

**PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 19 APRIL 2006**

Present:- Councillor A Dean – Chairman.  
Councillors M L Foley, B M Hughes, A J Ketteridge, M J Savage and P A Wilcock

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillor M A Gayler. Mr I Davidson (Audit Commission)

Officers in attendance: - T Fennell, C Roberts, J Smith and T Turner

**PS 15 ORDER OF CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ITEMS**

The Chairman of the Committee welcomed Mr Davidson of the Audit Commission and Mr Smith of the Council's Internal Audit Department.

He explained that he intended, subject to the agreement of the Committee, to vary the item order shown on the agenda and also, under the "Minutes" item, to submit for approval the Minutes of the Committee's extraordinary meeting held on 4 April 2006 as a matter of urgency since they were relevant to the Council's meeting on 25 April 2006. It had become necessary to postpone the "Covalent" demonstration to the next meeting of the Performance Select Committee. Since the Training item concerned Audit Commission workshops, he wished to bring it forward to allow Mr Davidson to leave the meeting at the earliest opportunity.

Members were content with the suggestions.

**PS 16 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Chambers, T P Knight, F E Silver and E Tealby-Watson.

**PS 17 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 25 JANUARY 2006**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2006 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

In the context of Minute PS 2 it was noted that the training offered by the Audit Commission was now on the agenda.

Under Minute PS 3 the Chairman informed the meeting that he had requested the attendance of a member of the internal audit team at each of the Committee's meetings.

In answer to questions from the Chairman of the Committee, the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance and the Performance Improvement Manager confirmed that the appropriate action had been taken under Minutes PS 4 and PS 5. The Internal Auditor explained that difficulties had been encountered in 2005 when he had tried to secure publication of audit reports over the internet but he agreed to relay to the IT department the Committee's request to see internal audit reports on the intranet.

**PS 18                    MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9 MARCH 2006**

The Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 9 March 2006 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**PS 19                    MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 4 APRIL 2006**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 April 2006 were received as a matter of urgent business, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chairman of the Committee proposed that as a matter of urgent business arising from the 4 April 2006 Minutes, the meeting accept a suggested form of words, which he read out, to define the action envisaged at the 4 April meeting for meeting the issues raised there of the Council's progress to date and the desired further improvement.

He added that the form of words and the approved Minutes were both relevant to the meeting of the Council on 25 April and needed to be submitted to that meeting as an urgent item, subject to the agreement of the Chairman of the Council.

In answer to a question he explained that all the Members present at the meeting on 4 April had discussed the issues and had taken them away from the meeting to deal with.

RESOLVED that the following form of words suggested by the Chairman of the Committee be approved as appropriate for submission with the Minutes of the meeting on 4 April 2006 to the Chairman of the Council as being urgent information relevant to business at the meeting of the Council on 25 April 2006:-

- “1 The Committee has welcomed the Audit Commission’s Annual Letter and has thanked them for it.
- 2 The Committee has noted the Key Messages and in particular the paragraph ‘Council Performance’ and advises the Council to act to achieve improvement.
- 3 The Committee has welcomed both the open acknowledgement by the Chief Executive that progress of improvement has been slower and more difficult than expected to achieve, and the recognition by leading Members that focused action is needed to boost progress.
- 4 The Committee is recommending the following to support future improvement
  - Further development of partnership working
  - Increased focus on procurement best practice
  - A workshop facilitated by the Audit Commission on the Council’s Direction of Travel performance
  - Appointment of Member Champions for key priority areas and improvement initiatives and other action to clarify Member responsibilities.”

PS 20

### **PRESENTATION FROM THE AUDIT COMMISSION**

The representative of the Audit Commission gave a detailed presentation on External Audit Responsibilities, and then explained the Audit and Inspection Plan document, which had been circulated with the papers for the previous meeting of the Committee, and the Audit Plan Progress report (a copy of the presentation overheads is attached to the Minutes for information).

RESOLVED that the presentations and reports made by Mr Davidson are noted and that the Committee looks forward to further information in due course.

PS 21

### **TRAINING**

The Committee received the report of the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance detailing development activities provided by the Audit Commission which Members might wish to

attend, and inviting Members' suggestions for other areas of useful training.

Mr Davidson suggested in particular Audit Commission Workshops for Councillors and possibly staff.

Members made the points that:-

- training would be better timed to happen after the formation of the new Council,
- a skills/expertise audit among councillors should take place so that the type of training selected could be appropriate to the skills of those trained.
- training event descriptions should set out the content of the training, not just the level.
- training should be focused to meet specific issues where there was an identified training shortfall
- regard should be had to the time constraints under which Members normally operate. Meetings should therefore last no longer than two hours of which up to fifteen minutes should be devoted to key point style training leaving the remainder for the Committee's business.

The Chairman and the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance noted these requests.

PS 22

## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance which set out 38 corporate performance indicators for adoption alongside the statutory Best Value Performance Indicators.

At the meeting of the Committee on 9 March 2006 (Minute PS10) the point had been made that a broad range of more customer focused and outward facing performance indicators should be used to manage corporate performance.

Subsequently a suite of 38 indicators had been developed as part of the Corporate Plan process to align with the priorities and areas of the plan and to meet the needs given prominence by the LGA's Reputation project on public satisfaction with local authorities. Former 'local' performance indicators would be retained as management indicators but it would be necessary to simplify the number of indicators.

The Executive Manager Strategy and Performance gave a verbal update on outturn data for 2005/06 and targets for 2006/07 and it was suggested that in future years it would be helpful to have the previous year's outturn available to look at. The Committee was asked to agree the indicators and to monitor them on a quarterly basis alongside progress with corporate plan projects.

Members debated whether or not to adopt various suggested accountability indicators and agreed to incorporate, in the target for the proposed new indicator numbered 33, a reference to measuring positive publicity by column inches in local papers.

The Chairman enquired whether the complaints process was used to feed improvements to services. The Executive Manager Strategy and Performance said that a formal corporate process needed to be adopted incorporating CRM.

It was agreed that the Performance Manager would provide further definition in new indicator 23 (removal of graffiti).

The Committee agreed to monitor CPIs 15, 18, 22, 23, 27, 28 , 33 and 36/38.

RESOLVED that the Committee agree to accept monitor and support the CPIs indicated on a regular basis.

PS 23

## **BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2006**

The Performance Manager explained that the latest update of performance outturn data had now been circulated.

The Chairman of the Committee referred to the CPA Improvement Plan 2004-06 and Members agreed that it should now be closed out and a new improvement plan drawn up.

In answer to a question the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance explained that approval of the Best Value Performance Plan 2006 would be sought from the Council at its Annual Meeting in May. Members stressed the need to limit numbers of printed copies and use CDs as an alternative.

In considering the updated tables of performance indicator returns Members noted that the Council was not hitting the targets relating to crime prevention. This was due to the targets

(set by the Police) being too rigorous for the area and Members asked that these circumstances be made plain in the report.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Committee notes the progress and endorses the structure of the Best Value Performance Plan 2006 and recommends to the Council the adoption of the final version;
- 2 that any alterations of detail becoming necessary in the intervening period before the Annual Meeting of the Council be authorised by the Executive Manager Strategy and Performance in consultation with the Chairman;
- 3 that the Committee's thanks be recorded to Mr Fennell for his work in producing this Plan.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm