

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 31 MARCH 2009
IN CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.16 PM

Members Present: D Jacobs (Chairman), G Mohindra (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, M Colling, J Philip, J M Whitehouse and Ms J Hedges

Other members present: Mrs A Grigg, D Stallan and C Whitbread

Apologies for Absence: J Hart, W Pryor and A Watts

Officers Present D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), P Maddock (Assistant Director Accountancy), P Maginnis (Assistant Director Human Resources), S Tautz (Performance Improvement Manager), R Wilson (Assistant Director Operations (Housing)) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

64. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that Councillor Mrs J Hedges was substituting for Councillor J Hart.

65. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

66. MINUTES

The notes from the previous meeting held on 10 February 2009 were agreed.

67. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Terms of Reference and the Work Programme were noted subject to:

- Item 2 of the work programme (Key Performance Indicators) – noted that the 4th quarter figures would be coming through in late May or early June 2009.

68. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2009/10

The Performance Improvement Manager, Mr S Tautz, introduced the report on the National and Local Performance Indicators for 2009/10. The Panel noted that this report went to the recent Finance Cabinet Committee and that Directors had reviewed the indicators with a view to rationalising the set. This report made proposals for the adoption of a range of 'Key' Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2009/10, comprising of both National Indicators (NI) and Local Performance Indicators (LPI).

It was noted that the Council's overall rate of performance improvement was below average, so for the next year (2009/10) focus has been placed on improving performance against the whole spectrum of performance indicators rather than just a selected few.

A few amendments were made to the Nis as listed. They were:

NI 182 – *Satisfaction of business with local authority regulation services* – to add “suggested for 2009/10” at the end of the listed comments.

Nis 195 a, b, c and d - should have their improving performance set as ‘Low’ instead of ‘High’.

LPI 14 – *Percentage of Council Tax collected* – Quarter 3 performance should read 80%.

LPI 15 – *Percentage of non-domestic rates collected* - Quarter 3 performance should read 82%.

Items shaded were to be deleted and transferred to the relevant business plans. Councillor Philip asked if there would be some level of scrutiny of these plans. He had concerns that some may be failing and should be scrutinised. He was told that it was not intended to bring these to the Panel as they would be going on to the relevant business plans. But if members here wanted it, they could be reported back to the Panel. As the Panel goes through the complete list of NIs they could highlight any greyed out indicators they thought should be singled out for special attention.

The Panel then considered the proposed indicators for 2009/10.

They noted that the indicators pertaining to the Local Strategic Partnership would be scrutinised by the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

NI 154 – *Net additional homes provided* – Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked why this was measured in hundredths, surely it should be to the nearest full house. He was advised that the Audit Commission had issued guidance on this and it had to be measured in this way.

NI 184 – *Food establishments in the area which are broadly compliant with food hygiene law* – Councillor Philip asked why the target was being reduced. He was told it was a new indicator and was not the same as last year, this new target had been carefully chosen.

NI 192 – *Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composing* – Councillor Jacobs suggested that the target could be bumped up above 42%. He was informed that the better they performed against the LAA target the more funding the council would get.

NI 186 – *Per capita CO2 emissions in the local authority area* – Councillor Philip asked why the target was N/A. He was told that it was an incorrect NI target; the proposed target of 5.9% was a percentage reduction per capita on the 2005 baseline. This would be expected to get better (bigger) in time.

The Panel discussed which of the three indicators LPI 47, 48 and 49 should be retained as a leisure (museum) indicator. LPI 47 and 48 had been greyed out and 49 kept. They concluded that LPI 49 was the most suitable and should be kept.

Noted that LPI 42, percentage of households served by a kerbside collection of recyclables had been replaced by a new indicator "implementation of formal containerised recycling facilities in flats and communal buildings". The Council has made recycling available to any one who needs it, including those in blocks of flats.

It was reported to the Panel that the Finance Cabinet Committee had wanted an indicator relating to benefit fraud. It was suggested that the performance of the benefit fraud team and that a target of 500 cases annually be scrutinised. This was an achievable target as the team only had three officers, one of which was a trainee. The Panel agreed to keep this new indicator and to review it in a year's time.

The Panel discussed **LPI 23a – Capital Projects Costs** – a greyed out indicator. They decided that it was logical to keep it as a monitoring indicator and agreed that it should be reinstated.

LPI 45 – *Number of appeals allowed against refusal of planning applications as percentages of the total number of appeals against refusals* - the panel agreed that the proposed target should be rounded down to 25% as opposed to the awkward 25.09%.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse said that he was glad to have the indicators now rather than later in the year. He noted that the Council was aiming for high performance rather than a general improvement and wondered if this would result in thicker agendas. He was told that they would have to have a thick agenda at their first meeting, and then members would have to decide what they would like to see at later meetings.

RESOLVED:

(1) That, the proposals for the adoption of 'Key' Performance Indicators for 2009/10, be agreed subject to:

- an indicator being established on benefit fraud;
- that LPI 23a should be kept; and
- the target for LPI 45 be changed to 25%.

(2) That a corporate target be set for the achievement of year-on-year improvement against four out of every five of the adopted Key Performance Indicators for 2009/10 and future years.

69. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY - PROGRESS REPORT 2008/09

The Performance Improvement Manager introduced the progress report on Equality and Diversity. The Performance Improvement Unit were developing a tool kit to enable managers to monitor these issues, there would also be relevant training for managers. It was noted that Equalities was a key matter for the Council and that it was statutorily required to carry it out.

The Panel noted that the government was introducing a new Equalities Bill in 2010, extending the range of groups covered by the equalities legislation. The Bill also introduced a single new equality duty for public bodies, which required them to tackle

discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and encourage good community relations. The Council currently measures its equality performance against the Equality Standard for Local Government, through local performance indicators. In April 2009 a revised equality standard known as the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) was to be introduced. The EFLG has simplified the measurement of equality performance by reducing the previous five levels of attainment down to three, encouraging a proportional approach, and favouring critical self-assessment rather than external auditing.

The Council will be required to monitor its policies and functions for any adverse impact on the promotion of equality. The new range of monitoring statistics will be brought to this Panel in June 2009 for their information.

It was noted that the proposed equalities staff group was to be a group for minorities of all kinds and not just as stated, those members of staff who have declared themselves to have a disability.

RESOLVED:

That the current progress in relation to the development and implementation of the Council's approach to Equality and Diversity issues be noted.

70. VALUE FOR MONEY STRATEGY - REVIEW

The Performance Improvement Manager introduced the Value for Money (VFM) Strategy review. The purpose of this report was to set out best practice and set out the responsibilities for the Value for Money officer. The report contained an action plan that needed more development and will be monitored on a six monthly basis.

The Panel noted that a sub-group had been set up originally by this Panel to monitor the Value for Money provision within the Council's planning functions. In future it was suggested that standard data published by the Audit Commission through its VFM Profile tool be used. This would be supported by relevant commentaries from service directors. It was intended that future analysis of the Council's cost performance should focus on comparisons with its 'nearest neighbour' authorities (those that are geographically and demographically similar) to gain meaningful benchmarking information. But this could not be done early as the Audit Commission do not publish their data when it was needed by this Council.

Councillor Whitehouse queried the action plan and asked how it would be carried out in relation to VFM, how it linked in with the budget and how the Panel could review this. There needed to be more details on the VFM review. It was agreed that more information and detail would be compiled and brought back to the members on this Panel.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's draft Value for Money Strategy for 2009 to 2012 be adopted in principle subject to further information being brought back to the Panel on the arrangements for the annual scrutiny of the Council's Value for Money performance.

71. 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.

72. FUTURE MEETINGS

The meeting noted that this was the last meeting of this Panel for this municipal year. The Chairman offered his thanks to the members and officers for their hard work during the year. The Chairman was, in his turn, thanked for his chairmanship during the year.

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