

Lancashire County Council

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 4th October, 2013 at 2.00 pm in Cabinet Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Jennifer Mein (Chair)

County Councillors

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1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were noted from County Councillor Geoff Driver.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None disclosed.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 June 2013

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2013 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Mike Hart, Directorate for Children and Young People, provided an update on GCSE results which the Committee have previously considered recovery plans for. The Committee was pleased to note that whilst the national trend for young people receiving 5 A* - C GCSE's has decreased, the provisional Lancashire results show an increase from 59.9% to 61.2% of young people achieving 5 A* - C GCSE grades.

The Committee noted the update on GCSE results and welcomed a full report being submitted to a future meeting at the appropriate time, possibly November 2013 or January 2014.

4. Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring and Improvement - Quarter 1 Monitoring Report & Recovery Plans

Michael Walder, Corporate Policy and Performance Team, introduced the report and explained that Corporate Performance Monitoring for quarter 1 2013/14 (April 2013 – June 2013) details that 85% of the total number of Directorate Key Performance Indicators reported across each of their quarter 1 Quality of Service Reports are performing well and/or are on track to meet targets.

Monitoring has also revealed the need for 2 indicators to be highlighted to the committee for further information, explanation and examination. The indicators presented to this meeting of the committee were:

- Debtor payments - Average days taken to receive payments
- Number of Carers receiving assessments & reviews (this item was considered under agenda Item 5)

Debtor Payments – Average days taken to receive payments

Lisa Kitto, County Treasurers Department, provided an update on this indicator and explained that the current adopted target performance for this indicator is to receive payments within the commercial norm (45 to 60 days). The current performance of this indicator is running at 55 days for the period April to June 2013.

Lisa explained that approximately **200,000+** debtor invoices are raised on behalf of the County Council each year and this volume has remained constant for at least the past 3 years. The value of these debtor accounts has also remained fairly constant over this period with an average value of **£300m** per annum being invoiced.

Debt is treated in 2 distinct elements;

- **Care Debt** - debt which has been raised in respect of the provision of social care.
- **Corporate Debt** - all other debt of the council.

The commercial norm is to receive payment for outstanding debt between 45 and 60 days. Lancashire's performance is currently at 55 days and therefore although performance has deteriorated over the past 2 years, recovery times remain within the commercial norm.

Whilst current performance is within the commercial norm there has been deterioration in performance over recent years and a review is considered appropriate to establish what measures can be taken to stop any further deterioration and improve on the position.

What actions are required to put it back on track? What action will be taken?

Lisa reported that it is clearly in the interests of the County Council to ensure income due for chargeable services is realised at the earliest opportunity, not only to aid cash flow but to minimise the resources consumed in collection activity and reduce the risk of non-payment escalating into bad debt and the need for subsequent write off.

Although recovery times are within the commercial norm there are a number of actions that can be taken to improve this further and these actions may also impact on the more difficult to collect care debt. The actions outlined below feature within the County Treasurer's 2013/14 Business Plan and centre on the implementation of a Debt Management Strategy explicitly targeted at maximising the volume and value of income recovered within 30 days. Delivering against this objective will reduce both the average payment period and the value of invoices +180 days whilst simultaneously reducing the volume of outstanding invoices;

The Committee noted various actions being taken (as detailed in the report) to put it back on track, including:

- The development and implementation of an updated Income and Debt Management Policy,
- Improvements in the Debt Collection process,
- Improvements to be made in the Oracle 12 system recording system,
- Educating Budget Holders on their responsibilities of effective income management,
- Partnership working with the Benefits Assessment Team, and;
- Utilising the legislative powers available to Local Authorities to recover debt.

Resolved: The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement noted the update, and actions being taken to improve the indicator relating to Debtor Payments and requested that a further update report be provided at an appropriate future Committee meeting, possibly spring 2014.

5. Progress on improving support for carers in Lancashire and the introduction of a Carers Break Fund

Olive Carroll, Director of Personal Social Care and Barbara Lewis, County Head of Support, Planning and Review, Lancashire County Council presented the report.

Olive explained that whilst the County Council had not met its own performance target, it was above the North West and National averages.

Barbara explained that the report provided an update on:

- the success of the carers' assessment pilot in Carers Centres and proposals for implementation across the county,
- learning and practice development initiatives,
- the pilot of the carers' break fund, and;
- comprehensive performance monitoring plans.

Carers Assessments

In line with other authorities, Lancashire is looking to involve Carers Centres in carer's assessments. Whilst Local authorities have a statutory duty to undertake carers assessments, authorities can choose to contract with a 'trusted assessor'. Trusted assessors are able to undertake carer's assessments, identifying universal support but make any recommendation for formal service to the authority for 'sign off'.

This approach has been seen to have a number of benefits for carers:

- signposting carers to local universal services/facilities. Carer specific organisations have up to date knowledge of the local support available that they are able to signpost carers to.
- offer carers the support that carers centres themselves provide, such as Peace of Mind 4 Carers, sitting in service, courses, support groups.
- increased carer satisfaction with the assessment process.
- carers may feel more comfortable and more open 'telling their story' with a carers centre worker than with a social worker.
- increased choice around who would undertake their carers assessment.

Barbara explained the background to the performance target and that a pilot took place in 2012 in North and Central Lancashire which offered carers who wanted a separate assessment the opportunity to have their assessment undertaken by a Carers Centre. The pilot project successfully met the initial aims and the outcomes for carers. Feedback received from carers, social workers and the workers undertaking the assessments as part of the pilot was positive. It was clear from the experiences and evidence gathered that there was a good case for rolling out the project across the county. As a result, it was agreed by ACS Senior Management Team that carers' assessments by Carers Centres should be implemented across the county. The plan is to have all Carers Centres undertaking assessments by the end of October 2013.

- On average, there are 166 new referrals a month to Carers Centres, 88% of which are people referring themselves or via Help Direct or Health.
- Peace of Mind 4 Carers, referred to above, is a service that provides cover for people's caring responsibilities in the event of an emergency. There were 3,178 carers with a plan in place in 2011/12, rising to 3,885 in 2012/13.

Practise Development

Practise development within Personal Social Care is delivered by Advanced Practitioners who supervise staff and identify learning opportunities to facilitate continuous professional developments.

Recent emphasis on carers in practise development means practise issues relating to carers will be highlighted and staff signposted to appropriate training

courses. Examples of good practise will also be shared through the staff newsletter – Change Matters.

A new e learning course has recently been developed and circulated to staff. The objectives of the course are to provide easily accessible refresher training for all staff within LCC and for external organisations. A review of other learning options is being taken up by the County Learning and Development Group and at the County Advanced Practitioners Meeting.

Carers Break Fund

A proposal to replace the current short break voucher scheme with a carers break fund was presented to the Cabinet Committee for Performance Improvement on 12 October 2012. The carers break fund provides carers with more choice than traditional services, and the fund is not limited to a financial year. This gives more flexibility to carers when planning their services, and removes the need for reviews of carers to take place around March or April each year.

There have been delays in setting up the carers' break fund pilot. The new IT system for Adult Social Care needs to be able to accommodate the scheme and it has taken time to establish how the scheme may work in the new system. A small group of volunteer carers identified by Carers Centres from across the county will be issued with pre-payment cards to use instead of their unused vouchers up to March 2014. This pilot will test out the "fund" and its impact upon respite for carers and inform future delivery of more varied respite provision. The roll out of the pilot will be dependent upon a procurement process for the additional pre-payment cards for carers. The pilot and issuing vouchers will continue until the procurement process is completed.

Performance Management Sub-Group

A Carers Performance Group has recently been set up as a sub group of the Social Care Performance Management Group to monitor the progress of the above actions. Performance data relating to formal assessments and reviews of carers and services provided is routinely collected from the local authority social care information system (ISSIS). However, this is an incomplete picture of Lancashire performance as support for a high number of carers is managed by the carers centres, whose data are restricted because of their charitable status. The Carers Performance Group will be utilising both sources of data, along with comparable information from other authorities, to ensure that progress in supporting Lancashire's carers is well monitored.

The Committee noted that the actions to be taken are complex and will be implemented over a longer term.

Resolved: The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement noted the report and continued to support the long term actions being taken to improve performance.

6. Corporate Human Resources - Health Check Report

Deborah Barrow, Head of Employment Services, and Katie Dunne, Business Manager – Employee Relations, One Connect Limited presented the report.

Deborah and Katie explained that the Corporate Human Resources 'Health Check' report provides information across the authority against key metrics regarding workforce information for 2012/13 and part year for 2013/14.

The Corporate Human Resources key metrics regularly monitored and reported against including; the numbers of starters and leavers; reasons for leaving; secondment and redeployment activity; vacancy numbers and recruitment costs.

The data in this report highlights that:

- More employees are leaving the organisation than starting
- Year on year spend on advertising costs is continuing to reduce

The data also shows that the number of leavers during the first five months of 2013/14 indicates that the estimated projected numbers of leavers in 2013/14 (1393) will be slightly less when compared to the figures for 2012/13 (1408).

Currently the estimated projected number of voluntary redundancy leavers in 2013/14 (103) is less when compared with the voluntary redundancy leavers in 2012/13 (140). However, it should be noted that this is likely to be affected by organisational change initiatives taking place during the remainder of the year.

Dismissals include dismissals for conduct, capability and sickness absence and the estimated projected figures for 2013/14 show a downward trend when compared with 2012/13.

There were more leavers than starters in 2012/13 and this trend looks set to continue in 2013/14 as organisational changes continue to take place.

The data provides combined detail on both the number of adverts placed both internally and externally, and the number of positions advertised, as some adverts include multiple positions. Requests for external recruitment advertising are submitted to Directors for a decision.

The cost of recruitment advertising has decreased significantly since 2010/11 and is continuing on a downward trend.

The Committee welcomed the report and expressed an interest in seeing trends regarding Human Resource levels on a regular basis (possibly quarterly) with a more detailed breakdown for areas including work start employees, apprenticeships and redeployment.

Resolved: The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement noted the report and requested that regular report be presented (possibly quarterly) to the Committee.

7. Urgent Business

None

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting will take place on Thursday 28 November 2013 at 2.00pm in Cabinet Room 'B' – The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston