

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2007
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.45 PM**

Members Present: J M Whitehouse (Chairman), J Hart (Vice-Chairman), R Church, M Colling, Mrs A Cooper, P House and D Jacobs

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: R Morgan

Officers Present T Tidey (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management), A Hall (Head of Housing Services), J Akerman (Chief Internal Auditor), P Maddock (Assistant Head of Finance), S Tautz (Performance Improvement Manager), A Akhrif (Trainee Performance Improvement Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance:

35. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that there were no Substitute members.

36. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

Councillor Mrs Cooper requested that her comment that she did not wish to continue as a member of this Panel be included in the minutes.

37. NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING - 15 JANUARY 2007

The notes of the previous meeting, held on 15 January 2007, were agreed.

38. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The current work programme was noted.

39. QUARTER 3 KPI MONITORING

The Panel noted that this was the third quarter when the new performance monitoring system had been used to provide information on KPI's. It was noted that at present the Council was not meeting about two thirds of the KPI targets. It would need to meet about 50%.

On the specific KPI's the following questions were asked:

BV008 – Percentage of Invoices Paid on time: noted that the target of 99.2% was very high and there would be some difficulty in meeting it. Although, it must be assumed that some councils were meeting it, it may be there was a need to further analyse our performance.

BV009 – Percentage of Council Tax Collected: noted that we would have to wait until the end of the year to know if we had achieved this target. Also, under 'Target met for 2005/06' it should read 'Yes' not 'No'.

BV010 – Percentage of non-domestic rates collected: Again this is a very high target (99.2%) and it would be a close thing for us to achieve this target at the end of the year.

BV012 – Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence: The Panel noted that we would not meet this target by the end of the year.

BV078b – Speed of Processing: Change in circumstances for HB/CTB Claims: Noted that this target was unrealistic. The Local Authorities Association was evaluating this as a target and found that a lot of authorities that reported that they had met this target had in fact not met it. A more realistic target would be 11 or 12 days.

BV091a – Kerbside Collection of Recyclables (one recyclable): Noted that the target should be reset to take in flats and other non-standard residences. By 2010 the Council would need meet a 100% target, so our strategy would need to be developed by then.

BV109a – Planning Applications: Major Applications: Noted it was a close run thing to meet this target. Also the description says it is "determined in a timely manner" this was a vague phrase and it should be replace (wherever it occurs) by a definite time period, eight weeks was said to be the time frame planning was working to. If so, eight weeks should be the period specified.

BV166a&b – Environmental Health & Trading Standards Checklist: The Panel noted that this target was unlikely to be achieved this year.

BV170a – Visits to and use of Museums (and Galleries): all visits: It was noted that the target had jumped from 309 in 2005/06 to 811 in 2006/07 a significant jump to happen in just one year. Also the Panel would like clarification as to what 811 means, is it per 1,000 of the population or total of population?

BV183b – the average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority: noted that our period is reducing from 20 to 19 weeks. However, it was also noted that this is a nonsense target as not all Local Authorities have hostels.

BV199a – Local Street and Environmental Cleanliness – Litter and Detritus: It was asked that our own internal indicators used to monitor our contractors should be used as targets.

BV204 – Planning appeals: It was uncertain that we would meet this target. It was noted that responsibility for performance against this indicator could be shared between the planning Sub-Committee and the delegated officer decisions. The Panel wished that a written explanation as to the circumstances why this target might not be met, be put into the members bulletin.

BV212 - The average time to re-let Local Authority Housing: noted that when Choice Based Letting is introduced in the autumn it would improve the situation. Also that the turnaround time for repairing empty properties for the next occupant would improve once the staff recruiting problems of the works unit are addressed.

H15a – the number of affordable homes completed and ready for occupation during the year: noted that the target would not be met. The problem was the lack of land for building on. There are however about 430 potential houses in the pipeline depending, among other factors, the outcome of the East of England plan.

The Panel noted that CEM1a, CEM1b, CEM1c, CEM1d, CEM1e, CEM1f, CEM1g and EH6 are all new indicators and need to be run for a year before meaningful targets could be set, and that it would be inappropriate to set targets for some of the indicators (e.g. number of tickets issued).

RESOLVED:

That the Panel considered the Council's Performance for the first nine months of 2006/07 in relation to those Key Performance Indicators.

That the appropriate officer provide members with an explanation of BV170a.

That the Head of Planning Services place in the Member's bulletin an explanation of why the target for BV 204 might not be met.

40. BVPP SUMMARY 2007/08

The Panel considered and noted the Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That this Panel agree the summary of the Best Value Performance Plan for 2007/08, but that the wording of the final section be reconsidered to avoid jargon and remove items of purely internal interest; and
- (2) That the proposed arrangement that for consideration of the full version of the Best Value Performance Plan for 2007/08, that is a complete version of the draft Plan be individually circulated for comment to all members of the Scrutiny Panel early in the municipal year with any comments being reported to the Cabinet at its first meeting in June, be agreed.

41. COUNCIL PLAN / LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT - PERFORMANCE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Head of Human Resources and Performance Management introduced this report. The Panel noted that they had received reports over the last year in connection with the adoption or review of the following corporate strategies:

- The Council Plan for 2006 to 2010;
- The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Improvement Plan; and
- The Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA)

These documents contained a range of objectives and targets to be achieved over the short to medium-term. Progress towards the completion of these actions were to be monitored by this Scrutiny Panel in line with its other performance management and monitoring functions.

Given the range of actions/policies to be monitored the panel debated whether they should focus down and only receive exception reports, highlighting things that had not gone to plan rather than receiving general updating quarterly reports.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Scrutiny Panel note arrangements for the future monitoring and reporting of performance against targets and objectives contained in the Council Plan for 2006 to 2010, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan, and the Council's priorities within the Local Area Agreement for Essex; and

(2) That the Panel only receives exception reports highlighting the things not meeting the standards and targets as set out in the above mentioned plans and strategies.

42. DRAFT INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2007/08

The Chief Internal Auditor introduced the covering report on the Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2007/08, which was being submitted to this committee as part of the members consultation. The Plan would be submitted to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in March and Cabinet for approval during April. He then took the Panel through the Internal Audit Business Plan for 2007/08 pointing out that it had been consulted upon with Heads of Service, and that all the main finance systems would be covered in accordance with Audit Commission requirements.

RESOLVED:

The committee noted and agreed the Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2007/08.

43. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Assistant Head of Finance introduced the report on financial monitoring on key areas of income and expenditure for each portfolio for the third quarter of 2006/07, covering the period from 1 April to 31 December 2006.

The Panel noted that:

- the table on salary monitoring showed that in some areas there were areas of underspend in excess of 10%;
- there had been no comments from individual portfolio holders;
- the underspends in annex 5 (Customer Services, Media & Communications & ICT) should clear by the years end;
- that for annex 8 (Planning & Economic Development) much of the underspends has been rephrased into 2007/08; and
- there was an overspend in Environmental Protection (annex 13) – a report will be going to Cabinet to explain why.

The Panel asked why the Loughton High Road, Town Centre Enhancement was 58% above target, the assistant Head of Finance said he would find out why and would report back.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the Revenue and Capital Financial Monitoring report for the Third quarter of 2006/07

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

To report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Panel had completed its work programme for this year.

45. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Panel noted that this was the last programmed meeting for this municipal year.