



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

date **18 January 2007**

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report seeks to update Members on various issues relating to the People and Performance portfolio since my last report to Council.

2. PERSONNEL AND EMPLOYMENT RELATED MATTERS

The overall project management for the County Council restructuring has been transferred to HR and the Strategic Management Board is receiving regular updates. The top three management tiers have now been appointed, with consultation for the remainder of the structure ending on 12th January.

It is pleasing to confirm that the smoking policy agreed during 2006 has been implemented fully and that no major problems associated with its introduction have been reported.

Recent formal consultations with the trade unions have concerned budget driven staffing reductions. Section 188 notice consultations will continue for 90 days from 18th December. On a separate note, we have, after much negotiation, agreed with the trade unions a learning agreement that will see Trade Union Learning Reps, for the first time, supporting the overall learning and development of the County Council and will allow the release of TU resources to support employee development. Other issues concern revisions to the early retirement scheme to take account of changes to the Age legislation in October, and we hope to implement a new agreement in the next few weeks. Finally, we are working on an event that will support employees approaching the end of pay protection as part of the introduction of new pay structures for senior employees in 2002/3.

3. BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

In previous years, the Council has been informed of its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) at the end of December. This year the assessment is not to be published until 22 February. This delay will

enable the results of the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey to be taken account of in the Assessment.

The indications from the different elements of the CPA are very encouraging and so we are hopeful that the Council will retain its top category, four star status but we will not know until next month.

Best Value User Satisfaction Survey

The Council employed IPSOS MORI to conduct this survey which is required by Government. The survey covers public attitudes both to the area in which they live and to the services provided by the Council. The results are currently being analysed and will be published shortly.

4. TRADING SERVICES

I am pleased to report that, with the exception of the catering services, all direct service business units including, highways, landscape, cleaning, building direct and central workshops are expected to achieve/exceed their given surplus targets. Schools catering, whilst on course to realise a small surplus, is behind its target by about £100K. However, it is projected that the combined overall budget target for all the services should be achieved by the end of the year.

Members are no doubt fully aware that this Council has been at the forefront of promoting healthier school meals, well before it became a topic of national debate. New menus were introduced in September last year in order to achieve national standards on both the quality food and nutrition in advance of the Government's guidelines. This has meant higher expenditure in sourcing fresh food and meats, some of which are purchased locally and also help the local economy. Some of these improvements have been made possible because of the welcome grants from the Government.

Encouragingly better quality school meals and greater choice is beginning to have a beneficial impact on meal take-up figures. However, a degree of consumer resistance remains as some parents and pupils have resorted to bringing packed lunches - partly because they have been influenced by the adverse publicity that followed Jamie Oliver's TV series. On a positive note it needs to be stressed that the underlying trend is upwards and should eventually improve financial performance of the school meals service. Pleasingly, despite the scale of challenges faced, service performance is continuing to improve.

5. ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY

Members will recall that in my reports last year I advised on a number of key initiatives that the Council was involved in. This report updates you on progress of some of these and new initiatives since this time.

Sustainable Energy: Beacon Funding

Members will recall that the Council was one of only seven Local Authorities in England and Wales to be awarded Beacon status for Sustainable Energy for 2005/06 and that to continue the support provided to other local authorities in addressing the issues of climate change and sustainable energy the seven beacon councils were awarded Beacon Peer Support funding of £186,000 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Nottinghamshire County Council, as lead beacon, is administering this support programme and I am pleased to report that both a benchmark for sustainable energy against which local authorities can measure their current practice and a toolkit providing a range of self assessment activities and options for improving performance has been developed. With a focus on climate change and emissions targets being assessed as part of the new Performance Framework (post CPA 2008) then this will be particularly useful process to follow.

This process is being piloted nationally through seven pilot mentoring projects and we are currently providing peer support to Newark and Sherwood District Council (N&SDC) as part of this project. We have a long standing strategic partnership with N&SDC as part of our Energy Agency, established with EU funding and one of the first UK Agencies some 10 years ago. We also have a much wider partnership with the Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Local Authorities Energy Partnership (LAEP) and we are proposing that this process be rolled out to all 19 Councils in the partnership.

Government has recently announced that 'Tackling Climate Change' will be a beacon theme for 2007 and will include actions not only to reduce emissions but also to adapt to the effects of climate change. Because this has such wide implications we are presently considering a possible bid through the LAEP.

Climate Change and Carbon Management Plan

Climate Change is very hot on the political agenda. The government's white paper advocates leadership from local authorities on climate change which will be assessed as part of the new performance framework in 2008. The recently published Stern Review sets out the economic imperative to address climate change now - otherwise there will be high financial consequences if action is delayed. The Climate Change Bill calls for a government carbon reduction target of 60% by 2050 and to move this forward there is a proposal to introduce mandatory carbon trading from 2009 with a cap on future emissions. This proposal will affect large organisations, including the County Council, and will have financial implications for the Authority. We are currently participating in the consultation process and I will be reporting the outcomes to Cabinet in due course.

In order to engage debate on this and the wider issues of climate change I invited all members and relevant senior officers to participate

in a lunchtime event last week where we also featured the Al Gore film – ‘An Inconvenient Truth’.

Local Authorities Energy Partnership

Members may recall that the County Council was instrumental in establishing the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authorities Energy Partnership (LAEP) 10 years ago since which time it has secured almost £4 million of external funding to deliver sustainable energy initiatives for the benefit of people in the two Counties. To continue this success the LAEP appointed a co-ordinator last year and following her joining the partnership we have been successful with two further funding bids.

Our most recent success was a grant of £379,000 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Climate Change Communication Fund for a programme of initiatives to change attitudes towards climate change. The programme is part of a national campaign taking place over the next 12 months to raise awareness and provide people with clear and straightforward information about what they can do to tackle it. A campaign manager will help deliver this project and LAEP will soon be taking delivery of a new campaign vehicle to replace its old mobile energy advice centre. I will be arranging an event for this to come to County Hall in due course.

The Partnership was also awarded £85,000 by the Regional Centre of Excellence to develop and improve sustainable procurement practice within the Region. The project aims to support projects from across the region targeted at generating efficiency gains/savings through collaborative working between local authorities that are linked to the Efficiency Review and National Procurement Strategy. Again LAEP have appointed a manager specifically for this project

The LAEP was the first regional partnership of its kind to be established and is cited as a national example of best practice. As joint Chair of the Partnership I was delighted that the partnership celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a Conference at County Hall in December (where it all started in 1996).

Cllr John Stocks
Cabinet Member for Resources