



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# A493

## **Cabinet**

### **10 February 2010**

#### **Report from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 25 January 2010**

##### **1. Place Survey**

- 1.1 The Place Survey is a national survey undertaken by councils once every two years. The data from the survey held at the end of 2008 was now available, and officers had undertaken some analysis of the results, which were presented to the Committee by the Policy, Performance and Customer Services Manager, Davina Howes.
- 1.2 Davina Howes explained that the survey measured feelings about quality of life, and satisfaction with local public services. Some of the key findings from the survey were that 88% of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with their area, with 93% being satisfied with their home as a place to live. When asked what made somewhere a good place to live, the top answer was level of crime, followed by health services. The St Edmundsbury area was in the top 25% nationally for satisfaction with issues including litter levels and parks and open spaces, but in the bottom 25% for local transport information and local bus services. A number of other areas of key findings were also presented to the Committee, as well as response differences based on demographics and location.
- 1.3 Generally, there had been a drop nationally in satisfaction with councils since the 2006 survey, although the quality of life had improved and there was high satisfaction with services. Davina Howes concluded that the results showed that councils were doing a good job, but were not necessarily always getting the credit for this. She suggested some potential actions resulting from the findings.
- 1.4 As the Place Survey provided data for 18 National Indicators, and focused on the performance of the area, Members found that the findings complemented information in other reports considered regularly by the Committee. Several Members asked for the data provided to be broken down into ward level, for their own use.

##### **2. Key Performance Indicators: Third Quarter 2009/2010**

- 2.1 Members considered the third quarterly report for 2009/2010, covering the period October to December 2009. A total of 33 indicators were reported this quarter, of which 21 were green, 6 amber and 1 red. The final 5 were contextual indicators. Compared with the same quarter of 2008/2009, although some of the indicators had changed, the report showed that overall performance had continued to improve.

### **3. Audit Commission – “Bitesize Training” – International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)**

- 3.1 The latest in the Committee’s occasional series of ‘bitesize training’ sessions was given by the Audit Commission, which took the opportunity to update the Committee on some imminent major changes to how the Council’s accounts must be prepared. They explained that the new standards would have the biggest impact on the accounting sector that had been seen for at least 15 years, and would significantly change the look of the Council’s financial statements.
- 3.2 Philip King, Audit Manager from the Audit Commission, explained the background to the IFRS and how it applied to the public sector. He covered what needed to be done in arranging for implementation of IFRS, including some lessons learned by the NHS, which had already implemented the system. Some technical issues for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 were covered, as well as the process of risk assessment. The Audit Manager explained the role of the auditor, and what help was available to Members and officers. He finished by explaining that it was essential to start preparations early, to engage Members and senior management in the process, to have a plan in place and to work with the auditor.
- 3.3 A question and answer session followed, during which Members were advised that, although the changes were a huge task, they would be accomplished within current staff resources, helped partly by joint working with Forest Heath District Council. Members also asked what the value of the changes would be, and were advised that it would be very helpful for comparability and consistency purposes for all organisations to use the same system.

### **4. Audit Commission: Presentation of 2008/2009 Annual Audit Letter**

- 4.1 Philip King, Audit Manager from the Audit Commission presented the above report to the Committee, which detailed the audit and inspection work carried out since the last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, and summarised the significant issues that had arisen from that work.
- 4.2 The Audit Manager started by saying that the report showed a tremendous result both for the Finance Team and for the authority, being the only council in Suffolk to achieve Level 4 in any Key Line of Enquiry or Theme. Key messages in the report were that the Council was performing well overall at Level 3 for Use of Resources, having scored 3 for Managing Resources, 3 for Governing the business and 4 for Managing resources. Overall, it was a very positive report, demonstrating the continued good performance of the authority.

### **5. Budget Monitoring Report: 1 April to 31 December 2009**

- 5.1 The Committee received the quarterly budget monitoring report which informed Members of the Council’s financial position for the period up to 31 December 2009, and highlighted significant variances. Overall an underspend for the period of £926,000 was being reported, and all budget variances over £10,000 were explained in the report. Favourable variances included underspends on the budget of £962,000 and income above budget of £665,000, the reasons for which were discussed by Members. Adverse variances included budget overspends of £431,000 and income below budget of £308,000, and again the reasons for these variances were discussed with officers.

- 5.2 The Capital Budget Monitoring Report showed net expenditure of £8,019,000 for the period 1 April to 31 December 2009, compared to a full year revised capital budget of £16,366,000. As in previous reports, the underspend was partly due to slippage in the programme, but also due to the fact that many of the budgets were not profiled, and a number of the projects were due to commence later in the financial year. The capital disposals programme showed capital receipts for the period of £2,157,387 against a full year disposal estimate of £2,779,000.
- 5.3 The Committee discussed a number of elements of this report, but do not wish to bring any issues to the Cabinet's attention at this time.

## **6. Corporate Risk Register: Quarterly Monitoring Report**

- 6.1 The third quarterly risk register monitoring report for 2009/2010 had been prepared following review by Management Team and Corporate Management Team. No new risks had been added to the register in this quarter, but Risk 2 had been expanded and the residual risk level increased, to incorporate the risks around creating shared services with neighbouring authorities.
- 6.2 One risk had been closed (West Suffolk House Capital Works), and a number of residual risks had been moved from red or amber to green.
- 6.3 The Committee discussed some of the risks in this quarter's report, including refurbishment of Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre, and suggested a couple of wording changes for clarification purposes.

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