

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2008
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.37 PM

Members Present:	D Jacobs (Chairman), G Mohindra (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, M Colling, J Philip, A Watts and J M Whitehouse
Other members present:	Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Grigg, D Stallan and C Whitbread
Apologies for Absence:	J Hart
Officers Present	D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), P Maginnis (Assistant Director Human Resources), R Wilson (Assistant Director Operations (Housing)), P Maddock (Assistant Director Accountancy), S Tautz (Performance Improvement Manager), M Warr (Performance Improvement Officer), M Tipping (Assistant Director of CSS - Facilities Management and Emergency Planning), Mrs J Twinn (Assistant Director of Finance and ICT) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

24. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that there were no substitute members.

25. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

26. NOTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes from the previous meeting held on 19 August 2008 were agreed.

27. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the VFM sub-group meeting due to have been had on 20 October had been postponed. Members expressed concern that the VFM analysis did not contain data for 2007/08 and relied on figures that could be up to 18 months old. Officers agreed to provide 2007/08 figures within the VFM analysis where possible, prior to further consideration by the sub-group.

The Sub-group would give a verbal update at the next scheduled meeting of this Panel.

28. NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2008/09 - TARGETS AND QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING.

The Panel considered the first quarter National and Local Performance Indicators for 2008/09.

This report was postponed from the last meeting of this Panel for further information. The Panel noted the figures for the first quarter of the year's indicators.

LPI 01 – *The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government* – Asked if level 2 was all that could be achieved at present, Councillor Jacobs was told that it was a realistic target for this year. An officer has only just been appointed to take the lead on this.

It may be that the equality standard would be scrapped next year.

KPI LPI 02 – *The percentage of licence applications processed within statutory periods* - This indicator is not measuring what the officers thought it would be. It was suggested that it be deleted or revised. The Director of Corporate Support Services will make a submission at the next meeting.

NI 155 – *Number of affordable homes delivered (Gross)* – During 2008/09 a further 43 properties will come into use including 14 on the Epping Forest College site and 29 on a number of small sites. There are 492 likely and 233 possible properties in the pipeline. It was agreed that a position statement would be put in the Members Bulletin.

ACTION: Position Statement to be put in the members Bulletin.

NI 156 – *Number of Households living in temporary accommodation* – Councillor Angold-Stephens queried that the target seemed rather high. He was advised that the definition had changed and the latest figures relate to everyone in temporary accommodation, so 79 was extremely low. The Council had met the government's target of reducing the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation by 501 by 2010, two years ago.

LPI 08 – *Urgent repairs undertaken within target time* – It was noted that the last part of the last sentence (being "and the identification of the proposed stretching target") be deleted.

LPI 09 – *Routine repairs undertaken within target time* – That the First sentence should be amended to read "Routine repairs should be undertaken within eight weeks."

KPI LPI 12 – *Affordable Housing* – Councillor Jacobs queried the proposed target of 45. He was advised that the target of 66 on NI 155 included any conversions undertaken.

NI 180 – *the number of changes of circumstances which affect customer's Housing Benefit/Council Tax entitlement within the year (per 1000)* – Officers explained the background to this indicator. The average change would be 0.95 to give a 975 per 1000 change. Almost every claim should have a change, this will have a lot to do with the Council's ability to publicise changes made to this type of benefit and our service. People should let us know if they have any changes to make on their claims as it will be good for the Council's figures. If the Council was not making the number of changes that the government expect then something was going wrong with its systems. It showed that the Council was on the ball. Currently the Council does not have the software to measure these figures. Also the government has only just given

out guidance on how to measure this. The software company will only just start to make the changes needed to convert the system by December and there should be some figures by early next year.

KPI LPI 14 and 15 – *The percentage of Council Tax collected and the percentage of national non-domestic rates collected* – Councillor Philip said it was difficult to work out if we were ahead or behind the target. He was told that it was too early in the year to make sense of the figures; it would make more sense after Christmas, not all the Council Tax has been collected as they pay over 10 months of the year. Councillor Philip commented that it would be helpful to have the quarterly figures from last year to be able to compare them to this years.

Councillor Stallan asked if the officers were aware that some businesses were holding back on paying non-domestic rates. Officers were not aware of this.

ACTION: Officers to clarify if the Council was charging non-domestic rates for empty buildings.

LPI 16 to 21 – *Benefits* - Councillor Whitehouse said that there were problems with benefits, would there be any new solutions. He was told that there was an increase of 15% in the first six months for the year. All Councils had experienced this and they had put in measures to deal with the changes. They cannot process the new claims as fast so are looking at how they can reduce their times and are studying how other authorities are tackling this.

The Council has to give people a full 28 days to reply to queries and that will extend the time taken. Other authorities send out visiting officers to new claimants but EFDC has limited resources. The council is currently in the process of changing its IT system on this and so will not have an IT system for about a month or so. Because of this the figures will go down. Councillor Mrs Collins said that the audit commission have picked up on this and we would need to provide answers for them.

LPI 23a and b – *Capital projects, Cost Predictability and Time Predictability* – Councillor Philip noted that the targets were not likely to be met. He was told that the targets relate to the outturn to major schemes from last year. The target and description for LPI 23b were not correct and would need to be amended. The definitions for both 23a and b would also need to be clarified and reported back to members.

LPI 24 – *Number of visits, per month, to the Council's website* – The meeting noted that this was an accumulative total shown and the description was therefore incorrect. Councillor Whitehouse asked if the number of visits measured the effectiveness of the website, as it seems to be a leap of faith. He was told that NI 14 'avoidable contact' measured this. And that 'effectiveness' was not what the indicator was looking at. Officers will undertake to clarify the definition shortly.

LPI 28 – *The number of working days lost due to sickness* – The Panel was told that the figure was a number and not a percentage.

LPI 34b to 36 – *Property Condition* – The Panel noted that the Council's Planned maintenance programme was aimed at keeping the status-quo of all operational properties in either a good or satisfactory condition. If the Council wished to increase the percentage of properties in the good category it would require more investment to be made.

LPI 38a – *Running costs and Carbon Dioxide emissions per square metre gross internal area* – Councillor Philip said it was unacceptable that the target for 2008/09 was set so far into the year. He was told that the problem was with collecting data, it had not been kept up to date and officers are currently catching up. They will be getting more meaningful figures in a few months time to present to the Panel.

NI 184 – *Food establishments in the area which are broadly compliant with food hygiene law* – Councillor Whitehouse said that this had a good performance in previous years, so why was it only at 80% now. He was told that the government had changed the way they now measured it. It used to be how many we inspected, now it is based on all premises in the district. As officers could not inspect all premises they made a judgement of 80%. Data from the inspections done will go to the Food Standards Agency; eventually they will build up a historical data base. There is no base line until after the first years return is processed.

NI 185 – *CO2 reduction from local authority operations* – The Panel noted that an assessment is to be made year on year. The Council is still in its gathering (of data) phase before it reached a baseline. The same applies for KPI NI 186 and NI 194.

KPI NI 192 – *Household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting* – The Panel noted the following changes:

- Outturn for 2007/08 figure should be 41.67%;
- Proposed target 2008/09 figure should be 40.00%; and
- Q1 2008/09 figure should be 45.98%.

NI 194 – *Air quality* – It was reported that officers will get baseline figures at the end of the year. They were not sure if they could get more sophisticated monitoring equipment. It was pointed out that they would get different results depending on where the sensors were placed. Officers agreed to find out what other Councils were doing about collecting this information.

KPI NI 195 – *Improved street and environmental cleanliness (graffiti, litter, detritus and fly-posting)* – The meeting noted that the data is not measured quarterly so there are no current figures and that the figures for the proposed targets for 2008/09 had been revised to:

- Litter 14%;
- Detritus 11%;
- Flyposting 0%; and
- Graffiti 1%.

KPI NI 157a – *Processing of Planning applications as measured against targets for 'major' application types* – Councillor Philip wanted to know why there was such an accurate figure of 80.71% was used. He was told that officers used the best information available and from previous figures. They were also required to give the percentage up to two decimal points.

Councillor Watts asked why the figure seemed so low for the period and was told that there was a low application rate; the time was extended because they had to go to a Planning Committee. Councillor Watts asked for a report on these figures, the number of weeks it took to receive it and why it went over the 13 week period and how the percentage figures are worked out. This was agreed by the Panel.

ACTION: Explanatory report to be brought to the next meeting.

NI 159 – *Supply of ready to develop housing sites* – It was noted that it was not appropriate to give quarterly figures for this indicator but officers had, why? Officers said they would investigate and report back.

ACTION: to investigate the reasons for the quarterly figures.

KPI LPI 44 – *Achievement of milestones within Local Development Scheme* - Councillor Watts said that he understood we had been given a time table for this agenda. He was told that there was; the current scheme was largely out of date and there is an agreed timetable for the LDF but it may be delayed due to the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan.

LPI 45 – *Number of appeals allowed against refusal of planning applications* – The figure of 27.08% seemed rather high and an explanation was asked to be included in the explanatory report already asked for.

ACTION: To add to explanatory report.

LPI 46 – *Percentage of Conservation Areas with up to date character appraisals* – Councillor Whitehouse asked if they were likely to finish the Epping Conservation Area. He was told that this was one of the priorities of the new conservation officer who would get this back on track. The target was now obtainable and with a full compliment of officers it could be increased next year.

KPI LI 08 – *Adult participation in sport* – The Panel noted that the outturn figure for 2007/08 should be 29.08% and that the last sentence in the comments column should be deleted.

Councillor Watts thanked the officers for the extra comments that they added to the report.

Derek Macnab summed up by saying that it was a mixed target for the Council to achieve 75% of the KPI's. They are likely to meet the same mark as last year and to come in at the 50% mark.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel agreed the targets for the Council's National and Local Performance Indicators for 2008/09 and considered the performance against the indicators for the first quarter of the year.

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

To report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a general update on the panels progress to date.

30. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel's Sub-group was scheduled for 11 November 2008.

The schedule for future meetings were noted.