

Title of Report:	Actions from previous meetings
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Meeting:	21 February 2012

Purpose of Report: To advise the Commission of the actions arising from previous meetings

Recommended Action: To note the report

Health Scrutiny Panel Chairman	
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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission with an update on the actions arising from its previous meeting.

2. Resolutions

- 2.1 **Resolution:** A letter would be sent from the Chairman of the Commission to the Secretary of State for Education outlining the Commission's concerns about representation of the views of parents of pupils at academies.

Action/response: A letter was sent to the Secretary of State on 26 January 2012.

- 2.2 **Resolution:** An update on progress would be provided on the recommendation to circulate to all Elected Members the plan template in order that they promote with their local school governors its adoption, regardless of whether the Member was a governor.

Action/response: Mark Lewis circulated the model plan to all Members by e-mail on 20 January.

- 2.3 **Resolution:** The Head of the Education Service should advise the Commission whether the anticipated November drop in the number of NEETs actually happened.

Action/response: The Head of Education has advised that West Berkshire NEET figures dropped to 4.5% in November 2011, falling across September and October, from a summer 'high' of 19%. In December they fell again to 4.4%.

- 2.4 **Resolution:** The Head of the Education Service should be invited to attend the Commission to explain the causes of and effect of the measures taken to address the drop in performance in GCSE mathematics;

Action/response: This item is covered by a separate item on the agenda.

- 2.5 The Head of Adult Social Care should advise the Commission of the costs associated with the required upgrade to the RAISE system and the progress made on the introduction of Personal Budgets.

Action/response: The Head of Adult Social Care has advised that the only cost associated with upgrading the Raise system for Personal Budgets is staff time and capacity working with practitioners to ensure the system supports the required workflow and processes.

Jan Evans also reports that feedback from staff and service users is that the Personal Budget process is still lengthy and complicated. A new simplified version will be available from 1 April 2012. All new assessments and reviews will then be automatically given a Personal Budget thus increasing take up.

2.6 **Resolution:** The Head of Children's Services should advise the Commission of the reasons behind the drop in numbers of young people entering the Youth Justice System.

Action/response: The Head of Children's Services reports that there are two reasons for the drop in first Time Entrants. Firstly, over the last decade the Children's fund (2002) and Youth Justice Board (2006) invested in early intervention with those at risk of offending. Locally we established an Early Intervention Team based within the Family Resource Service designed to work with young people at high risk of offending, and this has contributed to preventing some young people offending. Young people entering the youth justice system for the first time dropped from 272 in 2005-6 to 207 in 2008-9.

In addition to this, in 2009 the police introduced some informal disposals for young people committing low level crime - the Youth Cannabis Warning and the Youth Restorative Disposal – and these no longer count in the figures for first time entrants. Thus, although this is not a reduction in offending behaviour, it is reduction in the numbers of young people who enter the formal youth justice system. As a result first time entrants reduced to 123 in 2010-2011, although with 106 informal disposals (NB some informal disposals will be given for some behaviour which would not previously have been adjudged to be an offence).

Both of these factors are replicated nationally. The YOT screens young people receiving informal disposals to ensure that interventions are offered to those at highest risk.

In conclusion there has been a drop in the numbers of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time, which will partly be explained by effective prevention services, but partly explained more recently by police responses to low level offending behaviour. This is a strategy designed to keep young people out of the the Youth Justice system, partly in recognition of the negative impact it can have on young people.

2.7 **Resolution:** The Head of Planning and Countryside should advise the Commission:

1. of the actual numbers of planning appeals, in comparison to previous reporting periods; and
2. the likelihood of achieving the set target for determining planning applications within the government guidelines.

Action/response: The Head of Planning and Countryside has advised that the local target for the % of upheld planning appeals is set at "below" the national average for 2010/11 of 35%. Current performance, based on Quarters 1 through to 3, is 28% and so is Green.

The actual number of appeals does fluctuate considerably from quarter to quarter but tends to average out to about 86 per year.

This years appeals figures are as follows:

	No. of appeals	No. Upheld	No. Dismissed	% upheld
Q1	28	8	20	40%
Q2	31	8	23	37%
Q3	33	4	29	14%
Year to Date	92	20	72	28%

Based on the above the current year end forecast is as follows:

	No. of appeals	No. Upheld	No. Dismissed	% upheld
Year to Date	122	27	96	28%

Previous Year's Appeal Numbers and performance:

Year	No. Of Appeals	% Upheld
2006 / 07	152	36%
2007 / 08	98	27%
2008 / 09	77	29%
2009 / 10	84	33%
2010 / 11	87	33%
2011 /12 Estimate	122	28%

The number of appeals that are submitted is beyond any control by the Authority. Having reviewed the appeals submitted in the last 9 months there are no obvious reasons for the increase and so it can reasonably be expected that the actual number will reduce to the usual average of about 86 in 2012 / 13.

For Planning Applications Performance, Gary Lugg advises that at the time Development Control (DC) performance targets for 2011 / 2012 were set in February 2011 there was a considerable backlog (approximately 1,000) planning applications waiting to be processed and determined. Approval had been given to recruit to the 10 vacant posts in DC and the Planning Registration teams and to bring in additional resource. At the time it had been hoped to recruit to the vacant posts and bring in temporary resource within two months.

The recruitment process resulted in a number of internal appointments so creating further unforeseen vacancies within DC. It was hoped to cover all the vacant posts using temporary resource but this also proved more difficult than anticipated with very few suitably experienced temporary planners being available. 17 were interviewed only 4 were considered suitable. One of these left for another appointment shortly after starting work with the Council. This lack of resource

slowed performance improvement in Q2 and Q3 particularly in the Minor and Major categories.

In Q3 the majority of vacant posts were recruited to, with only 3 remaining vacant at the end of the quarter. It is hoped to recruit to these posts in the coming month. Temporary planners also joined the Council in August helping reduce the backlog from then.

At the time of writing it is anticipated that the performance target for quarter 4 will be achieved.

The table below summarises planning performance including quarter 3 outturn and forecast performance for quarter 4.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4 (Qtr End)
<u>Majors</u>				
Target	30%	50%	60%	60%
Actual	33%	50%	16%	60% Qtr end forecast
<u>Minors</u>				
Target	0%	0%	35%	35%
Actual	1%	1%	13%	40% Qtr end forecast
<u>Others</u>				
Target	70%	60%	70%	75%
Actual	83%	84%	81%	80% Qtr end forecast

2.8 **Resolution:** The Head of Customer Services should update the Commission on:

1. whether the target for the percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds was still likely to be achieved; and
2. the methodology in use for determining the rating of the Contact Centre.

Action/response: The Head of Customer Services reports that he anticipates being unable to meet this target by a small margin by year end.

During 2011-2012 the service has reduced its establishment and at the same time increased its portfolio through the addition of libraries and free school meals. Simultaneously there has been pressure due to an increase in demand caused by a compulsory data matching exercise between Housing Benefit and Working Families Tax Credit which suspended a significant number of benefit claims and caused lengthy enquiries. Also there was an increase in call volumes as a

consequence of queries about Council Tax Direct Debits and in relation to the 'new' waste collection arrangements.

Housing Benefit claims and debt recovery arrangements for residents in arrears with Council Tax have increased due to the economic climate, and just recently weather conditions have also added to call volume. Internally incidents of I.T. down time have caused back logs of calls resulting in short duration high demand.

Whilst many of the above have been unanticipated they do constitute a level of consistent and over profiled demand - previously these could have been reasonably responded to but with a reduction in establishment of 6 fte and a broader service provision this target is by necessity testing the resilience of the service.

Target achievement could be realised - however this could only be through 'pushing' enquiries to the 'back offices'. This would negatively impact on their capacity and be contrary to the principles that created Customer Services e.g. 80% of enquiries being dealt with at the first point of contact (currently 83% against a target of 80%). It would, by consequence, create a light touch service which would undoubtedly lead to the double handling of information and increase workload.

Operationally Customer Services has been working actively to broaden the knowledge and skills of Customer Services' advisors - this provides a flexible workforce that can be mobilised to those high demand areas. This ability has however been diminished as referred to above but we continue to work towards increasing the skills of customer advisors to maintain flexibility and responsiveness.

In measuring the quality of the service, Sean Anderson advises that this is captured both externally and internally – the reported indicator relates to external satisfaction scoring only. Externally this is achieved by way of customer feedback gathered through survey forms - however it is acknowledged despite recording high levels of satisfaction it does have a low participation rate despite active encouragement to complete survey forms.

Internally, staff have their telephone call 'silently monitored'. This measures both their soft customer care skills and their technical accuracy – this information is then used during 1-2-1's and Annual Appraisal.

With a reduction in resource and uplift in demand both targets will remain a significant challenge for the service. The quality of our response will remain the priority – along with the recognition that responsiveness is also a desired outcome. Given that set out above, we would look to review both these targets for 2012/13, with a view to capturing a rounded balance of measures around responsiveness and quality of service.

If adopted this action would balance the requirement for a responsive and effective service.

- 2.9 **Resolution:** The Performance, Research and Consultation Manager should verify the figures reported at Q1 and Q2 for the level of early intervention services in the Children and Young People directorate and advise the Commission of his findings.

Action/response: The Performance, Research and Consultation Manager reports that within the commissioning cycle, needs identification will result in the need for new or different provision. Some of this will be more cost-effective through purchasing services. Part of the committed budget for early intervention allowed for development of new provision (this was an expectation set out by the Government in its Early Intervention Grant guidance). This in turn supports local capacity building, diversification and market growth in the third sector, also part of the Government's policy agenda. Examples of services commissioned so far include, the domestic abuse referral team, co-delivered by A2 dominion with WBC. FiP Edge of care intervention again a partnership, with sovereign housing.

For 2011/12 a target was set of 10% of the early intervention money to be commissioned (£1,172,600). As per Q2, £1,066,000 of this pot had been allocated. This was reported as amber as some of this money may need to be diverted in order to meet in year savings targets. The implications of not delivering on this measure are a slower diversification of provision.

- 2.10 **Resolution:** The Chief Executive should take steps to ensure that Heads of Service provided sufficient detail in their exception reports to allow the Commission and others to fully assess the impact where there was a risk of targets not being achieved.

Action/response: Heads of Service have been advised to comply with the direction when making their returns for Quarter 3.

- 2.11 **Resolution:** A working group of 3 Councillors will be established to help develop the measures and targets to be incorporated into the Council Strategy.

Action/response: Councillor David Rendel will join Councillors Quentin Webb and Emma Webster on the working group.

- 2.12 **Resolution:** The Executive report on Taceham House would be passed to Councillor Brooks, along with information about its passage through the Executive Cycle.

Action/response: The report was e-mailed to Councillor Jeff Brooks on 31 January.

- 2.13 **Resolution:** A review of the Housing Allocations policy will be added to the work programme.

Action/response: This item is now on the work programme and forms part of the agenda for the meeting.

- 2.14 **Resolution:** The Chairman and Vice-Chairman will review the Scrutiny work programme.

Action/response: The work programme was reviewed on 25 January and a number of items were removed or re-prioritised.

- 2.15 **Resolution:** The Chief Executive will review the resources available in the Policy and Communication service to support Scrutiny.

Action/response: The Chief Executive has reviewed with the Head of Policy and Communication and the Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager the staffing resource available for Scrutiny. Redeployment of staff from other activities is not currently possible but staffing levels and deployment will be regularly reviewed.

Appendices

There no appendices to this report.