

## Scrutiny Standing Panel Agenda



### **Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel Thursday, 9th December, 2010**

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

**Time:** 7.00 pm

**Democratic Services Officer:** A Hendry - The Office of the Chief Executive  
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**Members:**

Councillors G Mohindra (Chairman), R Cohen (Vice-Chairman), W Breare-Hall, Ms R Brookes, D Jacobs, D C Johnson, B Judd, J Philip, W Pryor, Mrs J Sutcliffe and Ms S Watson

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)**

(Assistant to the Chief Executive) To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

**3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

(Assistant to the Chief Executive). To declare interests in any items on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a personal or a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

**4. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING (Pages 5 - 10)**

To consider and agree the notes of the meeting held on 9 September 2010

**5.      TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 11 - 16)**

(Chairman/Lead Officer) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed the Terms of Reference of this Panel and associated Work Programme. This is attached. The Panel are asked at each meeting to review both documents.

**6.      FINANCE RECEPTION REFURBISHMENT AND EXTENSION FEASIBILITY**

The Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel, established to consider improvements to customer services, reported its findings to the Cabinet in 2009. As a result, a number of initiatives have been taken forward to include, additional resources to improve the quality of the Council's Website, a review of the Forester publication and the establishment of the NI14 Avoidable Contact Working Group.

As part of this work, the Panel reviewed the adequacy of the reception areas within the Civic Offices. Whilst ideally there is still an aspiration to bring together the disparate reception areas into a "one stop shop", examination of the costs have demonstrated that this would be prohibitively expensive.

Subsequent to consideration of the Task and Finish Panels' final report, the Audit Commission undertook an inspection of the District Council's Benefit Service, the findings of which were reported in May 2010.

Whilst the Audit Commission deemed that there were adequate levels of access to the Service, in that customers can call at the Civic Offices in Epping or can use the housing offices as a postal drop-off point, it was found that users of the service would have liked more access points across the District, so that customers can get face-to-face advice and support more easily. The Council has responded positively to this request through the redevelopment of the Limes Farm Hall. On completion this will offer a range of co-located services to include bringing together the area housing office alongside a satellite benefits office. This initiative has been partly funded by a contribution of £802,000 from the £2.129M capital earmarked for the Customer Transformation Programme. Currently there is a remaining amount of £1.327M, within the current Capital Programme 2011/12, yet to be allocated for specific customer service projects. In addition to Limes Farm, there may also be an opportunity to provide further local services to benefit customers, as a result of the further regeneration of Debden Broadway.

However, whilst it can be seen that progress is being made with regard to geographical access, the Audit Commission Inspectors were highly critical of the Benefits/Finance Reception Area at the Civic Offices in Epping i.e.

*"Customers using the Civic office at Epping are provided with limited and uninviting facilities. The Revenues and Benefits Service reception area is small with limited and uncomfortable seating. Customers being interviewed do not have privacy as those waiting can easily overhear any discussions. Private*

*interviews are available on request and signs are displayed telling customers of this facility. Seating and desk arrangements are not designed to meet disabled customers needs and in particular wheelchair users. Anyone needing to complete forms has the choice of using a standing height shelf for a vacant cubicle with fixed seating, which is not suitable for some disabled people. There are no facilities for people with young children. Because there is no full-time receptionist, customers must use a telephone provided to be seen by a member of staff if no-one is present in the reception area. The lack of adequate facilities for customers, and in particular for those who are disabled, may deter some people from visiting the office".*

In response, Norfolk Property Services have been commissioned to undertake a feasibility study to identify options in addressing the Inspectors' concerns. A copy of the Feasibility Report has been placed in the Members' Room and is also available on the following link:

<http://haako/Published/C00000491/M00006554/AI00027814/feasibilityreceptio n nps.pdf>

In addition, a representative from Norfolk Property Services will attend to take Members through the refurbishment and extension options they have identified. The presentation of the feasibility study coupled with a visit to the existing reception area should assist Members of the Panel in recommending any preferred option onward to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for final approval.

- 7. FINANCIAL MONITORING - QUARTER 2.- JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2010 (Pages 17 - 40)**  
(Director of Finance and ICT) To consider the attached report.
- 8. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2010/11 - QUARTER 2 (Pages 41 - 104)**  
(Office of the Chief Executive) To consider the attached report.
- 9. NATIONAL INDICATOR SET - ABOLITION AND REVIEW (Pages 105 - 118)**  
(Office of the Deputy Chief Executive) To consider the attached report.
- 10. SICKNESS ABSENCE - QUARTERLY UPDATE (Pages 119 - 122)**  
(Director of Corporate Support Services) To consider the attached report.
- 11. FEES AND CHARGES 2011/12 (Pages 123 - 136)**  
(Director of Finance and ICT) to consider the attached report.
- 12. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORTING - CONTENT AND PRESENTATION (Pages 137 - 144)**

(Office of the Deputy Chief Executive) To consider the attached report.

**13. ICT UPDATE (Pages 145 - 150)**

(Director of Finance and ICT) To consider the attached report.

**14. EQUALITY ACT 2010 - PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY (Pages 151 - 158)**

(Office of the Deputy Chief Executive) To consider the attached report.

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

To consider which reports are ready to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

**16. FUTURE MEETINGS**

To consider the forward programme of meeting dates for the Panel.

Meetings are scheduled for:

17 January 2011; and  
10 March 2011