

# **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

## **– 18 November 2004**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **18 November 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs S A Harper (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T Livings  
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr D Merrick

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P A Capon and J E Grey.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
S Clarkson	- Head of Revenue & Housing Management
S Logan	- Revenue & Benefits Manager
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

### **REPRESENTING PKF**

D Eagles  
S Frith

### **492 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **493 HOUSING BENEFIT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on the progress towards meeting the Housing Benefit Performance Standards.

During debate, it was noted that the Authority was half-way through its five year Benefits Service Improvement Plan, the aim of which was to fully achieve the Housing Benefit Performance Standards. Currently, the Authority has met 515 of the 562 Standards with just 47 Standards unmet at 1 November, which was encouraging progress. The module relating to strategic management was the one that the Authority most needed to address, particularly with respect to establishing more transparent links to corporate policy objectives.

It was anticipated that the Department for Work and Pensions would further

revise the existing Standards in April 2005, reducing them to around 100. There would be merit in officers bringing a further report to this Committee after that, to provide an update on how the Authority was performing with respect to the new Standards.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to a new performance management system that was proposed for 2006/7, officers advised that, following the CPA process, work was underway to revise the Service Action Plan process; the intention being that Members should receive regular updates on key priorities arising out of the budget process. In tandem with this was a drive to work with other Local Authorities in the area to arrive at a standardised performance management system.

**Resolved**

- (1) That progress be noted in meeting the Standards.
- (2) That the identified weaknesses and the action required to meet the Standards, as set out in the report, be endorsed.
- (3) That a bid be made for £25,000 for inclusion in the 2005/06 draft budget for service improvement in the strategic management area and to improve performance. (HRHM)

**494 EXTERNAL AUDIT SAS610 REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) inviting Members to give consideration to the external auditors' SAS610 report. This was a new reporting mechanism required of the External Auditors, which would only focus on matters for improvement. It was not a "balanced report" as such.

It was noted that, since publication of this report, a subsequent adjustment had been made, namely that the figure of £60000 had been deleted from the Schedule of unadjusted misstatements on Appendix A to the auditor's report.

Representatives from PKF confirmed that the audit went smoothly and that there had subsequently been an unqualified opinion given to the accounts. Systems issues relating to reconciliations had been addressed and transactions dealt with on a monthly basis were also being tackled.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to long term debtors, the PKF representatives confirmed that this was not a serious issue, but related to residents who had bought council properties and who wished to pay back the Council over a number of years the balance of some outstanding service charges. These had been classified as short term debtors, rather than long term debtors.

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#### **Resolved**

That the report be noted and that implementation of any action plan be reported through the audit process. (CD(F&ES))

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....