

PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 9 AUGUST 2006

Present:- Councillor A Dean – Chairman.
Councillors M L Foley, T Knight, V J T Lelliott, M J Savage and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: - D Burrige, T Fennell, C Hughes, S Martin, M Perry C Roberts and T Turner.

PS 32 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A J Ketteridge and E Tealby-Watson.

PS 33 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2006

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 June 2006 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

PS 34 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman asked that an action list be appended to the Committee's Minutes in future.

The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) said that a revised proposal to address best value reviews (Minute PS 28) would be brought to a future meeting and would take into account the need to address value for money.

She added that the Audit Commission had proposed a number of dates for the annual audit letter workshop (Minute PS 29) , however, all of these had clashed with existing committee meetings and therefore the Commission had been asked again to suggest alternatives. She apologised for the delay in setting a date, but this was due to Audit Commission staff currently being on leave.

In answer to a question about Capacity Building (Minute PS 31) the Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) informed the meeting that following discussion at an EMT meeting it had been considered premature to make an application within the current deadline, but that a future application was being kept under review.

PS 35 APPRAISALS PROCESS – UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Executive Manager (Human Resources) on the overall organisational results of the completed appraisal process for 2006 which showed a very substantial improvement on previous performance. She gave detailed explanations of the few remaining exceptions to the improvement.

RESOLVED that the Committee's satisfaction be noted.

PS 36

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT AND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN – DATA PROTECTION

The Committee received the report of the Audit Partnership Manager advising on an internal audit of Data Protection. He reported that progress had been made with some previous recommendations but some others remained outstanding. The current audit also contained agreed recommendations relating to publishing the Council's Data Protection Policy, staff awareness and training. The Executive Manager (Corporate Governance) informed the meeting that although there was a data protection policy it had not been published until recently. He outlined the provisions made for training in Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Money Laundering. Some Councils had a specialist Officer to deal with all matters of this nature but there was no funding for this at Uttlesford.

The Audit Partnership Manager informed the meeting that he would review this area again before Christmas 2006.

RESOLVED that the report, and the progress made since it was written, be noted.

PS 37

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT AND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN – SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

The Committee received the report of the Audit Partnership Manager advising on an internal audit of the Saffron Walden Museum. The audit had largely focused on financial matters and he reported on weaknesses in internal control associated with the use of volunteers, volunteer management and income collection, recording, reconciliation and banking. The report and management action plan were discussed at length.

The Audit Partnership Manager and Executive Manager (Environmental and Cultural Services) explained the background to the reported weaknesses and answered various questions.

Some Members were concerned to obtain assurances about progress with the report's recommendations by October whereas others felt that a review at the next scheduled meeting in November would be sufficient.

The Committee considered that whilst a management action plan had been produced, some issues had been in existence for some 11 years. Whilst no new actions were required at this time, there was a need to ensure that those listed were implemented effectively and expeditiously.

The Audit Partnership Manager reminded Members that the report largely covered only financial matters at the Museum and that the shop area generated a relatively small amount of income. Whilst adequate financial control was needed Members' response should take account of this.

RESOLVED that a progress report be brought to the meeting of the Committee in November to establish what progress has been made in improving financial control and volunteer management and how these issues would link to any future plans for growth at the Museum.

PS 38

CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) setting out anticipated consultation activity during 2006/7. It was anticipated that the new Communications Manager would further develop this work. Consultation software licences were being obtained.

At the request of Councillor Foley she agreed to ensure that large text or taped versions of "Uttlesford Life" were provided for Vicarage Mead, Thaxted.

RESOLVED that an interim working group on consultation be established comprising Councillors M J Savage and P A Wilcock, who would engage with the Communications Manager following the post being taken up.

PS 39

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 1

The Committee considered the report of the Performance Improvement Manager updating Members on the Best Value Performance Indicators and the newly identified Corporate Performance Indicators.

The Performance Improvement Manager drew attention in particular to BVPI 218 [a] and [b] about abandoned vehicles and the CPA framework for district councils. The Executive Manager (Environmental and Cultural Services) answered questions about the situation regarding these indicators. As regards indicator [a] she explained the disadvantages which would ensue if staff were from time to time relocated to support the part-time officer concerned. As regards [b] it seemed there was doubt about the accuracy of the figure and this would be checked. She also informed Members that vehicle removal was now being undertaken by a commercial operator at no cost to the Council, releasing resources to be deployed elsewhere in the service.

Members were concerned whether the target in [a] was achievable. The Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) however pointed out that achieving 100% was critical to the Council being able to sign up for the LGA's Reputation Project which she equally had pressure from Members to aspire to. The trade off between the two positions was therefore an issue on which Members needed to reach a decision.

Members also commented upon housing targets on page 32 of the report, where it appeared targets might be too rigorous.

The Chairman thanked the Performance Improvement Manager for his report.

RESOLVED that BVPI 28 [a] be recommended for improvement and the housing indicators on Page 32 be noted for further review by the committee.

PS 40

LGA CONFERENCE 25 OCTOBER 2006

The Chairman asked that a Member of the Committee attend an LGA conference, entitled "Do you know your customers?" He asked that a note on this be forwarded to those absent from the meeting.

The Chairman also asked that an agenda item headed "Business for the next meeting" appear routinely at the end of the Committee's agendas.

Members noted the following for the meeting to be held on 21 September 2006:-

Apologies for absence from Councillors Knight and Lelliott.
Audit Commission to attend for reports on:

Opinion on Annual Accounts
CPA
Interin Audit Opinion
User focus

The Committee would also receive a presentation on the Covalent Performance Management System and an update on Risk Management.

PS41

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT MANAGER

The Chairman reported that this was Ted Fennell's last meeting before he left the Council and, on behalf of the Committee, thanked him for all his hard work and wished him well for the future.

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm

PS34	Action list to be appended to future minutes	CR
PS34	Best Value Review Programme report for future meeting to cover value for money assessment	TT
PS34	Date of Audit Commission workshop on annual audit letter to be set	TT
PS34	Capacity Building Bid to be kept under review	EMT
PS37	Report on progress on the Museum Internal Audit Report to the November meeting	DB
PS38	Future meeting to be set up between Cllrs Savage & Wilcock and the Communications Manager	TT
PS38	EM(S&P) to consult on sheltered housing etc where large print or taped copies of Uttlesford Life could be made available	TT
PS39		
PS40	Details of the LGA conference to be sent to all members of the PSC	CR
PS40	Agenda item 'Business for next meeting' to appear on future agendas	CR