

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 17 JUNE 2013
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 8.50 PM

Members Present: A Lion (Chairman), C Finn, D Jacobs, G Mohindra, Ms S Watson, D Wixley and J Wyatt

Other members present: Ms S Stavrou

Apologies for Absence: K Angold-Stephens, Mrs R Gadsby and J Knapman

Officers Present D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), P Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)), P Pledger (Assistant Director (Property and Resources)), N Richardson (Assistant Director (Development Control)), S Tautz (Performance Improvement Manager), J Twinn (Assistant Director (Benefits)), V Loftis (Market Research Consultation Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APPOINTMENT OF A VICE CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the appointed Vice-chairman, Councillor Gadsby, the Panel agreed that Councillor Watson be appointed the Vice-chairman for the duration of the meeting.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted that Councillor D Wixley was substituting for Councillor Angold-Stephens.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 March 2013 were agreed.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted their Terms of Reference and Work Programme.

6. CONSULTATION PLAN 2012/13 AND REGISTER 2011/12

The Consultation Officer, Valerie Loftis introduced the annual report on the public consultations carried out during 2012/13 and the register of those planned for the future. It showed the wide range of consultation that the Council carried out over the year. The Panel noted that usually the planned and registered consultation was kept separate, but this year they had been amalgamated. They also noted that the

information changed very little from start to finish and the results and outcomes were the only areas that were added at the completion of the survey.

The Consultation Register was a list of the most recent exercises, which have been carried out on behalf of the Council or by the Council in the last financial year. More work had been done this last year to include the opinions of young people. The Youth Council on behalf of young people in the District were gathering information regarding satisfaction with the Bus Services, also the Youth Conference will be about the main issues facing young people.

A lot more work had been done on the Local Plan with large surveys carried out as part of the stages of the Plan such as the Community Involvement Survey, the Sustainable Appraisal Survey and the Core Issues and Options Survey. The next stage would be consultation on 'preferred options' that was not yet registered. These surveys would involve the highest costs mentioned in the report.

Councillor Mohindra commented that the report was useful and asked if there was a budget in place for each consultation. He was told that the budget was determined at the start of each year. Councillor Mohindra added that he hoped that this Panel would be informed during the year if any sizeable monetary bids for large consultations came up during the year. Councillor Lion noted that this was the only time that the Panel saw this report. Mrs Loftis said she could put this type of information in the Council Bulletin for information. Councillor Mohindra was content with this. The Deputy Chief Executive, Derek Macnab noted that other council bodies such as the Cabinet Committee also saw reports on consultations that were in the planning stage or being carried out.

Councillor Lion asked how the consultations were closed, how did they close the loop and sign them off. Mrs Loftis said that they were signed off by the people who had requested the consultation. The majority of consultations were designed at service level and the results reviewed at that level.

Councillor Watson commented that the Neighbourhood Plans seemed to be going ahead; what would be the cost of this over the next year? Mr Macnab noted that it was not a one size fits all, there were 24 parishes and the cost would depend on the size of the parish. For example, a Neighbourhood Plan could cost up to £10,000.

Councillor Wixley noted that there was a STAR Tenant Satisfaction Survey, what did STAR stand for and how random was the sample? Mr Pledger, Assistant Director Housing – Property said he would find out what the acronym stood for after the meeting and report back. He added that the survey was carried out by 'Housemark' who randomly generated a sample by computer.

*Subsequent to the meeting it was reported that STAR stood for 'Survey of Tenants and Residents'

RESOLVED:

That the Consultation Plan for 2013/14 setting out those issues on which public consultation was to be undertaken during the municipal year and those consultation exercises completed during 2012/13, be noted.

7. PROVISIONAL REVENUE OUTTURN 2012/13

The Assistant Director of Finance, Peter Maddock, introduced the report on the Provisional Revenue Outturn for 2012/13. The report provided an overall summary of the revenue outturn for the financial year 2012/13. He apologised for having to circulate an updated report at the last minute, but the figures had only recently been updated. They noted that the underspend was lower than in previous years. Salaries had a saving of 2.2%, which was less than in previous years. The largest figure to be carried forward on the District Development Fund related to the Local Plan. Mr Maddock made some amendments to the table on page six, paragraph 13 on the Housing Revenue Account. The figure on the Total Expenditure row and under the Revised Estimate column should have been 25,384 and not 32,384. On the Net Cost of Service row under the Revised Estimate column the figure should be -6696 and not 304.

The Panel noted that a fuller review of the HRA budget would be going to the Cabinet Committee and to this Panel for evaluation.

Councillor Jacobs noted that the value of dry recyclable goods may diminish over the coming years. Mr Gilbert, the Director of Environment and Street Scene, commented that the value went up and down. It had stabilised recently but he honestly did not know what would happen. It also depended on what risk we would want to expose ourselves to. Our current contract would not be affected by these peaks and troughs, but they would have to be taken into consideration when a new contract was being tendered.

Councillor Mohindra asked about the removal of the Personal Search Charges and was told that there was a claim against local authorities pending and the Council were required to retain a budget in case it had to pay out.

Councillor Watson asked why the planned Building Maintenance Programme of £76k was in the DDF and not the Continuing Services Budget. She was told it had two aspects, preventative maintenance and a planned maintenance programme, which fitted into the two budget headings.

Councillor Lion queried if the Council should be carrying over such large sums and should it be reviewed? He was told that officers were only allowed to carry over sums twice in a row. They would have a discussion with the cost centre managers, where they would review the figures and look at them more critically.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the overall 2012/13 revenue out-turn for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) be noted;
- (2) That as detailed in Appendix D of the report, the carry forward of £836,000 District Development Fund expenditure be noted ; and
- (3) That the carry forward of £170,000 HRA Service Enhancement Fund expenditure be noted.

8. PROVISIONAL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2012/13

The Assistant Director of Finance, Peter Maddock, introduced the report on the Council's capital programme for 2012/13, in terms of expenditure and financing and compared the provisional outturn figures with the revised estimates. The revised estimates represent those adopted by the Council in February 2013.

Appendix 1 of the report summarised the Council's overall capital expenditure in 2012/13, analysed by directorate, while appendix 2 and 3 identified the expenditure on individual items. The generation and use of capital receipts and Major Repairs Fund resources in 2012/13 were detailed in appendix 4.

Councillor Mohindra asked why there was £10,000 allocated to the Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool and was told it was for a feasibility study on the pool. This was required as the building was getting old and officers needed to understand what problems there were. Councillor Mohindra noted that this had been carried forward for a few years now. Did the Council have a plan for this? He was assured that there was a plan and that the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group would be looking into the new leisure contract, part of which would be to look at the structures of the current buildings. They would report regularly to the Cabinet.

Councillor Watson queried the market improvements at North Weald Airfield and the overspend incurred. She was told that this would be self funding to an extent; the market operators would pay a certain amount for this as part of their current arrangements. They still had money in this account from previous years.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Panel noted the provisional outturn report for 2012/13;
- (2) That retrospective approval for the over and underspends in 2012/13 on certain capital schemes as identified in the report be recommended to the Cabinet;
- (3) That the Panel recommended to the Cabinet approval for the carry forward of unspent capital estimates into 2013/14 relating to schemes on which slippage has occurred; and
- (4) That retrospective approval for changes to the funding of the capital programme in 2012/13 also be recommended to Cabinet.

9. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2012/13 - OUTTURN

The Performance Improvement Manager, Mr S Tautz, introduced the report on the outturn position for the Key Performance Indicators 2012/13. The KPIs provided an opportunity for the Council to focus attention on how specific areas for improvement would be addressed, how opportunities would be exploited and better services and outcomes delivered. A number of KPIs were used as performance measures for the authority's key objectives.

In March 2012, a range of thirty-two Key Performance Indicators (KPI) had been adopted for 2012/13 by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee. An overall target was set for at least 70% of the indicators to achieve target performance by the end of the year.

It was noted that KPIs were important to the improvement of the Council's services and the achievement of its key objectives, and comprised a combination of former statutory indicators and locally determined performance measures.

The outturn position with regard to the achievement of target performance for the KPIs for 2012/13 was:

- (a) 18 (56.2%) indicators achieved the cumulative performance target for the year; and
- (b) 12 (37.5%) indicators did not achieve the cumulative performance target for the year.

From the first quarter of 2013/14, performance against all of the KPIs would be reviewed and monitored by Management Board and the Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis and no indicators would in future, be subject to scrutiny at year-end only. The Panel noted that targets for each KPI for 2013/14, based on third-quarter performance and the estimated outturn for 2012/13, were considered by the Scrutiny Panel in March 2013, and agreed by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee at its last meeting.

KPI 4 – *what % of visitors to the Council website were satisfied with their experience* – the Panel wondered about the downward trend over quarters 3 and 4. They were informed that it was due to the launch of the new website which affected the figures. New software to monitor the visitor hit rate and to make more sense of the figures collected was being purchased. The Chairman noted that there was also to be a user group set up to monitor website use.

KPI 11 – *what % of rent for commercial premises was not paid* – the Panel asked for more detail on the performance of this KPI. Officers agreed to provide this.

KPI 21 – *what % of all household waste was sent to be recycled, reused or composted* – the actual figure for quarter 3 of 63.87% was questioned, was that the right figure? Officers said that this was an erroneous number, as they had to publish these before Essex County Council issued the correct figures.

KPI 24 – *how well have we done in reducing flytipping and taking action against those responsible* – the Panel wanted to know what sort of measures were taken to reduce flytipping. They were told that it was not easy to do. This year they had changed how they measured this to make it more meaningful to residents. It was being replaced by two new ones to better measure the Council's performance in actually dealing with fly tips reported. One was for tipping on public land which the Council had immediate access to and where they had a 5 working days target and the other one was for tipping on private land where the enforcement was not for the Council to do.

KPI 30 – *what % of the invoices received were paid within 30 days* – the Panel wanted to know where the Council was with paying local suppliers. They were told that they were up to 86% at present for 2012/13. Officers would continue to monitor this to ensure improving rates.

KPI 41 – *on average, how many days did it take us to re-let a council property* – the Panel asked if this exclude long term vacant properties? They were told that it excluded difficult to let properties.

KPI 46 – *how many affordable homes were built in the District* – the Panel asked what the definition of an affordable home was. They were told that it would be for anything that was going for less than the market rent rate. Officers were dependant on developers coming forward with suitable schemes. This indicator had been dropped for 2013/14.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Panel noted the review outturn performance in relation to the Key Performance Indicators for 2012/13.

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

The Chairman would report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that they had set up a sub-committee looking at cross charging (recharging) in the Council.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Recent Flood at the Civic Offices

The Panel wanted to congratulate officers over their handling of the recent flood that hit the Civic Offices and the fact that this had resulted in no break to our services to the residents. They noted that a report on this would be going to Management Board highlighting what had happened and the remedial action taken. This would then go on to members for their information.

Areas of work to look at in future meetings

It was noted that the Chairman had emailed each member asking them to consider the Panel's Scrutiny role in a different way and to consider areas within the scope of their remit that could be considered by the Panel for more in depth scrutiny. The Chairman asked that members consider this for the next meeting.

Councillor Watson commented that one area that should be looked at was Economic Development. KPIs are readily measurable, but could we find a way to look at patterns in what we do and how we could improve. Councillor Lion added that they should look at how all the blocks fitted together such as the KPIs and the Budget etc. and where we could add value.

12. FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates for the future meetings of this Panel were noted.