

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel **Date:** Tuesday, 8 November 2005

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 9.38 pm

Members Present: J M Whitehouse (Chairman), R Chidley, Mrs D Collins, K Faulkner, Mrs R Gadsby and R Goold

Other Councillors: R Glozier, D Jacobs, J Knapman, Mrs C Pond and D Stallan

Apologies: S Barnes

Officers Present: P Haywood (Joint Chief Executive), R Palmer (Head of Finance), T Tidey (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management), J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), A Hall (Head of Housing Services), D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), P Maddock (Assistant Head of Finance), S Tautz (Senior Performance Management Officer) and G Lunnun (Democratic Services Manager)

21. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Notes of the meeting held on 26 September 2005 agreed as a correct record.

22. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

No substitutes advised.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations declared by members.

24. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

Terms of Reference and Work Programme noted.

25. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING

Noted that the Panel had within its terms of reference, consideration of financial monitoring reports on key areas of income and expenditure for each Portfolio.

Considered a report covering the period 1 April 2005 to 30 September 2005. Advised that the key items selected for each Portfolio had been chosen following consultation with the Chairman of the Panel.

Noted that salaries monitoring data was held by Service rather than by Portfolio, although there were clearly some Services that were linked closely to particular Portfolios.

Attention drawn to the following main variances:

Salaries underspend of approximately £764,000 (7.7% of budget), reflecting the fact that at the end of September there had been 92 vacancies.

Shortfall in income for Local Land Charges of £44,000.

Higher than anticipated income for off-street parking (£55,000).

Higher than anticipated income for North Weald Centre (£37,000).

Overspend on concessionary fares due to the popularity of the amended Transport for London Scheme (Supplementary Estimate being sought for £68,000).

Spend of only £33,000 against a half year budget of £185,000 in relation to Forward Planning.

Agreed:

(1) that the financial monitoring report for the second quarter of 2005/06 be noted; and

(2) that the content and format of the report be retained in future reports.

26. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2005-06

Considered the Council's performance for the first six months of 2005/06 in relation to the key performance indicators to be considered quarterly as adopted by the Cabinet.

Noted:

BV157 – need to consider increasing target in view of performance;

BV64 – need to re-evaluate target when strategy agreed/traffic light should be red;

H15(a)/(b) – refer to Overview and Scrutiny Committee with request that Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel include in their programme of work with a view to formulating proposals for increasing the number of affordable homes ready for occupation in 2007/08.

BV82a(i) – noted amber traffic light/include DC top quartile information in future, if possible.

BV82a(ii) – noted amber traffic light/include DC top quartile information in future, if possible/J Gilbert to review position.

BV82b(i) – noted amber traffic light/include DC top quartile information in future, if possible.

BV82b(ii) – noted amber traffic light/include DC top quartile information in future, if possible/J Gilbert to review position.

BV199a – noted green traffic light.

BV199b – noted green traffic light.

Agreed:

- (1) that the key performance indicators be reviewed at the end of the third quarter in order to establish whether action is required in order to achieve targets;
- (2) that, if possible, the presentation of the data relating to DC top quartile and all England top quartile be separated in future reports, after the introduction of the planned new performance reporting software.

27. CONCESSIONARY FARES - ACCESS INTO LONDON

Received a presentation from the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder on a report to be submitted to the Cabinet on the popularity of the revised scheme with Transport for London.

Noted that the Cabinet was being recommended to approve a supplementary estimate of £68,000 to cover the additional costs of the scheme in 2005/06; to amend the scheme for 2006/07 to exclude tube travel in view of changes to the pricing structure used by Transport for London and; to the submission of a bid for CSB growth of £45,000 to fund the revised scheme in 2006/07 with the charges for a pass being held at the current level of £30 or £10 if the applicant is on housing benefit or income support.

Agreed that the recommendations to the Cabinet be supported.

28. PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PERFORMANCE 2005/06

Received a presentation from the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder and the Head of Planning and Economic Development on planning performance.

Discussed planning enforcement with particular reference to numbers of cases outstanding; progress against development control targets following the recent approval of a supplementary estimate and the award of Planning Delivery Grant; and the rationale behind the proposed service restructure. Noted the steps which had been taken to improve performance and that these would take time to have a full impact.

Agreed that the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder and the Head of Planning and Economic Development be asked to agree a local performance indicator in relation to planning enforcement.

29. FEES AND CHARGES

Agreed that the proposal to increase fees and charges by 2.5% in line with the consumer prices index be supported subject to the different approaches set out in the reports circulated.

Agreed that the proposed first application fee for a dangerous wild animals licence be checked for accuracy.

Noted that the period cost for a monthly season ticket in a long stay car park should be £46 and not as shown on the circulated schedule.

Noted that the 2005/06 and 2006/07 file copying charge in relation to Housing Services should be £10.

30. COUNCIL PLAN 2006-2010

Agreed the proposed format and structure of the draft Council Plan for 2006 to 2010.

Agreed the initial proposals for consultation on the new Council Plan. Noted the timetable for the completion of the new Council Plan.

31. USER FOCUS AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Noted the findings of the Audit Commission's "User Focus" assessment of the Council's approach to public consultation.

Agreed that the Council's existing consultation strategy be reviewed in the light of the Commission's findings and that the revised strategy be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel for consideration.

Noted customer consultation exercises completed during 2005.

32. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Noted issues to be referred to in report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) concessionary fares – endorsement of proposed action;
- (ii) affordable housing – request for Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel to include within work programme;
- (iii) fees and charges – support to general approach regarding increases.

33. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Panel noted the forward programme of meeting dates for the Panel as follows:

16 January 2006
7 February 2006
25 April 2006.