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SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 November 2008 – 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Williamson (in the Chair), Councillors Burroughs, B Coleman, M Coleman, Collins, Grey, S Hacon, Page, Pettit, Reynolds and Weymouth.

Mr R Packham (Managing Director), Mr S Duncan (Head of Financial Services), Mrs C Metcalf (Head of Customer Services), Mr R Hodds (Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer) and Miss K Edmonds (Senior Member Services Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barker and Field.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2008 were confirmed.

2. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the period 1 October 2008 to 31 January 2009 was noted.

3. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee was asked to consider the Performance Indicators for the period 1 April 2008 to 30 September 2008.

Councillor Coleman stated that Performance Indicators were one of the major areas to be focused on this year and that he and the Managing Director would be attending future Scrutiny Committee meetings to talk about Performance Indicators. It was reported that in general, the Performance Indicators were positive. There were 17 Performance Indicators and at the end of 2006/07, there were four Performance Indicators were in the upper quartile. It was reported that there were 18 Indicators of which four were improving substantially and eight were improving although it was reported that six were deteriorating. It was reported that 15 of the National Indicators and Local Indicators were on target and that only five of these were below target.

The Managing Director then detailed individual Performance Indicators:-

BV12 presented seven months worth of data on sickness and that it was anticipated that 8.8 days per full time employee would be achieved which would place the Council in line with the national average for sickness as they had previously been one of the worst performing Councils.

BV668 (Local Authority Rent Collection and Arrears – proportion of rent collected), it was reported that this Performance Indicator had slid ten months ago and that an Improvement Plan was now in place where one Estate Manager had been given responsibility of rent collection. It was reported that the Council would not make the top quartile on this Performance Indicator but may be on target in the last quarter. A Member asked what measures Great Yarmouth Borough Council was currently putting in place to prevent tenants from being made homeless if they were not able to pay their rent. The Managing Director stated that the Council could make special financial arrangements to prevent this situation from arising. A Member asked if the Borough Council could furnish tenants with information on help that the Council were able to offer. The Managing Director stated that tenants already have this information via a tenant's magazine and a Member asked for the Local Authority to do a specific leaflet/information drop to reiterate the help available to all tenants.

BV212 (average time taken to re-let Local Authority housing) – it was reported that this Performance Indicator was in the upper quartile and it had made an improvement since the previous quarter.

National Indicator 157A (percentage of planning applications determined – major applications in 13 weeks). The Committee was informed that major planning applications that were subject to legal agreements, had been complex and drawn out and that a comparatively small number of the applications in this category meant that such applications had a greater impact on the level of performance. However, it was pointed out that this would not affect the planning delivery grant.

National Indicator 157B (percentage of planning applications determined – major applications in eight weeks). It was reported this Performance Indicator had improved in the last two years due to staff recruitment.

National Indicator 195C (percentage of relevant land and highways from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible). It was reported that these figures were low, however, the Council was above the bottom quartile. Concern was expressed that Great Yarmouth Borough Council had set a low target which would place them in the bottom quartile and it was stated that this would need to be addressed with the Service Unit Manager for Environment.

BV218A (percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours of notification). It was reported that this Performance Indicator had improved.

BV218B (percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours). It was reported that the performance level of this indicator had fell slightly as in the last quarter this Performance Indicator had achieved 100% and this had now fallen to 98.83%.

RESOLVED:

That the Performance Indicators for the period 1 April to 30 September 2008 be received.

4. SECTION 106 FUNDS

The Head of Financial Services provided the Committee with a verbal update on Section 106 Funds stating that he had looked at a report presented to the Economic Scrutiny Committee in 2003 on Section 106 Funds and that he would be able to present a full report at a future meeting of Scrutiny. He, however, pointed out there were issues around how Section 106

Funds were dealt with and he needed to analyse the full data for the past ten years. Members agreed that they were interested in the Section 106 monies that had accrued interest which should have been forwarded on to each Parish Council directly.

5. CONCURRENT AND NON-CONCURRENT FUNDING FOR PARISH COUNCILS

The Head of Financial Services gave the Committee an update on concurrent and non-concurrent funding for Parish Councils stating that each year all Parish Councils in the Borough were asked to submit bids for funding and that Great Yarmouth Borough Council was now in the process of finalising the 2008/09 bids which would be detailed in a report and presented to the January 2009 Scrutiny meeting. A Member expressed concern that the deadline for placing bids was too short and the Head of Financial Services stated that many Parish Councils had expressed this concern and that the deadlines had therefore been extended. The Chairman stated that many Parish Councils were receiving the funds and were not using them for the correct reason that they were originally applied for and that this should be further investigated as there seemed to be no accountability for this issue. A Member asked if the Borough Council received Parish Councils Statement of Accounts and could this be used to ascertain what the funds were being spent on.

6. STAFF ACCOMMODATION

The Head of Customer Services gave a verbal update on staff accommodation issues stating that D Harvey from Harvey & Co had been appointed to prepare an Option Appraisal document which had detailed two options and it was reported that two buildings had been looked at on a leasehold for three, five and ten year periods. It was reported that the ongoing repair and maintenance of the existing buildings had been investigated in order to reduce the ongoing responsibility of repair and maintenance. A high level business case would be presented to the Asset Management Group on Thursday, 27 November 2008 and if this business case was agreed, the business case would then be presented to the Executive Board and then onto Cabinet. It was reported that the Borough Council currently has five customer access points that needed to be looked at. An independent evaluation of Trafalgar House and the Old Fire Station was on-going as to alternative uses. It was reported that the Borough Council lease for Maltings House had been extended with a six month break clause.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer reported on the Work Programme stating that on the first page of the Work Programme the internal post issue and the Safer Neighbourhood Team issue had both been addressed. On page two, the concurrent and non-concurrent funding for Parish Councils was an outstanding issue. Alternative uses for the Town Hall, this issue was currently being addressed. On page three, ISC and accommodation of staff, this issue was currently being addressed. The highways general maintenance in South Yarmouth issue was still to be addressed. The tender procedure capital projects, green waste issues were still to be addressed. The review of key Performance Indicators was an on-going issue being addressed. The review of the management structure had been dealt with and the travellers' incursion issue had partly been dealt with and an update would be given on this in a future meeting.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Monday, 19 January 2009 at 6.00 pm.

9. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm.