

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2009
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.53 PM

Members Present: D Jacobs (Chairman), G Mohindra (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, K Chana, A Watts and J M Whitehouse

Other members present: Mrs D Collins, C Whitbread and R Bassett

Apologies for Absence: J Hart, J Philip and Mrs L Wagland

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 Director (Accountancy)), S Tautz (Performance Improvement Manager), Mrs J Twinn (Assistant Director (Benefits)) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

12. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that Councillor K Chana was substituting for Councillor J Philip.

13. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

14. NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes from the previous meeting held on 16 June 2009 were agreed.

15. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

1. The Terms of Reference and Work Programme were noted.
 - It was noted that item 1 of the work programme (KPI – Performance outturn 2008/09) had now been completed and should be greyed out to indicate this.
 - Under items 4 and 7 (performance of services to be scrutinised and value for money performance analysis), the Panel considered a suggestion to reconvene the sub-group looking at value for money in the council. It was intended that the findings of the Value for Money Customer Performance Analysis for 2008/09 would be considered by the Sub-group during October 2009 and that the sub-group would then report to the November meeting of the Panel. The new sub-committee will consist of Councillors Jacobs, Mohindra, Philip and Watts.
2. The Panel then considered the inclusion of the final piece of work of the disbanded Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel. They were tasked with

further prioritising the remaining recommendations of the original report. They agreed that it should be added to their terms of reference and work programme; and that a report be brought to their next meeting.

16. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2009/10 - QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Councillor Jacobs introduced the quarter 1 report on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2009/10. It was noted that although there were 57 indicators the report only covered 51. Indicators 8, 15, 16, 48, 49 and 50 were not in the report. These were indicators that were monitored on an annual basis and would not have any figures to consider at this quarter.

A note from Councillor Mrs Wagland with comments on the various LPs was tabled.

The Performance Improvement Manager, Mr S Tautz informed the Panel that the report was set out on a service based format. Improvement plans had been produced for all the KPIs, setting out actions to be implemented in order to achieve or maintain target performance. It was noted that as part of the process for agreeing the KPI improvement plans, some targets had been adjusted by the Corporate Executive Forum. But, where this had happened they had been increased and not lowered. Councillor Watts asked if the Panel could have a report on which indicators have had their targets altered. This was agreed.

AGREED: that the second quarter KPI reports to be presented to the Panel in November 2009, should identify those indicators where the target for 2009/10 had been revised by the Corporate Executive Forum.

Councillor Watts said he would also like to see the improvement plans for each of the indicators. He was told that there were 57 of them, each running to several pages. Councillor Watts replied that if any indicators were not meeting their targets for the next quarter then councillors would need to know what the improvement plans were so that they could comment on them. Councillor Bassett said that he had not seen the plans either. Councillor Mrs Collins added that the Portfolio Holder should have access to the relevant information.

AGREED that:

- (1) the Improvement Plans for each of the KPIs for 2009/10 be provided for the Portfolio Holder for Performance Management;
- (2) the improvement plans of any indicators not currently achieving the performance target should be brought to the relevant meeting of this Panel to be considered; and
- (3) the individual KPI Improvement Plan for 2009/10 be subject to ongoing review between the relevant service director and the Portfolio Holders.

Councillor Watts asked how the figures could be improved for LPI 24(a) 'the number of visits to the Council's website'. He was told that more information could be made available on the website; it could be made easier to access and to increase the promotion for the site on the council's literature. LPI 24 (a) and (b) (the quality of the Council's website) should be considered together.

Councillor Mohindra asked if the Panel could get an indication of the sample size used in LPI 02(a) 'the percentage of premises licence applications determined within 30 days'. Mr Tautz said that officers could supply that information.

LPI 02 (b) (percentage of temporary event licence applications determined within 5 days) and (c) (percentage of Hackney Carriage/Private Hire licence applications determined within 5 days) were not going to meet their targets. It was noted that this could be helped by refusing to accept applications that were not fully complete. Councillor Mohindra brought the Panels attention to a paragraph on Councillor Mrs Wagland's note that referred to LPI 02 (b) and (c) asking for a timescale for the proposed investigation into revision of the M3 system. The Deputy Chief Executive, Mr Macnab said that they would bring an answer to the next meeting.

Councillor Jacobs asked if the target could be met over the period of the year for LPI 28 'number of working days lost due to sickness absence'. Mr Macnab said it was possible and the prognosis should be set at 'uncertain' instead of a flat 'no'.

Councillor Jacobs asked if under the comments for NI 191 'residual household waste per household' that the measurement used in the figures supplied, in this case kilos, be made clear. The Director of Environment and Street Scene, John Gilbert, stated that the measure was in kilograms. He also added, when asked about future targets, that the new waste service should be allowed to bed in and then it should be possible to take a more realistic view of what the target should be.

Councillor Bassett, referring to NI 192 'percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting' asked what would happen to the target and figures now that the Council was trying to reduce green waste. Mr Gilbert said this would affect the top and bottom of the equation used and they would have to see how it worked out.

Councillor Jacobs asked if the four month figures were available for NI 95(a) 'improved street and environmental cleanliness'. He was told that they were not available as yet.

Councillor Whitehouse asked about how the enforcement was going in relation to NI 196 'improved street and environmental cleanliness – fly tipping'. Mr Gilbert explained that there were some doubts over the data because of the need to co-ordinate the data collected by the Neighbourhoods Team and the existing waste team. However, now that the Neighbourhoods Team had been accredited, they could undertake a more proactive enforcement approach, which would hopefully result in the indicator outcome improving. Councillor Jacobs said that this indicator should be classed as 'uncertain'. Councillor Bassett asked if officers were seeing more fly tipping nowadays. Mr Gilbert said that there was not on the increase generally, but fly tipping had slightly increased in some parts of the district. The Safer Cleaner Greener action team were being as pro-active as they could.

Mr Gilbert tabled new definitions for LPI 52 'implementation of containerised recycling facilities for recyclable materials in flats and communal buildings, broken down into two new parts, (a) and (b). At present they were in the process of surveying all flats and communal buildings in the district.

Councillor Jacobs remarked that the council was not in control of the outcome for NI 180 'number of changes of circumstances which affect customer's Housing Benefits and/or Council Tax Benefit entitlement within the year'. The Assistant Director of Finance, Mrs J Twinn, agreed that it was not something that that the Council had control of. The comment should also be updated as the necessary software had not been available, but was now. The target was also now 'uncertain'.

The target for NI 181 'time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims' should read 'uncertain' and not 'yes' as they did not meet their target for quarter 1, due to the implementation of their new computer system. The same went for all the indicators that Mrs Twinn was responsible for. Councillor Whitehouse asked where that section was with respect to new staff. Mrs Twinn said that they were currently recruiting for new posts; they had restructured the work in their section and were now more efficient. She wanted to see it all bedded in over time. The section also recently had the Audit Commission monitoring them. Councillor Whitbread added that now they had the new structure in place, improvements in service should quickly follow. Councillor Bassett commented that NI 181 looked at days, but did not take into effect the increased numbers that were being processed. The delays could be because of the sheer volume handled. Mr Macnab said that this could be reflected in the comments section to put it into context.

Councillor Angold-Stephens asked about LPI 13 'percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt'. Was not the Council now targeting invoices to be paid in 20 days? He was told it was 20 days for local businesses, but they were still using the 30 day target for the indicator. Councillor Mohindra asked if they could have an update on figures for the 20 day period for the next meeting. This was agreed.

AGREED that the figures for payment of invoices for local suppliers within 20 days be brought to the next meeting of this Panel.

Noted that LPI 23(a), 'Capital projects cost' was an annual indicator and officers were currently working on a definition for it.

Mr Twinn said that as they had a small team, the loss of just one officer dramatically affected the outcome for LPI 53 'number of completed investigations carried out by the Benefits Investigation Team'.

The Director for Housing, Alan Hall, said that they had completed 37 houses so far for NI 155 'number of affordable homes delivered (gross)' and were likely to exceed the target of 57 set for this indicator by the end of the year. Councillor Mohindra asked why the target went down from last year. Mr Hall replied that it went down to set a realistic view on the completion of affordable housing for this year. It should be noted that waiting lists for housing had increased by 20% in the first four months of this year.

The Panel noted that the survey for NI 160 'local authority tenant's satisfaction with landlord services' was carried out every two years, and was completed last year.

Mr Hall updated a figure for LPI 05 'Average number of days to re-let council dwellings'. They were informed that the actual figure for the first quarter for 2009/10 was 43, officers were confident they would improve on this and meet the target by the end of the year. They noted that it excluded the difficult to let properties which tended to distort the figures.

The Panel noted that LPI 07 'emergency repairs undertaken within target time'; LPI 08 'urgent repairs undertaken within target time' and LPI 09 'routine repairs undertaken within target time' were all good news stories and the targets were being met for the first time due to improvements in their working practices. Councillor Mrs Collins congratulated Housing on this improvement.

Councillor Whitehouse queried where the target of 144 for NI 154 'net additional homes provided' had been derived from. He was told that it was an externally generated target.

The Panel noted that NI 157(b) 'processing of planning applications (minor)' was uncertain because of the amount of objections being raised for planning applications.

It was noted that officers were still awaiting the outturn data for last year for NI 185 'CO2 reduction from local authority operations', which were to be published by the Department for the Environment and Climate Change.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's performance for the first quarter of 2009/10 in relation to the Key Performance Indicators adopted for the year be noted.

17. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Assistant Director (Accountancy), Peter Maddock, introduced the quarterly financial monitoring report. The report provided a comparison between the profiled budgets for the period 30 June 2009 and the actual expenditure or income applicable.

The Panel noted that:

- The salaries schedule showed an underspend of £255,000 or 5.1% as at June 2009;
- The budget had allowed for a pay award of 2.5%, but given the current economic climate and level of inflation it was unlikely that any award would reach this level;
- Building control income showed an underachievement of £29,000;
- The £15,000 building control deficit that existed at 31 March 2008 made it difficult to recover the costs and break even;
- The Council had received the first tranche of money back from the Heritable Bank. A 15% return was due in July equating to £376,000, in the event £404,000 was received. An updating report was agreed to be presented at the next meeting;
- Development Control income at Month 3 was £19,000 above expectations, but there was an reduction in application levels compared to the first quarter of 2008/09;
- Income from industrial estates was higher than expected, due to a number of rent reviews being backdated to April 2008; and
- Payments to Sports and Leisure management Ltd were up to date as of 30 June 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the position on both revenue and capital budgets as at Month 3 and the Major Capital Schemes monitoring schedule.

18. 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 reports considered at this meeting.

19. FUTURE MEETINGS

The schedule for future meetings were noted.