

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2007
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.56 PM**

Members Present:	J M Whitehouse (Chairman), R Bassett, J Hart, M Colling and D Jacobs
Other members present:	Mrs D Collins, D Stallan and C Whitbread
Apologies for Absence:	G Mohindra, R Morgan, Mrs P Richardson and Mrs P Smith
Officers Present	D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), A Hall (Director of Housing), J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), P Maddock (Assistant Head of Finance), P Maginnis (Human Resources Manager), Mrs J Twinn (Assistant Head of Finance), M Shorten (Principal Valuer/Surveyor), S Tautz (Performance Improvement Manager) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

22. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that there were no substitute members.

23. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

24. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted the work programme and terms of reference.

25. NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING - 14 AUGUST 2007

The notes from the last meeting, held on 14 August 2007, were agreed.

26. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Panel noted the figures for the second quarter of the year's capital financial monitoring figures covering the period from 1 April to 30 September 2007. This report covered key areas of income and expenditure for each portfolio.

Revenue Budgets:

The Panel noted that:

- Month six showed an underspend equal to 4.2% of the budget, 2.5% of which relates to the pending pay award;
- The Land Charges Searches income was down due to the introduction of the Home Information Pack requirements;
- The council has done much better with its recycling figures;

- Penalty Charge Notice income was down by £12,000 on estimate, Pay and Display figures are in line with the budget.

Capital Budgets:

The Panel noted that:

- These figures were tabled at the meeting;
- That Annex 10 contained an incorrect figure, under 07/08 variance, the budget column the –25 figure should read 44;
- The expenditure on Bobbingworth Tip is lagging behind;
- The invoice for the Loughton High Road works was being disputed, the council has asked for more information before it is paid;
- A report on the PDG Capital Scheme will be going to Cabinet;
- We were still awaiting the final account for Loughton High Road;
- There are some problems with Loughton Broadway but are not expecting any further expenditure until the problems have been resolved.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the revenue and Capital Financial monitoring report for the second quarter of 2007/08/

27. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT ON KPIS

The Panel noted the figures for the first six months of the years KPIs. It was noted that the Cabinet had set a target of achieving at least 75% in the top quartile by the end of the year. The corrective comments were found to be most useful.

BV012 – a review of the Council's absence policy will be carried out in the near future with the intention to put a report to the January 2008 JCC meeting.

BV078a and **BV078b** – noted that there was a problem with staffing in benefits section for the first six months of the year, but the situation is getting better.

BV082a(ii) – noted that the target seemed low for this year, but this was in line with the Council's Best Value Performance Plan. Once the new contractor has settled in the target will be increased and a more realistic target will be set next time.

BV084a – once the new contractor has settled in, the council could increase its target.

BV109b and **BV109c** – noted that we were close to the target but currently just under it. There was still a lot of work to get on to the new document management system (ERDMS), they are still expecting to introduce a single application form and are hoping to hold extra planning sub-committee meetings just before and after the election period.

BV170a – this is quite a challenging target for a small service, but the figures are going in the right direction.

BV199a and **BV199b** – noted that Encams have been invited back to train our current staff and have now done the assessment strictly to Encams standards. Using

these new strict standards it seems that the year end target will not be met as it is now not practical to meet it. The target should therefore be reassessed and perhaps set to around 10 to 15%.

BV212 – unsure if this target would be met by year's end and have set up an officer's working party to review the detail. Also looking into multiple viewings of empty properties, and with the introduction of Choice Based Letting, it should improve the figures.

EH6 – noted that the target for 2007/08 should be 95% and not 100%.

H15a – the assessment of the year end position should be a 'NO' and not a 'YES'.

The Panel noted that it would be a challenge to meet our 75% target for the year, but were optimistic. There are still some 12 or 13 targets to be reported at the end of the year.

It was reported that, with effect from April 2008 a new national set of performance indicators was to be introduced, replacing our existing Best Value Performance Indicators. Once they are firmed up they will be brought back to the Cabinet and the scrutiny panel for information. It may be, as an authority, we may wish to keep some of the current Best Value Performance Indicators for our own information to use a local indicators.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Scrutiny Panel noted the Council's performance for the first six months for 2007/08, in relation to those Key Performance Indicators adopted by the Council; and
- (2) That the publication by the Department for Communities and Local Government of a new 'National Indicator Set' to replace all other suites of performance indicators from April 2008, be noted.

28. FEES AND CHARGES

This was is an annual report that is considered by the Panel. As part of the budget setting process the levels of fees and charges are considered for the forthcoming financial year. The general premise was that fees and charges will be increased by 4% in line with the retail prices index

I was noted that on page 79 under the 2008/09 column, the Heating Charge for Chalets should read £40.60 per week and not £19.60 and that the heating charges for room and communal heating at Norway House was being significantly increased. The communal heating charge increase for people on benefits would be covered by their benefits. The Panel were concerned that the charges were rising so dramatically for people on limited income and asked that the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee be given a more fuller explanation on the background to this increase.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Panel considered the policy for increasing fees and charges for 2007/08 and recommended a general increase of 4% to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee.

(2) That the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee be given a fuller explanation on the background to the Homeless Hostel Heating increase.

(3) It was noted that in the review of officer delegation being conducted by Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration would be given to the manner in which Leisure fees in respect of the SLM contract and Cultural and Community Services are to be dealt with in future.

29. LAND AND PROPERTY ASSESSTS REVIEW

The Principal Valuer and Estates Surveyor introduced the report on Land and Property Assets Review. It was noted that the Council has an above average portfolio of property. The T11 site sale had recently been successfully completed. The future use and occupation of all four depots was currently under review. A report was presented recently to the Cabinet to approve the appointment of a Planning Consultant to submit an outline planning application for industrial development on the Langston Road Depot site. As for accommodation for officers, this is linked to the Top Management Re-structuring. The Director of Corporate Support services is co-ordinating a corporate approach with the Service Directors to meet new accommodation needs for the Council's services. It was noted that the Council is actively engaged in selecting projects for the Broadway and looking at the future of the works unit.

The Chairman noted that the Panel could ask to look in detail at any of the assets referred to in the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the on the Land and Property Assets Review be noted.

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

To report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the KPI monitoring undertaken, the fees and charges report and the land and property assets review report.

31. FUTURE MEETINGS

The future meeting dates were noted.