

Minutes of a meeting of the **PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 15 June 2016 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

B Alcock (Chairman)  
M D Booth (Vice-Chairman)

J R Astill  
C J T H Brewis  
T A Carter

J L King  
J D McLean  
A M Newton

A C Tennant  
J Tyrrell

In Attendance: The South Holland Place Manager, the Environmental Services Manager, the Environmental Protection Manager, the Change and Performance Manager, the Housing Landlord Manager, the Business Intelligence Officer and the Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors G R Aley, R Clark, G K Dark, P C Foyster and R Grocock.

1. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the following meetings were signed by the Chairman as a correct record:

- Performance Monitoring Panel – 5 April 2016
- Special joint meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel – 26 April 2016
- Special joint meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel – 16 May 2016

With regard to the meeting of Performance Monitoring Panel on 5 April 2016, where reference was made to inviting a representative from Network Rail to attend a future Panel meeting to discuss how issues around how complaints and queries were dealt with (minute 41e), the following issues and concerns were raised:

- The outside space was in a very poor state, with much of the area being overgrown. It gave a very poor impression to those arriving in Spalding by train.
- Part of the station building had been let out, and some of it was boarded up. Again, it gave a poor impression of the town, and the building itself was listed.
- Currently, any downtime as a result of barriers closing when trains travelled through Spalding created severe backlogs for those travelling on the roads. The anticipated increase in trains travelling through Spalding would make this problem worse. A bridge in the town had been discussed, but this

**Action By**

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would be some time in the future.

- There had been recent incidences where faulty rail barriers, sometimes in combination with roadworks, had resulted in certain areas of Spalding being inaccessible, causing access issues and also major travel disruption. It was felt that these issues could cause potential problems for the emergency services. Was this an issue that should be considered within the Authority's Emergency Plan?
- There were still concerns regarding the complaints process at Network Rail. Members had contacted the company on a variety of issues, had been provided with reference numbers for their complaints, but no resolution to them.

Although the Panel initially felt that a representative from Network Rail should attend to answer questions on all of these issues, the Place Manager advised that they were too varied for one representative to deal with and that in reality, they would be dealt with by a number of different departments. He also advised that some of the issues could be dealt with through planning processes. The following suggestions were therefore made:

- Poor upkeep of outside space – This could be dealt with through a S215 notice relating to untidy land.
- Condition of part of the listed station building – This could be investigated by a planning enforcement officer.
- The issue of downtime caused by railway barriers, and the potential public safety risk of emergency vehicles not being able to get through could not effectively be dealt with by Network Rail attending a Panel meeting. It was important to consider two areas - the consequence of the barrier closures, and the pattern of downtime; and the provision of emergency services vehicles. There had to be liaison with both Network Rail and the emergency services. With regard to whether the Emergency Plan accounted for these situations, the Planning Manager commented that this would be an area in which to start considering how the problems could be addressed, with the long term solution of a bridge being part of the Local Plan, although this would be some time in the future. He also pointed out that many towns were bisected by the railway and that this was not an issue peculiar to Spalding.

Following discussion on these various matters, the Panel agreed that rather than asking Network Rail to attend a future meeting, that a list of officers/ bodies to be contacted for each of the issues raised be provided in order that the Panel could progress the various complaints/concerns. In addition, it was requested that the Emergency Plan be considered in light of members' comments.

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**AGREED:**

- a) That the minutes of the following meetings be signed by the Chairman as a correct record:
- Performance Monitoring Panel – 5 April 2016
  - Special joint meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel – 26 April 2016
  - Special joint meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel – 16 May 2016; and
- b) That in order for the Panel to progress the various complaints/concerns raised relating to Network Rail, a list of officers and bodies to be contacted for each of the issues be provided.

CM

**2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.**

There were none.

**3. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6**

There were none.

**4. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

There were none.

**5. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL.**

There were none.

**6. KEY DECISION PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan issued on 6 June 2016.

**AGREED:**

That the Key Decision Plan issued on 6 June 2016 be noted.

**7. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT Q4 2015/2016**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Strategy and Governance, which provided an update on the Council's performance up to 31 March 2016. Areas where

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performance had improved since the previous quarter were brought to Members' attention, as were areas of concern where performance was below expected levels or were considered to be worsening.

With regard to Key Performance Indicators, Quarter 3 saw similar levels of performance against indicators, as had been experienced in Quarter 2. The performance was rated as good. The current status of performance indicators, as represented by the returns of Quarter 4, still represented good performance.

Areas of success highlighted in the report included the following, which were below tolerance levels/within time frames: call abandonment rate; call waiting times; commercial property occupancy; staff turnover; and planning application determination.

Areas of concern highlighted in the report included the following: high levels of staff sickness; the performance of the re-letting of void properties; and a decline in the performance on missed waste collections.

The Panel considered the information detailed within the report, and the following issues were raised:

- It was stated in the report that the Council had adopted a new sickness management process. How was sickness now managed, and what was the process?
  - Officers did not have this information available and members were therefore advised that they would be provided with this in due course after the meeting.
- The performance of the re-letting of void properties was still an area of concern to the Panel.
  - At the last meeting, the Panel had requested that a 'deep-dive' investigation be undertaken at a future meeting to investigate the issues. The Chairman suggested that a Task Group be set up to undertake this investigation, and the Place Manager agreed that this would be the appropriate forum, given the confidential nature of some of the information. The Task Group should be focussed, with the intention of understanding the current problems and making recommendations to improve performance.
  - Councillors Booth, Brewis and Carter volunteered to be members of the Task Group. The Democratic Services Officer would contact the Panel members not in attendance to ascertain whether they wished to serve on the Task Group.

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- The Place Manager suggested that he and the Housing Landlord Manager attend the first meeting of the Task Group to provide guidance with the scope, and that a member of the Performance Team should also be in attendance to advise on how data was managed.
- With regard to commercial property occupancy, what was the definition of occupancy? Members were concerned that some units were rented out but were being used for storage, while there was a waiting list for businesses requiring commercial properties.
  - The Place Manager advised that this issue would be investigated and a response sent to Panel members.

**AGREED:**

- a) That the report of the Executive Director Strategy and Governance be noted;
- b) That Panel members be advised how the Authority's new sickness management procedure operated;
- c) That upon completion of the work of existing Task Groups, a new Task Group be set up to look at performance of the re-letting of void properties, as follows:
  - i. The Task Group should be focussed, with the intention of understanding the current problems around the re-letting of void properties, and making recommendations to improve performance;
  - ii. Membership of the Task Group to consist of Councillors Booth, Brewis and Carter, and the Democratic Services Officer to contact those Panel members not at the meeting to clarify if they wished to be members; and
  - iii. That the Place Manager, the Housing Landlord Manager and a member of the Performance team attend the Task Group's first meeting to provide guidance with the scope, and to advise on how data was managed; and
- d) That Panel members be provided with a definition of what was classed as commercial property occupancy, and whether rented properties being used purely for storage were in contravention of the terms of occupancy.

CM, CB

CM

VS, CM

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(The Change and Performance Manager and the Business Intelligence Officer left the meeting following discussion on the above item).

**8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Manager Governance, which set out the Work Programme of the Performance Monitoring Panel. The Work Programme consisted of two separate sections, the first setting out the dates of the future Panel meetings along with proposed items for consideration, and the second setting out the Task Groups that had been identified by the Panel.

A number of particular items for discussion were identified on the agenda and each was discussed as follows:

Sir Halley Stewart Playing Field Task Group

The original Task Group had commenced its work in February 2014 at the request of the Council, in response to concerns from the Charity Commission about management of the Sir Halley Stewart Playing Field that sufficient public benefit was being demonstrated. The Task Group had concluded that the Council was compliant with the Commission's Guidance on public benefit, and had also recommended that the Performance Monitoring Panel be invited to appoint a Task Group on an annual (single meeting) basis for the specific purpose of ensuring that the Council remained compliant with Charity Commission Guidance.

The Chairman confirmed that this Task Group should be set upon conclusion of the work of current task groups that were undertaking work.

Biennial Review of Implemented Planning Decisions

The Chairman advised that the tour in respect of the review would be undertaken in September 2016. Officers would meet with the Chairman to discuss the process and Panel members would be asked to submit suggestions of sites to visit in due course.

The effectiveness of SHDC's fraud process within the housing stock

The Chairman commented that fraud within the housing stock was a national issue, specifically in relation to individuals living in Council properties that they were not entitled to, subletting and

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benefit fraud. He suggested that the Panel may wish to investigate how robust the Authority's systems were in this area. It was agreed that the Place Manager provide the Panel with information on these issues prior to a decision being made with regard to setting up a Task Group.

### Environmental Enforcement

Councillor McLean had raised a number of issues around the enforcement of environmental issues e.g. littering, dog fouling etc. Reference was made to recommendations made by the Enforcement Policy (Street Scene) Task Group in November 2008, specifically 'to implement the robust enforcement objective recommended in the SHDC Street Scene Strategy that all Community and Neighbourhood Services Officers currently operating in an enforcement role are trained and authorised to be generic enforcement officers and deal with street scene issues in both targeted and one off actions'.

The Environmental Services Manager was in attendance to explain what had happened since the Task Group had made its recommendations. The Panel was advised that since then, the Authority had gone through a restructure and a number of management reviews, the Community and Neighbourhood Services department was no longer in existence and that Environmental Services was now its own department. In addition, there had also been changes in legislation around enforcement.

A part-time enforcement officer was now in post. His main priority was fly-tipping, but he also dealt with issues around fixed penalty notices. There was still a desire by the Authority to continue issuing fixed penalty notices for littering offences. There had been an increase in the number of notices given out since the Authority had employed a dedicated officer to deal with this issue.

The Panel discussed the topic further and the following issues were raised:

- The Chairman commented that due to the changes detailed above, the recommendations from the original Task Group may no longer be appropriate however, the problem still existed and an alternative solution was therefore required.
  - The Place Manager responded that, as part of its work, the Authority's Transformation Programme would be looking at a review of place services which would include addressing how enforcement in the round was undertaken. The departments of the Environmental Services Manager and the

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Environmental Protection Manager had similar issues around enforcement, and common processes to deal with them were required. How the Authority dealt with all regulatory issues as an organisation had to be considered. Proposals could be shared with the Panel towards the end of the year, following consultation with staff.

- With regard to fly-tipping, were cameras and/or signs used to deal with this problem?
  - Cameras were sometimes used however care had to be taken and the legal process involved could sometimes be lengthy. However, signage to discourage fly-tipping in an area had been used, and had produced good results.
- How was dog-fouling dealt with?
  - No fixed penalties had been given for dog-fouling – this was a notoriously difficult area to enforce as officers had no powers to compel individuals to provide details of their identity. However, the Authority's dog warden was very effective in helping to reduce its incidence. Posters were also put up in areas where the issue was a particular problem.
- What were the issues in dealing with persistent offenders?
  - For all offences, there were repeat offenders. They could sometimes be dealt with however there were issues with lone working, the attitudes of individuals and obtaining evidence of who committed the offence.
- Could officers use body cameras to identify offenders, similar to those used by the police?
  - The Place Manager commented that there could be data protection issues involved.
- Members requested that this issue be looked into.
- Members questioned whether the Authority could be doing more with regard to enforcement.
  - The Place Manager responded that it was doing as much as it could with the resources at its disposal. The focus needed to be on prevention and education first, before enforcement. Coordination of efforts amongst officers would also help.

Following consideration of these issues, it was agreed that the Panel be provided with details of how the Authority could improve

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how it dealt with enforcement issues, through a coordinated Authority-wide approach to enforcement and undertaking of preventative educational measures.

**AGREED:**

a) That both sections of the Panel's Work Programme, as set out in the report of the Executive Manager Governance, be noted;

b) That a single meeting Task Group to investigate whether the Council remained compliant with Charity Commission Guidance in respect of the Sir Halley Stewart Playing Field be set up upon conclusion of the work of the Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre Contract Task Group;

c) That the Panel be provided with information around the Authority's processes to prevent fraud within the housing stock, prior to a decision being made as to whether to set up a Task Group to investigate this area; and

d) That the Panel be provided with a report detailing how the Authority would undertake enforcement in the future, through a coordinated Authority-wide approach to enforcement and undertaking of preventative educational measures.

CM

RS, CM

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(The meeting ended at 8.35 pm)

(End of minutes)