

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

8 APRIL 2008

### MAIL COMMUNICATIONS TO MEMBERS

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members with the outcome of a recent investigation into reported problems with Members' mail

#### Background

- 2 At the meeting held on 11 March 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Board (OSB) was informed that a scrutiny review had been requested by a Member following some of her mail being delivered to another Member, and his to her. OSB was also informed that there had been other problems with the mail delivery service.
- 3 The Members' mail service is a daily courier service provided by Mouchel Business Services.
- 4 The incident referred to in paragraph 2 above had also been reported by the Member concerned to the Members' Office. The Senior Resources Officer, who has responsibility for Members' support, took up the matter with the Council's Partnership Manager on 27 February 2008. In turn, the Partnership Manager asked the Corporate Policy Manager in the Performance and Policy section to undertake an inquiry with the Business Support Manager in Mouchel Business Services, who has responsibility for managing the courier service.
- 5 On 7 March 2007, the Corporate Policy Manager reported back to the Senior Resources Officer. His memo, containing the findings of his inquiry, is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

- 6 As Members will see from the Appendix, the courier services handles approximately 2,600 deliveries per quarter, and in the last quarter prior to this complaint, only 4 problems with mail deliveries were received by Mouchel Business Services. This represents a failure rate of less than 0.2%. All of these were caused by 'human error'.

## **Conclusions**

- 7 There was a breakdown in the courier service that led to Councillor Elder's mail and Councillor Dryden's mail being delivered to the others' houses. A personal apology has been made by Mouchel Business Services both to Councillor Elder and to Councillor Dryden for this error.
- 8 The Mouchel Business Services manager responsible for the courier service has spoken with the particular courier and is satisfied that the error was due to a genuine mistake.
- 9 There is an extremely low failure rate by the courier service. Nevertheless, the reported failures in the services are being taken seriously, and ways of improving the service are being sought.
- 10 The courier service is a manual service with little opportunity to automate through technology.
- 11 The courier service is currently provided by a casual bank of staff. Mouchel Business Services are developing a proposal to employ permanent staff. This should provide for greater reliability in service.
- 12 The Members' Office will continue to take up failures in the courier service with Mouchel Business Services.

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## MEMO

From: Scott Postlethwaite Corporate Policy Manager  
To: Sylvia Reynolds, Senior Resources Officer, Member's Office  
Subject: Courier Service Complaint

Date: 07 March 2008

## PURPOSE

1. To respond to the complaint by Cllr Elder in relation to the Post Room Courier Service.

## BACKGROUND

2. Mouchel provide a courier service that delivers mail to the homes of councillors each night. As you advised in your email to John Polson on 27/02/08:

*'...This week, Cllr Elder received Cllr Dryden's mail and opened the envelope. She then asked where her mail was (post room don't know). She also complained that she had received personal information regarding Cllr Dryden i.e. his phone bill etc. Cllr Elder is now concerned that her post has been seen by somebody else. She also claims that other cllrs have also had the wrong post delivered to them. We are aware of some such incidents.*

*Cllr Elder has now been to the Scrutiny Team asking them to carry out an ad hoc Scrutiny on this process.*

*Following previous complaints there are now written procedures in place for the post room and the Courier. However every now and then this fails for some reason.... but understandably... cllrs get very agitated about this...*

## COMMENTS

3. I have met with Paul Pearson, Customer Services Manager, Mouchel concerning the complaint from Cllr Elder about the delivery of the wrong mail to her and Cllr Dryden.

4. Mouchel have investigated the incident. Mouchel admit error and advise that a personal apology by telephone has been made to Cllr Elder and to Cllr Dryden.
5. The Mouchel manager responsible for the courier service has spoken with the particular courier and is satisfied that it was a genuine mistake. There is no evidence of human intervention or breakdown of systems. I am unsure if there were any mitigating circumstances such as rain, dark night etc.
6. The couriers make approximately 200 deliveries per week to councillors (2,600 per quarter). Last quarter there were only four official complaints about the service (including this one):
  - Letter not pushed through letterbox;
  - Letter left on doormat;
  - Batch of letters not delivered; and
  - Letters delivered to wrong address (Cllrs Elder and Dryden).
7. The courier service is currently provided by a casual bank of staff. Mouchel are developing a proposal to employ permanent staff. This should provide for greater reliability in service and enable better training and development of the courier workforce (and hopefully fewer mistakes).
8. The courier service for Members is a fully manual service with little opportunity to automate through technology with the current arrangements. This means that, regrettably, it is virtually impossible to eliminate errors and that the best we can do is to minimise the risk of errors.
9. Paul Pearson has indicated that the responsible Mouchel manager will be working with the Members' Office to build a better relationship with that service and to better understand the particular service needs and sensitivities of elected Members.
10. I consider that the mix up of mail involving Cllrs Elder and Dryden, though regrettable and avoidable, was a genuine mistake and hard to eliminate from a fully manual system. I also consider that Mouchel have acted appropriately in relation to the complaint and in relation to the provision of courier services to Members. I will continue to monitor courier performance in consultation with Paul Pearson during 2008 in my role as Administration Services Client Officer.
11. In investigating this complaint, I have identified some potential opportunities to improve services to Members and possibly reduce the costs of providing the courier service. The opportunities are around potentially using email to circulate documents to Members or perhaps giving Members the option of collecting mail from the Town Hall. I am happy to discuss these further with Members' Services.

Scott Postlethwaite  
Corporate Policy Manager  
Performance and Policy