



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

date **Thursday 17th MAY 2006**

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

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

2. HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATED MATTERS

Key issues at present are implementation of the new integrated HR structure, agreeing appropriate HR service level agreements with departments, developing training and support packages for managers to empower them to undertake fundamental HR work together with an effective intranet support page to give managers easier access to HR information. The absence management project continues to be the focus of attention with project board main priorities established as:

- The development of accurate and reliable information systems
- The review and development of supporting policy and procedure
- Support mechanisms including training/re-training of line managers in relation to their duties and responsibilities, and the provision of support through Absence Management Officers.
- Ensuring the validation of compliance and success.

Joint meetings with trade unions are continuing, as is a review seeking to streamline key policies around absence management and capability.

3. BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE

Business Improvement Board

The Business Improvement Board which includes people with extensive experience in private business or from academia are again working with the Council this year and giving advice and comment on a range of improvement projects. One project has involved a survey of performance management arrangements in the Council. The results of this survey are to be used along with the findings on public satisfaction

with the Council and its services in a training event for senior managers.

Changes to the Government's performance framework for local councils

Members will be aware that the Government announced proposals in their White Paper last year to introduce a new system of performance assessment to replace the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The new system will give greater weight to local priorities and will look not only at the Council but at its key partners with a focus on the area and community they serve. The implications of the new procedure will clearly need to inform performance processes and monitoring undertaken within the Authority. Details of the new system are being developed and officers of the Council will be contributing to this work.

4. TRADING SERVICES

I am delighted to report that the majority of services are in line with their targeted position. Furthermore a number of services, Landscape Services, despite reduced buyback, Building Cleaning and Building Direct are all expected to exceed their forecast targets and surpluses are anticipated. This represents excellent performance by the businesses this year.

School Catering continues to experience some difficulties. Cumulatively meal sales are exceeding their target due to ongoing marketing efforts and PFI income, but direct costs continue to be above target. As a result, I have agreed a 10p rise in the cost of a primary school meal with effect from the start of the new school year. The meal price was last increased in April 2006 from £1.70 to £1.75. The proposed increase from September 2007 represents an annual increase of 5.5%. Previous increases have been in line with inflation only and generally represent just over 2%. In order to meet Government's nutritional standards and deliberate strategies to source fresh meat and vegetables locally against the price of school meals, it is necessary to consider an increase of 10p a meal with effect from the new academic year.

5. ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY

I am delighted to announce that the County Council has been selected as a finalist for another award in respect of its work on sustainability, and woodheat in particular.

In common with other shortlisted organisations, we have passed through an initial assessment for the Ashden Awards and are now invited to an interview with the full judging panel in London with a presentation ceremony scheduled for 21st June. The process will include a technical seminar, in partnership with Imperial College

London, at which all UK and International finalists will present their work to practitioners, academics and students at Imperial College.

The first prizes are up to £30,000 each, to be used to raise awareness of the importance of local sustainable energy and to promote the work of the finalists. One of the aims of the Awards is to highlight the work of the winners and the potential of sustainable energy as a whole to a wide audience. In addition to the above there will be a number of policy-focused seminars involving Award winners in the Autumn. It is intended that any prize money would be used to further promote biomass and other renewable technologies to schools to develop zero carbon use and integrate into our Eco-schools project and Climate Heroes Campaign project.

Cllr John Stocks
Cabinet Member for Resources