

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 22 December 2009

Subject: Performance Management Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Bassett

Item 8(i)

Recommending:

That the report of the Performance Management Portfolio Holder be noted.

Work on areas where we may be able to improve efficiency or save money has been progressing. An initial report to the Performance Management/Finance and Economic Development Committee on 23 November was presented. The report has identified several initial areas for review of consideration and I am meeting with relevant managers to discuss how the reviews can be accommodated.

A summary of Areas Suitable for Review

1. Forester – it was felt that the current exercise to tender for printing and distribution could be expanded to cover the outsourcing of the editorial role. A saving of £40,000 was identified as a target with the review to be led by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Leader.
2. Members – concern was expressed about the growth in the number of meetings and whether 58 remained an appropriate number of Members for the Council. A target saving was not identified and it was acknowledged that a review to reduce the number of Members might take a number of years to complete. However, a review was felt necessary and, as he has previously examined this issue, the Assistant to the Chief Executive is to be invited to lead the review with the Leader.
3. Police Community Support Officers - the Council entered into the commitment to jointly fund 6 PCSOs prior to the heavy investment in the Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative and the expansion of the Safer Communities Team. It was felt appropriate that the funding for the PCSOs should be negotiated down in a tapered way over a period of time. The appropriate Chief Officer and Portfolio Holder to take this forward are the Director of Environment and Street Scene and the Community Safety and Transport Portfolio Holder.
4. Insurance – a tendering exercise is currently underway as a collaborative procurement with 8 other authorities. This is being co-ordinated by the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and a target saving of £100,000 has been identified (with a minimum of £60,000 of the saving relating to the General Fund). This work is being led by the Director of Finance and ICT and the Performance Management Portfolio Holder.
5. Voluntary Sector – it was felt that the grants to Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Citizen's Advice Bureau and the women's refuge should be protected but at their current level. The area suitable for review here is the process by which grants are administered as it was felt that this could be streamlined or handled by a third party. The appropriate people for this review are the Assistant to the Chief Executive and the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder.

6. Information Centre – there was no desire to withdraw services from remote locations but it was felt that a review could consider the appropriateness of current locations. Specifically, a review considering the relocation of the Information Centre in Waltham Abbey from the Town Hall to the library might be beneficial. This review should be conducted by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Leader.
7. Print/Messenger Service – concern over value for money had been highlighted by an Internal Audit report. It was felt that a review should be conducted by the Director of Corporate Support Services and the Performance Management Portfolio Holder to examine the greater use of electronic access and possible outsourcing.
8. Secretarial Bureau/Land Charges – Members felt a review covering efficiency and value for money should be conducted by the Director of Corporate Support Services and the Performance Management Portfolio Holder.
9. Legal Services – the Group were unsure why the Council were not participating in the shared services arrangements involving Essex County Council and most other districts in Essex. A review was felt appropriate to cover working with this shared service and examining other models of service delivery. This review should be led by the Director of Corporate Support Services and the Legal and Estates Portfolio Holder.
10. Building Control – the Planning Services Standing Scrutiny Panel have already initiated a review to consider a shared service and alternative models of service delivery. The need for this review was agreed and it is suggested that this Committee keeps the work of the Standing Scrutiny Panel under review.
11. Grounds Maintenance/Country Care/Nursery – it was felt that a review of these areas should concentrate on the combining of functions/management, ensuring full cost recovery from the Housing Revenue Account and Essex County Council and evaluating the direct purchasing of stock. This review should be led by the Director of Environment and Street Scene and the Environment Portfolio Holder.
12. Leisure and Young People – spending on Community Arts, the Museum, Sports Development and Community Development is currently £1.1 million. A target saving of £100,000 was identified from these areas, with the review to be led by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder.
13. Depot Rationalization/Property Development – the Working Group noted the work of the officer asset management group and the projects underway to either reduce costs or create new income streams. It is suggested that this Committee keeps the work of the asset management group under review.

I should again state that this list is review areas and following a review we may not be able to identify savings. I would also like to ask members if they have ideas for other areas of review I would gladly investigate them.