

Public Document Pack



Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

Tuesday, 27 February 2007 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David WR'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe (Vice- Chairman)	Labour
Councillor John Bradshaw	Conservative
Councillor Sue Blackmore	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Mark Dennett	Labour
Councillor Susan Edge	Labour
Councillor Christopher Inch	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Kath Loftus	Labour
Councillor Paul Nolan	Labour
Councillor Ulfar Norddahl	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Kevan Wainwright	Labour

*Please contact Gill Ferguson on 0151 471 7395 or e-mail gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Date Not Specified*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
<p>Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached and (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members) to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.</p>	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 27th February 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 33 (5).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Standing Order 34(11) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-
- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
 - (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
 - (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be submitted by 4.00 pm on the day prior to the meeting. At any meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
 - (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
 - (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chairperson will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note that public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 27th February 2007
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Executive Board and Executive Sub Minutes
WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Corporate Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board and Executive Sub since the last meeting of this Board are attached at Appendix 1 (link) for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to update the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

Executive Board – 7th December 2006

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB61 GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

The Board considered a report of the Council Solicitor outlining a Statement of Gambling Policy, which had been produced as required by Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005. The Statement had been out for public consultation and the responses received were outlined at Appendix 1 to the report. No changes to the draft Statement, previously agreed by the Board, were proposed as a result of the consultation exercise.

Members noted that, once adopted, the Statement of Gambling Policy would be used by applicants and the Regulatory Committee in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to adopt the Statement of Gambling Policy attached to the report.

EXB62 CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy requesting approval of the revised Corporate Equality Plan which was to be submitted for public consultation.

It was noted that the Board had approved a Plan earlier in the year; however, since then, there had been significant new legislation in relation to both Disability Equality and Gender Equality. The new legislation required the Council to adopt a Disability Equality Scheme (December 2006) and a Gender Equality Scheme (April 2007) and it was proposed that a single equality scheme be adopted, to include the statutory requirements, within the Corporate Equality Scheme.

The changes within the Scheme were outlined for the Board's consideration, and the proposed process in terms of public consultation was also outlined. It was advised that, following this process, any representations and further amendments would be brought back to the Board for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the revised Corporate Equality Plan be approved and submitted for public consultation as outlined in the report.

EXB63 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director

– Financial Services regarding the ‘Tax base’ for the area and the tax base for each of the Parishes. The Council was required to notify Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police Authority, the Cheshire Magistrates’ Courts Committee, the Cheshire Probation Committee and the National Rivers Authority of this figure by 31st January 2007.

Members were advised that the ‘Tax Base’ was arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula, representing the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough expressed in terms of the equivalent of Band ‘D’ dwellings, and was the measure used for calculating the council tax. Taking account of all the relevant information, and applying a 99% collection rate, the calculation for 2007/2008 gave a tax base figure of 37,392 for the Borough as a whole.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council be recommended that the 2007/8 Council Tax Base be set at 37,392 for the Borough, and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police Authority and the National Rivers Authority be so notified; and
- (2) the Council be recommended that the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes be set as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	722
Daresbury	140
Moore	352
Preston Brook	331

Executive Board - 25th January 2007

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB75 ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy outlining a proposed Accommodation Strategy, which had been produced as a result of a recommendation of the Base Budget Review Working Party, looking at savings and rationalisation.

The objectives of the strategy and issues that needed to be resolved were outlined for the Board’s consideration together with proposals for rationalisation in respect of Runcorn Town Hall and Midwood House, and the knock-on effect for Municipal Building, Lugsdale Road, John Briggs House and Grosvenor House.

In addition, an appendix was attached to the report outlining a proposed decision chain, which would be utilised when considering any future changes to accommodation needs.

In particular, the Board considered the proposed space standards which would be used to test any future accommodation moves and it was confirmed that the text ‘individual offices down to Divisional Managers only’ did not intend to suggest that Divisional Managers would automatically be allocated an individual office as a matter of course.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the approach outlined in the report be supported;
- (2) a capital bid be made to support the refurbishment of Runcorn Town Hall; and
- (3) future accommodation decisions be made within the framework outlined in the report and implemented by the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy in consultation with the Corporate Services Portfolio holder.

Strategic Director -
Corporate and
Policy

Executive Board Sub-Committee 25th January 2007

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB67 DISPOSAL OF FORMER DAY NURSERY SITE, OKELL STREET, RUNCORN

The Sub-Committee considered a report which sought approval to dispose of the former Day Nursery Site at Okell Street, Runcorn.

It was anticipated that the sale would produce a capital receipt in excess of £50,000. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, required local authorities to achieve the best possible consideration when disposing of land and property interests. To ensure this, other potential uses of property would be examined, following which the property would be extensively marketed.

RESOLVED: that

- (1) approval be given to dispose of the property by private treaty following a marketing exercise, and
- (2) approval be delegated to the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy to accept the highest offer with the details being reported to the Sub-Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Strategic Director
Corporate and
Policy

REPORT TO:	Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	27 th February, 2007
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director Corporate and Policy
SUBJECT:	Area Forum Topic Group
WARD(S):	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To allow the Chair an opportunity to give an update on matters relating to the Area Forum Topic Group.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Area Forum Topic Group has been gathering information in relation to its review of area Forums. This item has been included on the meeting agenda in case there are any matters or issues that the Chair wishes to feedback to the Board arising from the work of the Topic Group.

4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Too early to report at this stage.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Too early to report at this stage.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 Too early to report at this stage.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 7.1 None

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 27th February 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Work Programme 2007/08

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider and determine the items to be included in the draft work programme for the Board for the coming year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the draft work programme attached to this report be approved for further development.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Board is asked to agree a list of topics for review during the year. The suggested list of topics is appended to this report, but the board is of course entirely free to add topics to, or delete topics from, the suggested list at its discretion. Lead Officers need to be identified for the topics, and, if the draft programme is agreed, the lead officers will work up a topic brief for each of the topics identified. This will then result in a report to the first meeting of the board in the new Municipal Year with a view to the work programme being finalised.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 These will depend on the work programme selected.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 These will depend on the work programme selected.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 These will depend on the work programme selected. .

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 These will depend on the work programme selected.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit	2nd Floor Municipal Building	A Villiers

APPENDIX 1**Corporate Services PPB Work Programme 2007/08**

Item No.	Topic	Lead Officer	Lead Member
1.	Learning from Complaints – how we respond to complaints and ensure that we learn from mistakes	Rob Mackenzie	
2.	Development of Web Based Service Delivery –an analysis of what we need to do to further develop web based service delivery	Simon Riley/ Ray Dart	
3.	Disabled Access to Council Buildings and Services - what have we done so far & what more needs to be done?	Jerry Goacher	
4.	Performance Management - what is the role of elected members and what information do they need?	Rob Mackenzie	

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 27th February, 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Council-wide Training Provision

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To look further at the cost of training within the authority and to examine whether there is scope for improving co-ordination and reducing duplication in training provision.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board considers its further information requirements in relation to this issue.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 At its meeting in October 2006 the Board looked at training provision across the Council. However, with the exception of Corporate Training, the Board were not given any details as to the budget for training provision within the authority. The purpose of this report is therefore to provide further information to the Board in this regard.

3.2 By way of reminder, at the meeting in October the Board were advised that Corporate Training Budget for 2006/07 was £237,050 and was used to provide the following;

- Post Entry Training
- In House Consultants
- Short Courses
- IIP
- Members Training
- Training Resources.

3.3 This budget provides a very significant level of training activity and in the first six months of 2006 alone the usage figures for the Corporate Training Centre were as follows:

- Total overall users - 5,693
- Total Number of Training Courses held at the Corporate Training Centre – 845

3.4 But the Corporate Training Centre is not the sole provider of training within the authority, and specific training provision is also made in the

Health and Community and Children and Young People Directorates. I am attaching as Appendices 1 and 2 financial information in relation to the Training Activity undertaken in these two directorates.

- 3.5 It also appears that a significant amount of training is carried out by the Council's Adult Learning Team. This is primarily training for non-Council employees in basic skills (up to Level 2). I have only recently become aware of this activity and will try and obtain some further information for circulation to members in advance of the meeting.
- 3.6 The issue that the Board has been trying to tease out by looking at the training provision across the authority as a whole is whether there is scope for reducing duplication and overheads. Even with the additional information now provided this is still not clear. It is therefore suggested that the Board might wish to ask some further questions of the responsible officers in each area:
- What posts are involved in organising/providing training activity within your Directorate?
 - What are the grades/salary costs of each post involved?
 - What proportion of each of the posts identified is attributable to organising or providing training?
 - Where are each of the officers identified as organising or providing training based?
- 3.7 The answers to these and other questions raised by the Board would then be brought back to the Board at its next meeting.

4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Too early to report at this stage.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Too early to report at this stage.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 Too early to report at this stage.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 7.1 None

APPENDIX 1**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTORATE TRAINING BUDGET**

A total of £139,942 budget training budget has been disaggregated to cover both National Training Strategy Grant and Core training funding. The split between the two sources of funding based on previous allocations is £76,968 National Training Strategy and £62,973 core budget.

Description	Budget
Children's Training and Workforce Officer (this covers 50% of salary)	£15,079
NVQ	£15,000
Qualifying	£23,384
Induction/Foundation	£9,000
Management Development	£10,000
Non-Qualifying Training	£25,000
External Training	£12,000
Trainee Social Worker Scheme	£11,069
Other Training	£19,409

The NTS Grant is provided to meet the staff training and qualifications standards within the relevant National Minimum Standards and ensure a skilled and competent workforce able to provide high quality social care services.

It is important to note that the costs of the salary of Children's Training needs to be funded from the Training budgets.

There is no dedicated training budget for what was previously the education service. Application for funding to support training was and continues to be made to Corporate Training.

APPENDIX 2

**HEALTH & COMMUNITY (H&C) DIRECTORATE
TRAINING BUDGET 2006/7**

During 2006/07, the following was made available to be spend on Training and Development within H&C:

- The National Training Strategy (NTS) Grant from the DoH
- Contribution made by Halton Borough Council

NB. The NTS Grant supports the training of social care staff across the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. The majority of the grant is intended to be used to develop NVQ qualifications in social care to meet the National Minimum Standards and specific targets in this area. The NTS grant is only available for another 12 months, until 31.3.08.

The 2006/07 overall NTS allocations (inc. Children's) were as follows: -

National Minimum Standards	£209,930
Trainee SW Scheme	£33,208
Post Qualifying Training	£35,976
TOTAL	£279,114

Following the desegregation exercise with Children Services the remaining Training Budget for H&C Directorate was as follows: -

£531,592

That Budget has been allocated in the following way: -

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT 2006/07 £	AMOUNT 2007/08 £
Staff Salaries & Car Allowances	224,890	99,359
Trainee SW Scheme	22,138	22,138
Post Qualifying Training	12,592	12,592
*Other Training – H&P	46,116	58,449
*Other Training – OP/PSD	118,068	151,984
*Other Training – Adults	107,788	138,620
TOTAL	531,592	483,142

*Other Training includes NVQ, external training and Management Development

NOTE

2007/8 training budget is not yet available, however a review of NVQ and PQ provision is currently under way and potentially this may mean commissioning the services from external providers. If this happens a number of posts (4 posts) will be put at risk and therefore impact on the staff salaries allocation and the 'other' allocations as shown above during 2007/08.

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 27 February 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director-Policy & Performance

SUBJECT: Performance Monitoring Reports for the 3rd quarter (2006/07)

WARDS: Boroughwide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The departmental service plans set out what the services are planning to achieve and demonstrate how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. The service plans are central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.
- 1.2 The 3rd quarter monitoring reports for the services that come within the remit of this Policy & Performance Board are available in both electronic and hard copy formats. These reports enable Board Members to scrutinise progress towards achieving the service objectives, milestones and performance targets contained in the 2006/07 service plans for the following:

Corporate & Policy Directorate

1. Personnel Services
2. Financial Services
3. Exchequer & Customer Services
4. ICT Services
5. Policy & Performance
6. Legal & Member Services
7. Property Services

Environment Directorate

1. Stadium & Hospitality

2. RECOMMENDED: That the Policy & Performance Board

- 1) **Scrutinise service performance and progress towards achieving objectives and targets and raise any questions or points for clarification in respect of the information contained in the quarterly monitoring reports; and**
- 2) **Highlight areas of interest and/or concern that require further information or action to be reported at a future meeting of the Policy and Performance Board where appropriate.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 At an earlier meeting, the Board received a performance briefing paper that was intended to highlight aspects contained in the full versions of the monitoring reports (available electronically) that Members might wish to consider further. Although, the Board has now requested that hard copies of the quarterly monitoring reports be available to Members prior to this and

future meetings, the performance briefing papers will still be provided for the remaining two quarters of this year. (See Appendix 1).

- 3.2 It is intended that Jerry Goacher will attend the meeting to give a more detailed presentation in relation to the performance of Property Services.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any policy implications arising from emerging issues or key developments that will impact upon the service or any action required to address performance issues, will be identified in the respective quarterly monitoring report.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Any other implications associated with issues connected with the service will be identified in the respective quarterly monitoring report.

6. RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 The risk control measures associated with the service objectives that were initially assessed as having 'HIGH' risks are summarised in the quarterly monitoring reports to monitor their implementation.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 The actions identified arising from the Equality impact/needs assessments that are regarded as 'HIGH' priority for each service are in the Equality Action Plans and progress on their implementation is included in the respective quarterly monitoring reports.

8. REASON(S) FOR DECISION

Not applicable

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not applicable

10. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Not applicable

11. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Quarterly monitoring reports for:		
1. Personnel Services	Municipal Building 2 nd floor	Mike Foy-Senior Performance Management Officer
2. Financial Services		
3. Exchequer & Customer Services		
4. ICT Services		
5. Policy & Performance		

6. Legal & Member Services
7. Property Services
8. Stadium & Hospitality

PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

(3rd Quarter 2006/07)

SERVICE: Human Resources & Organisation Development

Overview

The prospects for achieving the service objectives are very good as demonstrated by the implementation of the Trent HR/Payroll IT systems and the Pay and Grading review all scheduled for completion on time. However, progress against many of the performance targets have been given an amber traffic light because of factors outside of the control of the service, which make it difficult to provide a meaningful, forecast. Therefore, an overall assessment of performance will not be available until the 4th quarter/year-end figures are produced.

Areas of Further Consideration

- The monitoring report comments that the analysis to identify and understand the reasons for staff loss/turnover did not take place as planned by July 2006 due to insufficient data provided by departments across the Council. This type of analysis is critical for workforce management, development and planning purposes and therefore, it is important to highlight the reasons why the detailed information has not been made available.

SERVICE: Financial Services

Overview

All the objectives and performance targets are on course to be achieved and therefore, the prospects for the service delivering on its commitments are very good. The major issue for the service and indeed the Council are the financial implications arising from provisional Government Grant settlement which represents an increase of only 2.8% compared to the English average of 3.8%.

SERVICE: Exchequer & Customer Services

Overview

Overall the prospects for the service achieving its objectives and performance targets appear to be very good. The significant developments highlighted in earlier monitoring reports such as the implementation of the TRENT HR/Payroll system, the opening of HDL shops in Runcorn and Ditton and the service and financial benefits of the new Customer Relationship Management software have progressed well. There are no major issues or concerns associated with the objectives highlighted nor any key developments reported that could pose risks or implications for the service.

SERVICE: ICT Services

Overview

3rd quarter monitoring report to be finalised.

SERVICE: Policy & Performance

Overview

Overall the prospects for the service achieving the vast majority of its objectives and performance targets are very good although there are a couple of matters that may benefit from some further consideration.

Areas of Further Consideration

- The greater focus by central government on the issues of pandemic flu and terrorism has been highlighted as an emerging issue and resulted in an increase in work by the service. However, it is not clear in the report on what the implications are for the Council in terms of its current emergency and recovery planning preparations.
- In effect the testing of the Council's business continuity plans was undertaken as part of Checkmate 2 to deal with the consequences of the recent severe weather conditions (*Objective PP 07*). However, other options to assess the Council's capability to respond to major emergencies are currently being explored with external consultants. Therefore, more details on what the options are and when a further report is expected maybe appropriate given the greater focus by central government on such issues.

SERVICE: Legal & Member Services

Overview

The objectives and performance targets are on course to be achieved and therefore, the prospects for the service delivering on its commitments are very good. There are no key developments or emerging issues reported that raise any serious concerns although implications of the proposed changes to the Code of Conduct for Members will be the subject of further consideration at the appropriate time.

Areas of Further Consideration

- It had been reported earlier that the introduction of the Foundation Degree in Community Governance for Members by the Autumn 2006 (*Key Objective LMS 02*) will not be achieved due to the withdrawal from the venture by Salford University and that the Council was to consider alternatives. However, the North West Employers Organisation are to explore the possibility of moving this forward on a national basis although a timescale has not been highlighted.
- The attendance of members of the public at Area Forums has dropped off during the year and a review of the Area Forums currently underway is likely to consider this issue in further detail. It may now have added significance in the light of the recently published Best Value User Satisfaction Survey (2006-07) and the Government's view of the link between the level of public satisfaction and the degree of public participation in local services.

SERVICE: Property Services

Overview

All service objectives and the majority of the performance indicator targets are on course to be achieved and therefore the prospects for the year appear to be good overall. However, There are a number of topics identified in the quarterly monitoring report that might benefit from some further consideration or clarification.

Areas of Further Consideration

- There is an emerging issue concerning the reported under resourcing to carry out all the work particularly the CPO preparations and delivery, required for a number of major developments. However, it is not clear whether the under resourcing has already or is likely to have implications or risks for the major projects referred to in the monitoring report.
- The 90% target for the occupancy rate at Runcorn Market (*PYSL! 7*) will not be achieved this year and measures have been introduced which have stabilised matters to an extent. However, whether they will be successful in reversing the current trend over the longer term is uncertain at this stage and therefore, further consideration of the situation would be appropriate.

SERVICE: Stadium & Hospitality

Overview

Although the majority of the objectives and performance targets are on course to be achieved the increasingly difficult trading and financial climate is presenting some major challenges for the service. The decrease in the numbers of meal numbers apparently due to the unpopularity of healthier school meals is still evident and civic catering looks likely to exceed its budget for the year. The Stadium has still to secure formal a sponsorship deal and interest in the Executive Suites has declined largely due to Widnes Vikings missing out on promotion to Super League. However, on a positive note, the return of Everton FC could present opportunities for the Council to generate greater audience interest in the Stadium.

Areas of Further Consideration

- Many local authorities are facing the problem of an income shortfall for school meals and in Halton if the present trends continues, this deficit will be around £250k at the end of the year. This is due to the drop in school meal numbers and the effect on the productivity of the school kitchens reflected in the 3rd quarter figures for *local PI 5: No. of meals served versus hourly input of labour*. However, it might prove useful to look at comparative performance across other authorities to see if anything can be learned.
- Although the report estimates that over 1,400 pupils eligible for free school meals are not registering it also refers to significant progress being made to develop a plan to increase registration. The GREEN traffic light is forecasting that registrations will increase and therefore, further monitoring of progress towards achieving the target would be appropriate.