

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2005
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.50 PM**

Members Present:	J M Whitehouse (Chairman), A Green (Vice-Chairman), Mrs D Collins, K Faulkner and R Goold
Other members present:	J Knapman
Apologies for Absence:	(none)
Officers Present	P Haywood (Joint Chief Executive), R Palmer (Head of Finance), T Tidey (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management) and S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer)
Also in attendance:	(none)

10. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

No substitutes advised.

11. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests declared by members.

12. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Noted and agreed as a correct record.

13. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

Terms of reference noted. Items on the Budget, Council Plan and Performance Management Framework were on this agenda.

14. BUDGET 2006-07 - FINANCIAL ISSUES

Issues Paper noted. A number of elements were seen to affect the budget in the next year these were:

- Future Local Government Finance Settlements
- Ongoing difficulties with recruitment and retention
- Changes to the statutory concessionary fares scheme
- Capitalisation of pension deficit payments
- Residual costs following changes in Highways and Leisure
- Generation of future Capital Receipts
- Restriction on future Council Tax increases
- Changes to the waste service and higher recycling targets

Councillor Knapman indicated that these uncertainties would be clarified nearer to December 2005. The supplementary agenda set out two growth scenarios, one just under 3% growth, the other just under 4% growth. Salary under spends formed a large amount of this year's under spending.

The Portfolio Holder agreed to review the London concessionary fares scheme. Some members of the Panel felt there was scope for changes in the scheme to increase the charges.

Noted that it was now likely that the Leisure Centre Management Contract wouldn't be fully operational until possibly February 2006 and that support service costs would take time to be reviewed. The 2006/07 budget was being drafted on the basis of the current establishment. Anticipated savings might be incorporated into the budget at a later stage depending on progress. The panel indicated a wish to be kept informed about the review of support service costs and the financial consequences of the transfer of highways and leisure.

Agreed that a paper on fees and charges be presented to the November 2005 meeting of the Panel.

Agreed that the general approach to the Budget taken by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee be endorsed.

15. COUNCIL PLAN 2006-2010

Noted that it was intended that specific aims included in the new Council Plan would be developed in line with the following themes of the Community Strategy:

Green and Unique
Homes and Neighbourhoods
A Safe Community
Fit for Life
Economic Prosperity

It was noted that a framework document would be reported to the November 2005 meeting of the Panel. An audit of the current plan would form part of the process. Noted that officers were drafting the document to avoid duplication with the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and that the BVPP for 2006/07 would take account of the emerging Council Plan.

The panel endorsed the proposed report and made various comments which the Head of Human Resources and Performance Management undertook to take into account.

16. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Framework noted.

It was considered that Portfolio Holders should have a method of signing off Service Business Plans prior to each year. Councillor Knapman agreed to consider the implementation of this proposal.

17. PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PERFORMANCE 2005/06

Noted that the Planning and Economic Portfolio Holder had been asked to attend the next meeting of the Panel. The Panel requested the following issues to form part of the discussion at that meeting.

- (i) Planning enforcement – particular reference to numbers of cases outstanding;
- (ii) Progress against Development Control targets following recent supplementary estimate and Planning Delivery Grant; and
- (iii) Rationale behind forthcoming service restructure

18. 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) Budget parameters; and
- (ii) To remind members of the Portfolio Holder discussion at the next meeting.

19. PANEL MEETINGS - PUBLIC ACCESS

The Chairman raised an issue about whether the Panel's meetings should be open to the attendance of the public. All present agreed that they should be open and the Chairman undertook to report this back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

20. FUTURE MEETINGS

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

8 November 2005
16 January 2006
7 February 2006
25 April 2006