



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

date **Thursday 18th May 2006**

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 former Resources portfolio since my last report to Council.

2. PERSONNEL AND EMPLOYMENT RELATED MATTERS

2.1 Senior Officer Restructuring/ Budget

The County Council at its meeting on 6th April agreed five new departments (inc. Chief Executive's) and consultation for the second and indicative third tier structures. Consultation outcomes are due shortly, meanwhile preparatory work continues for both restructuring and for dealing with measures arising from the budget.

An enabling document has been issued for final draft consultation and the Strategic Director posts are being filled – the Director of Children's Services will be commencing his duties on the 28th August and the Authority is currently recruiting for the Director of Adult Social Care and Health.

Regular meetings are held with the trade unions over the issue of redundancies and the 188 notice and, whilst the trade unions have reported isolated problems (which are being dealt with), on the whole the vacancy protocol appears to be working well.

Work is progressing on the design of a new human resources (HR) structure and a number of groups have been set up to develop thoughts around the integration of Learning and Development, Organisational development, Health and Safety, Service Level Agreements and Baseline data. Draft proposals for the integration of HR are being developed together with proposals to make the required budget savings.

2.2 Learning and Development

Personnel Committee on the 16th March agreed, in principle, the draft Key leadership Skills for senior managers, and further work is now refining these so that they can be easily measured. Key Leadership skills will form the basis of development for the newly appointed top three tiers.

The draft Learning and Development strategy recently agreed at Personnel Committee is to be subject to formal consultation and it is envisaged that a final version will be available before the summer recess. The Building Effective Leadership (management development) programme for third tier officers is being designed and will be in place by September.

Electronic equality and diversity briefings are now established and the first one was launched during week commencing 1st May

2.3 Sickness Absence

We are keen to pursue assurances at the Informal Corporate Joint Forum on the 26th April where the Trade Unions agreed to work closely with the County Council to tackle sickness absence and consider ways in which we can develop strategies to reduce sickness absence. A tight and time-limited action plan will need to be developed as part of this work. Active monitoring support will be provided by the Performance Improvement Group.

2.4 Children's Workforce strategy

A workforce development plan needs to be drawn up as part of the development of Children's services across the authority. A post has been established to support corporate HR with this work which requires a joined up approach to be taken between the County Council and key partners.

2.5 Health and Safety

Work is progressing on introducing the Council's Stress Management Toolkit, which will provide an electronic means for managers to gauge the levels of stress within their specific parts of the organisation and to develop ways in which this can be managed. More widely, the Health and Safety function is liaising with the City Council to develop joint proposals for business development and continuity.

A detailed and far reaching employee support package is being developed, to support employees displaced as a result of the budget cuts, and the package involves additional and individual counselling support as well as external support from the Department of Work and Pensions.

3. BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 Strategic Plan Performance Management

Council approved the new Strategic Plan "All together better" on 6th April 2006. The Plan contains a range of commitments sorted into five themes, namely: Safer-Stronger, Healthier, Learning-Earning, Cleaner-Greener, and Travel & Access

The Plan also set out three Principles and Values for "Improving the way we work". These are:

Putting our customers at the heart of everything we do
Being a civic leader, helping to develop strong communities
across the County
Delivering excellent but affordable public services

Since approving the Plan, work has been undertaken to establish a set of performance management targets, now approved by Cabinet. In setting targets the following considerations have been taken into account. They must convert the commitments of the Strategic Plan into measurable form making clear the Council's intentions and ambition. They must enable progress throughout the four year period of the plan to be measured and monitored. They must enable the effectiveness of developments to be assessed and for changes to be made if these are not having the desired effect

Targets for the new Plan will focus more on impact and outputs than on measuring inputs, but in several instances will depend upon partnership delivery. Predicting four years ahead is difficult at any time and currently the Council faces major uncertainties. Target setting cannot therefore be a precise activity. Changes outside the control of the Council can significantly alter the possibility of achieving a target. For this reason it is intended to review the targets on an annual basis.

The targets will provide the basis for performance management of the Strategic Plan. Information on each of the targets will be gathered as frequently as possible and the information kept on the PRIDE Performance Management System which can be consulted through the County Council's intranet.

Every six months a progress report will go to Cabinet and Council and a full report will be produced for Cabinet and Council annually. The performance against the Strategic Plan targets will also be reported through the Annual Performance Plan published at the end of June each year.

3.2 User Satisfaction Survey 2006/07

The Authority has a statutory requirement to undertake a User Satisfaction Survey every three years. (The County Council has undertaken similar surveys annually). The ODPM have recommended that authorities work together and included a draft "joint survey" in their consultation documents. The County Council has agreed to undertake

a joint survey with the District Councils, with three additional questions to gather baseline data for the Local Area Agreement. Unfortunately Gedling Borough is the only district that will not be joining the consortium and is insistent on undertaking its own, separate survey. Nottingham City Council has agreed to join the consortium and will share the contractual arrangements (as previously). Three companies are being invited to tender for completing the survey work which is scheduled for the autumn.

4. TRADING SERVICES

4.1 Performance of Environment Direct Services

I was hoping to be able to report on the Year-End Accounts for the Direct Services but the figures are still being finalised, so this report offers just a brief overview of the last reported position.

I am pleased to be able to report that the majority of businesses are broadly in line with the expected budgetary position and in Highways Operations the position is better than expected. This is due in part to good progress made on implementing BBC schemes, as well as to their success in obtaining external work.

The turnover for *building*DIRECT has caused some concern, but improvements continue to be made and it is anticipated that the business will achieve a breakeven position. Building Cleaning has also faced a difficult year with higher labour costs resulting in a higher deficit than expected. However, additional income continued to be identified and it is hoped a breakeven position could be achieved. School catering sales are still under pressure mainly due to the reduction in vending sales in secondary schools. Vending machines are gradually being removed from schools in accordance with government guidelines and the rolling out of the healthy eating programme. Savings are being identified in other direct costs and overheads and, again, the year end target should be achieved.

I would like to thank all those who are working so hard, in very difficult circumstances to keep these businesses viable. I hope to bring a favourable confirmation of the Final Accounts to the next meeting.

4.2 Property Services Customer Satisfaction Report

Each year Property Services undertakes an annual customer satisfaction survey with schools to measure satisfaction levels with the various parts of the service. The survey includes the catering, cleaning, *building*DIRECT and landscape services. The results allow managers to determine whether services are improving, identify priorities for further service improvements and address any concerns.

This year's results were encouraging, showing high customer satisfaction levels overall. Customer expectation remains high and the

service is generally meeting those expectations. Measures have been put in place to address particular areas of concern and deliver improvements in the future.

Thanks are due to those who work in Property Services and who have contributed to these positive results.

Cllr John Stocks
Cabinet Member for Resources