as a means of measuring service delivery and improvement.

3.5 Business Planning Review Board

The Business Planning Review Board has produced its Annual Report and this will be taken to Cabinet in September.

For the coming year, Board Members have again agreed to be assigned to departments to bring a 'critical friend' perspective to the business planning process. Inputs essentially will revolve around constructive challenge to business plan outcomes and planning activities, at both the review and development phases.

Specifically, the Board Members' role will be to act as an independent voice, offering observations on the robustness of the process and the application of corporate business planning standards. As in previous reviews, Board Members will be asked to bear in mind two questions:-

- Is this a good service(s)?
- Will the business planning activity bring about improvements in the service(s)?

4. TRADING SERVICES

4.1 The performance of trading organisations continues to be monitored through regular portfolio briefings with officers. Out-turn performance information for 2002-03 was included in my last report to Council.

4.2 Environment Department Contracting Services (DLO/DSO's)

Further to the draft out-turn report in my last Council report, detailed out-turn information across all business units for the financial year 2002-03 is to be presented to the Environment Select Committee for information and comment.

4.3 Corporate Procurement Strategy

The strategy is now being implemented. The first tranche of appointments to the CPU (Corporate Procurement Unit) will be drawn from the staff at County Supplies and is scheduled for September. A consequent reorganisation of County Supplies is currently being discussed with the trade unions. The target date for completing these consultations is the autumn

5. ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 PSA - Climate Change - update

Members will recall from previous reports that this is one of 12 PSA projects that, together, are worth a grant reward of £15 million. The County Council is committed to delivering 68% (3,490 tonnes) of the 5,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions to be saved by project partners. Having already achieved its Strategic Plan target of a 25% cumulative reduction for the period 1998-2003, the project will enable the County Council to stretch this further to a minimum of 27% by 2006.

Project partners have each produced a project plan, to be delivered locally, but co-ordinated and monitored by officers of the County Council. The County Council's contribution will be phased over 2 years (2003-05) and is based on the conversion of old inefficient coal fired boilers. Approval has now been received from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to include the use of wood fired systems as an alternative to gas or oil fired replacement systems. The use of wood as a fuel is a net zero CO₂ contributor which should enable The PSA stretch target to be readily achieved, or indeed surpassed.

The PSA project has now been interfaced with the maintenance of buildings boiler replacement programme with conversions to Woodheat now being considered as an option rather than gas or oil systems. All sites in the 2003/4 programme have now been surveyed and 7 sites identified as suitable for conversion to Woodheat. Schools have confirmed their desire to proceed and proposals are currently being presented to school governors.

5.2 Sustainable Energy Bill

Letters have been sent to all Nottinghamshire MP's seeking their support for this Bill and the energy efficiency targets contained. MP's were asked to lobby relevant ministers and sign the two relevant House of Commons Early Day Motions (EDMs) – EDM 148, which supports energy efficiency targets, and EDM 910, which supports the Sustainable Energy Bill. The opportunity was taken of reminding them of the Local Authorities Energy Partnership (representing all 19 local authorities in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire); its recognition of the importance of energy efficiency and commitment to help achieve the government's objective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

5.3 Newark & Sherwood Energy Agency

A report was taken to Cabinet on 23rd July advising of new proposals for the joint management of the Newark & Sherwood Energy Agency. Originally established as a vehicle to deliver the SAVE II and other European programmes, following the successful completion of these contracts the Energy Agency has more recently focused less on Europe and more on locally based initiatives. It is however beneficial to retain the Energy Agency as this enables other European funding opportunities to be more successfully pursued.

The main purpose of the Energy Agency's Board has been redefined as being to advise the constituent authorities, the general public and the domestic, business, voluntary and public sectors within the district of Newark & Sherwood and to actively promote energy efficiency with particular emphasis on carbon management and CO₂ reduction.

Cllr John Stocks
Cabinet Member for Resources