

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 10 MARCH 2011
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.25 PM

- Members Present:** G Mohindra (Chairman), R Cohen (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens (Vice Chairman of Council), W Breare-Hall, D Jacobs, D C Johnson, J Philip, Mrs J Sutcliffe and Ms S Watson
- Other members present:** A Lion, D Stallan, C Whitbread and J M Whitehouse
- Apologies for Absence:** Ms R Brookes and B Judd
- Officers Present** D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), R Wilson (Assistant Director (Operations)), P Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)), N Richardson (Assistant Director (Development Control)), S Tautz (Performance Improvement Manager), J Twinn (Assistant Director (Benefits)), P Maginnis (Assistant Director (Human Resources)) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

45. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that Councillor Ken Angold-Stephens was substituting for Councillor Rose Brookes.

46. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

47. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 09 December 2010 were agreed.

48. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted their Terms of Reference and Work Programme.

49. SICK ABSENCE REPORT

The Assistant Director (Human Resources), Paula Maginnis, introduced the regular quarterly sickness absence reports. The Council's target for sickness absence under LPI28 is an average of 8 days per employee (2 days per quarter). The quarter outturn figures for 2010/2011 are Q1 = 1.88 days, Q2 = 1.81 days and Q3 = 2.15 days. The Council was currently below the accumulated figure of 6 days.

During Q3, 4.9% of staff met the trigger levels or above, 29.9% had sickness absence but did not meet the triggers and 65.2% had no absence.

The outturn figure for 2009/2010 was 8.35. The outturn figures for Q1 and Q2 were both below the 2 day target per quarter, Q3 is slightly over. However, the Council is currently below the accumulated figure of 6 days.

It was noted that back problems had not increased significantly in Q3, and absence due to depression had also reduced significantly.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the report on sickness absence.

50. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Assistant Director of Finance, Peter Maddock, introduced the report providing a comparison between the probable outturn for the period ended 31 December 2010 and the actual expenditure or income applicable.

Despite the income losses reported against the Original Estimate the probable outturn was expected to use £235,000 less of General Fund balances than was predicted in the Original Estimate. This is primarily due to the income losses being offset by savings on employee expenditure, the budget assumed a 1.5% pay increase which in the event did not occur.

The Panel noted that:

- The salaries schedule shows an underspend of £294,000 or 2.0%;
- Building Control was managed within a ringfenced account that over a three year period should break even. Income levels have been down significantly and in order to keep the account in balance posts have been held vacant;
- Building Control Income shows an under achievement of £4,000 at 31 December, when compared to the three year average used for budget monitoring purposes. Income was £20,000 above that achieved at this point last year; however January was a poor month. Unless something unusual happens in 2010/11 the account will be in deficit by the year end;
- Development Control income at Month 9 was £20,000 above the current probable outturn figure, however like Building Control January was not a good month. If the final two months outturn in line with the Probable Outturn figures the amended position will be met; and
- The Housing Repairs Fund shows an underspend of £354,000. However much of the winter related expenditure will not show until the final quarter. The final position is expected to be in line with the Probable Outturn figure.

Whilst a number of income sources will fall short of the Original Budget set in February 2010, the budget process undertaken during 2010/11 included an update on the expected outturn for the year. The amount needed from the General Fund balance to meet the net expenditure should be about £235,000 less than the £544,000 originally anticipated

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the revenue and capital financial monitoring report for the third quarter of 2010/11.

51. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2010/11 (QTR. 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING) AND 2011/12 (TARGET SETTING)

The Performance Improvement Manager, Mr S Tautz introduced the report considering the Council's performance for the first nine months of 2010/11 in relation to the Key Performance Indicators adopted for the year. The Panel noted that forty-eight Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been adopted for 2010/11.

Since the changes to existing performance arrangements were announced by the Secretary of State, a review of the existing KPI set has been undertaken to identify any National Indicators that could be deleted as KPIs for 2011/12, where data collection is resource intensive or over burdensome, or where issues of limited value and validity have arisen in respect of data previously collected. This exercise resulted in proposals for some National Indicators to be carried forward into 2011/12 as Local Performance Indicators.

NI 189 – *Flood and Coastal erosion Risk Management* – this mainly applied to the County Council and it has not proved possible to adjust the indicator to make it more meaningful to this Council; it was therefore recommended that this indicator be withdrawn. On consideration the Panel agreed with this recommendation and withdrew this indicator.

AGREED: that NI 189 be withdrawn.

LPI 45 – *Number of appeals allowed against refusal of planning applications* – this indicator was derived from a statutory indicator in 2008/09. It was proposed that this indicator be revised taking two separate targets, one for the delegated decisions to the Director of Planning and Economic Development and one for the number of reversals of officer recommendations on planning applications, to allow for a greater understanding of decision making.

The Panel noted that there was an issue due to committee reversals, which was the prime reason why the Council was not meeting its target. The Panel were unsure of changing this measure, as a lot of the balanced or contentious decisions would go to the sub-committees and because of this, they did not believe that the target for both should be the same.

AGREED: The Panel agreed that LPI 45 should be split into two parts as indicated and that officers bring back options as to how the indicator was to be measured.

NI 196 – *Improved Street and Environmental Cleanliness (Fly-Tipping)* – noted that this indicator had been completely reassessed and as a result it would take a further 12 months to reassess the new data.

LPI 16 – *Average time for processing new benefit claims* – it was noted that the recruitment freeze may hit the section's ability to meet its target for this year, as they would be short staffed. However, the outcome was still uncertain as the section had been hitting their targets (and better) so far this year.

LPI 07- Emergency repairs; LPI 08 - Urgent repairs; and LPI 09 – Routine Repairs undertaken within target time – the Panel were concerned that these were not hitting their targets. Officers accepted that it should be better, but they did go through a difficult period with only two part time staff managing that section. They have now restructured and recruited more staff. A report would be going to Cabinet recommending a new contractor to undertake this work in the future.

LPI 10 – Satisfaction with repairs – the Panel noted that there was no computer available to report on the performance achieved for quarter 3. The following was written for these minutes to update the Panel:

Set out below are the Q3 satisfaction statistics for the Repairs Service. The infomaker report that was used to produce the statistics became corrupted, and gave false results, when checked manually. The reports have now been re-written and can be verified as correct.

Surveys issued between 01/04/10 and 03/01/11 - 817

Ref 83: Quality of Repair - Good or Satisfactory
Total Number Good or Satisfactory - 810
Percent - 99.14%

Ref 84: Polite/Cooperative Workmen - Good or Satisfactory
Total Number Good or Satisfactory - 817
Percent - 100%

Ref 85: Home Left Clean and Tidy - Good or Satisfactory
Total Number Good or Satisfactory - 815
Percent - 99.76%

Ref 87: General Standard of Service - Good or Satisfactory
Total Number Good or Satisfactory - 810
Percent - 99.14%

The Panel then considered the corporate KPIs performance improvement targets for 2011/12. They went through the list and commented on the proposals.

NI 14 – Reducing avoidable contact - they noted that no target had been set at present as they were awaiting the final report from the working party.

NI 157 (a & b) – Processing of Planning Applications – It was noted that planning permission could be delayed by the signing of Section 106 agreements. The target for the indicator could be realistically achieved if the measure was taken at the time of the original Committee decision, rather than the date of the signing of the Section 106 agreement. This was agreed by the panel.

AGREED: that the measure of the indicator be taken from the time of the Committee's decision.

NI 189 – Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management – This was deleted.

NI 192 – Household Waste sent for reuse, recycle and composting – After a discussion the Panel decided to keep the target at 58%.

NI 195 (a & b) – Improved Street and Environmental Cleanliness (Litter) (Detritus) – After discussing raising the target it was agreed that they remain the same for the year.

LPI 14 & LPI 15 – Council Tax Collection / Non-Domestic Rates Collection – Peter Maddock to check the wording on the comments. Targets to remain the same.

LPI 16 – Processing New Benefit Claims – The Panel agreed to increase the target for 2011/12 to 23 Days.

AGREED: the target to increase to 23 days for 2011/12.

LPI 17 – Processing Notification of Changes of Circumstances for Benefit – The Panel agreed to keep the target at 8.

AGREED: the target be increased to 8 days.

LPI 24 (a) – Visits to the Council’s Website – on reflection the Panel decided to keep the target as is for the year. They noted that a measurement of people’s satisfaction would be better.

LPI 44 - Local Development Scheme – Achievement of Milestones – An updated report was still to be considered. This indicator would come back to the next meeting of this panel to set its target.

AGREED: to be referred back to the next meeting of this Panel.

LPI 53 – Benefit Fraud Investigation – to review the new target at the end of the fourth quarter.

AGREED: to review the target at the end of the fourth quarter.

The Panel agreed to set the overall target for 2011/12 at the end of the year when a number of year end results were known and to consider this at their next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Scrutiny Panel considered the Council’s performance for the first nine months of 2010/11, in relation to the Key Performance Indicators adopted for the year;
- (2) That, subject to the concurrence of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee:
 - (a) National Indicator 189 (Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management) not be retained as a Key Performance Indicator for 2011/12;
 - (b) That LPI 45 should be split into two parts and that officers bring back options as to how the indicator was to be measured;
 - (c) The proposed targets for the Key Performance Indicators adopted for 2011/12, be agreed as amended; and
 - (d) A corporate target for the achievement of year-on-year improvement against the adopted Key Performance Indicators for 2011/12 be set after year end and brought to the next Panel meeting.

52. 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 target setting exercise, the split planning appeals and the marked improvement to the Benefits Service.