

Recommended item from Scrutiny Committee held on 13th October 2009

390. POLICY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT GROUPS

(1) PROGRESS ON REVIEWS

(a) PPMG1 - Review of Expenditure within PPMG1's Remit

The Chair of PPMG1 presented the report which gave details of the review of the expenditure budgets of ICT, Democratic Services, Legal Services and Finance.

A discussion took place regarding Members allowances.

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith

RECOMMENDED that (1) the use of the LGA and LGEM services by the Authority are assessed annually before the budget is assigned,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor R. Turner

RECOMMENDED that (2) the Directors be asked to promote the services, within their departments, provided by LGA and LGEM to ensure that the Authority is exploiting the facilities,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor R. Turner

RECOMMENDED that (3) there be a review of the postal arrangements to promote best practice in all departments to result in a reduction in postal costs across the Council,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor J.A. Clifton

RECOMMENDED that (4) there be a review of the distribution of items to Members and proposed options to meet the Members and legal requirements to minimise the cost to the Authority,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor S. Peake

RECOMMENDED that (5) there be a review of the frequency of meetings to consider reducing the volume to reduce the cost to the Authority,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor J.A. Clifton

RECOMMENDED that (6) a finance stream be developed so that the cost of Local Assessment Sub-Committee hearings to the Authority can be fully understood,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor R. Turner
RECOMMENDED that (7) a review be undertaken of what is being held in archives by each department with a target to move to electronically held data to reduce the cost to the Authority,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor M. Dooley
RECOMMENDED that (8) there be a plan to minimise the storage space at Pleasley Vale Mills including regular reminders that the retention guidelines are being applied and periodic spot checks to ensure adherence,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor M. Dooley
RECOMMENDED that (9) the contract for the secure collections be reviewed to reduce the cost to the Council,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor B.W. Hendry
RECOMMENDED that (10) Best practice in delivering savings that is demonstrated within the departments, be shared across the Authority,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor R. Turner
RECOMMENDED that (11) the previous recommendations be forwarded to the Executive for their approval,

Moved by Councillor H. Gilmour and seconded by Councillor K. Walker
RESOLVED that (12) the review be closed.

(Scrutiny and Policy Officer/Head of Democratic Services)

Council/ Committee:	Scrutiny	Agenda Item No.:	9(1)(a)
Date:	13 October 2009	Category	
Subject:	Review of Expenditure within PPMG1's remit	Status	Open
Report by:	PPMG1		
Other Officers involved:	Scrutiny and Policy Officer		
Director	Solicitor to the Council and Director of Resources		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cabinet Member for Corporate Efficiency		

RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS

STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Continually improving our organisation.

TARGETS

Delivery of the recommendations will support the target:
Minimise Council Tax increases by achieving our efficiency target of £1,078,000 by March 2008 and subsequent government targets to March 2011.

VALUE FOR MONEY

The recommendations highlight will ensure that the opportunities identified will provide efficiencies and savings for the Council.

THE REPORT

Report attached.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

As outlined in the attached report.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial :None

Legal :None

Human Resources : None

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The use of the LGA and LGEM services by the Authority are assessed annually before the budget is assigned,**
- 2. The Directors be asked to promote the services, within their departments, provided by LGA and LGEM to ensure that the Authority is exploiting the facilities,**
- 3. There is a review of the postal arrangements to promote best practice in all departments to result in a reduction in postal costs across the Council,**
- 4. There is a review of the distribution of items to members and propose options to meet the members and legal requirements to minimise the cost to the Authority,**
- 5. There is a review of the frequency of meetings to consider reducing the volume to reduce the cost to the Authority,**
- 6. A finance stream is developed so that the cost of Local Assessment Sub-Committee hearings to the Authority is fully understood,**
- 7. A review of what is being held in archives by each department with a target to move to electronically held data to reduce the cost to the Authority,**

- 8. There is a plan to minimise the storage space at Pleasley Vale Mills including regular reminders that the retention guidelines are being applied and periodic spot checks to ensure adherence,**
- 9. That the contract for the secure collections is reviewed to reduce the cost to the Council,**
- 10. Best practice in delivering savings that is demonstrated within the departments is shared across the Authority,**
- 11. The previous recommendations be forwarded to the Executive for their approval,**
- 12. The review is closed.**

ATTACHMENT: Y

FILE REFERENCE: Revenue budget review PPMG1 report for Scrutiny
160909final.doc

SOURCE DOCUMENT:

Review of expenditure within PPMG1's remit Scrutiny Review

September 2009

By PPMG1

Cllr Bowmer
Cllr Connerton
Cllr Gilmour
Cllr Mills
Cllr Crane
Cllr Turner
Cllr Waring
Cllr Hodkin

The aim of review was to identify any possible savings within the remit of PPMG1.

May I take this opportunity to thank all the members of the group and our executive member for his continued support.

Contribution and commitment to the work and attendance at the extra meetings to achieve the deadlines set for the end of September.

My thanks go to the heads of service who have been very helpful both in the group and meeting me on an individual basis, providing me with any additional information required within their budget expenditure.

I would also like to give my thanks to our Scrutiny Officer Bernie for all her hard work and support during these budget reviews and her increased workload.

Hilary Gilmour
Chair of PPMG1

Introduction

The Council has a financial shortfall of £1.1m for 2009/10. This is expected to be a similar situation for the following years.

As this review covers internal services it is not appropriate to involve the community.

Reason for the Review

To identify any immediate savings and areas for further investigation within each departments budget by September 2009

The review will cover the expenditure budgets of ICT, Democratic Services, Legal and Finance but will exclude the work being completed by other groups

The Review

During the review the group considered information from the following areas:

- ⇒ Budget details for each department
- ⇒ Service Plans for each department
- ⇒ Overview of the service
- ⇒ Interviews with the Heads of Service

The group investigated the £23,670 allocated for subscriptions. Finance supplied the details of subscriptions paid to LGA, LGEM and Knowshare Ltd and the services that they provide. The group contacted each Head of Service, SMT and the Executive to assess the impact of withdrawing the subscriptions. The responses highlighted the fact that Knowshare had been withdrawn. From the limited responses received the group felt that the LGA and LGEM services were being used and therefore needed to be retained.

Recommendations:

1. The use of the LGA and LGEM services by the authority are assessed annually before the budget is assigned
2. The Directors be asked to promote the services, within their departments, provided by LGA and LGEM to ensure that the authority is exploiting the facilities

The group reviewed the Democratic Services department list of responsibilities within the team, the breakdown of time spent on the activities and the breakdown of the monthly postal off-charges for May 09. The team rotate their roles every 2 years and the group reviewed the roles within the department. They considered the process of the production of committee agendas and minutes. The group

recognised that from May 2007, there had been an increase in work caused by the obligation upon the Council to hold Local Assessment Sub-Committees for complaints against Members and that there had been no increase in budget. The parish hearings have been imposed on them and it was confirmed that there was no extra funding and the group were concerned about the increase in member and officer time for the hearings. They have no budget for the elections as and when they occur and the costs are reimbursed. The group discussed the potential efficiencies in the items that are issued out to members including:

- Issuing the weekly meeting schedule A4 flat in one envelope rather than folding it and reducing the postage cost
- Members collecting the agendas rather than being posted
- Using 2nd class as standard for postal items
- Having one weekly despatch to members rather than several

Scott Chambers had suggested that non-urgent items are included in the members newsletter rather than being posted e.g. the weekly meeting schedule.

Recommendation:

1. There is a review of the postal arrangements to promote best practice in all departments to result in a reduction in postal costs across the Council
2. There is a review of the distribution of items to members and propose options to meet the members and legal requirements to minimise the cost to the authority
3. There is a review of the frequency of meetings to consider reducing the volume to reduce the cost to the authority
4. A finance stream is developed so that the cost of Standards hearings to the authority is fully understood.

The group considered the use of relief casuals and the archiving space at Pleasley Vale Mills (cost £11,070). The group felt that archiving should be kept to a minimum and there needed to be regular reminders to departments to remove out of date items and spot checks to minimise the volume of space required.

Recommendation:

1. A review of what is being held in archives by each department with a target to move to electronically held data to reduce the cost to the authority.
2. There is a plan to minimise the storage space at Pleasley Vale Mills including regular reminders that the retention guidelines are being applied and periodic spot checks to ensure adherence.

The group consider the contract for the secure cash collections (cost £12,240). On investigation it appeared that there was also money in the CSPD and the Leisure budgets that covered the cost of the secure collections from the contact centres, leisure centres and Frederick Gent School. The contract has not been reviewed for a long time. The group questioned if there had been a reduction due to the fact that there had been no collections from Kissingate while it had been closed.

Recommendation:

1. That the contract for the secure collections is reviewed to reduce the cost to the Council

The group moved on to look at the finance department's budget. The group reviewed the departmental structure in the service plan and the list of services that they provide.

The department had taken on board the savings and had been able to reduce the staffing by changing how they work. They try to accommodate requirements for those with childcare demands. They have peaks and troughs and allow staff to take time off or unpaid leave during the quiet times.

September to November was a busy period compiling the budget, in December they are busy with the Council Tax and between April and June they are completing the statement of accounts. They have had 0.5 duty on maternity leave for 12 months and have managed to cover the work between the team. They have streamlined the work and when staff members have left they have not been replaced which has created the cashable savings. An example of this is where they have developed an IT system to check the bank statement which has saved 1.5 hours per day. At their team meetings they have an item 'why do we do that?' to ensure that the staff are engaged and resulted in charging for mobile phones quarterly instead of monthly. If they need extra hours they use overtime rather than agency staff as they cost £200 per day. To reduce the cost of storage for archiving they are going paperless by scanning documents. The group felt that this could be shared across the departments. The group discussed the area and felt that they are proactive.

Recommendation:

1. Best practice in delivering savings that is demonstrated within the departments is shared across the authority

The group investigated the Legal department's budget and the potential for savings. The majority of the budget is staffing costs and they are currently carrying vacancies although some is being utilised for the temporary enforcement

officer role. They are planning to review the staffing before the temporary post comes to an end and the group felt they should wait for the outcome of this review.

With the increase in standards complaints locally the impact in this department has also increased with the extra work for the standards hearings and this will be monitored with the introduction of recommendation 6.

The group discussed the ICT department but felt that due to the staff shortages and potential of sharing the service with other authorities they would be no value in this area being scrutinised.

Recommendations

Please see pages ** and ** of the covering report.