

**PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 6 NOVEMBER 2007**

Present:- Councillor H S Rolfe – Chairman.
Councillors S Barker, M L Foley, M A Gayler, A J Ketteridge,
T P Knight, J Salmon and P A Wilcock.

Also present:- P King, M Matthews and C Rockall – Audit Commission.

Officers in attendance:- A Bovaird, G Bradley, M Brean, S Bronson,
A Clarke, S Martin, J Mitchell, C Roberts, A Stewart, T Turner,
A Webb and C Wingfield.

PS35 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman of the Committee, with Members consent re-ordered the agenda.

PS36 MATTERS ARISING/ACTION LIST

The Committee received the list of committee actions.

(a) PS4 – Visits to UConnect

The Head of Community Engagement informed the meeting that he would be taking Members individually to visit U-Connect.

(b) PS16(ii) – Staff shortage in Revenues and Benefits

The Head of Corporate Support and Revenue Services said that the staffing situation remained the same.

(c) PS17(ii) – Dunmow Library scoping paper

The Director for Communities explained that this paper had been delayed due to a hiatus in the library build and a paper on two tier working from Essex County Council.

(d) PS20 – Understanding of risk management-briefing

The Chairman of the Committee stressed that SMB must receive the risk management briefing soon.

PS37

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTTURN MONITORING

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which he explained was on financial process and system development only. The report had been prepared at the request of the Committee in response to Members' concerns about the adequacy of the Council's financial stability, capacity and management processes. Figures had not been included in the report because they came within the remit of the budget holding Committees (of which Finance would meet the next week) and the Council.

Members were enthusiastic about the format of the waste budget and the Chief Executive suggested that each of the other service budgets should receive similar attention and the support of a service accountant. He added that monthly reports to each Head of Division were appearing much more quickly after the end of the month.

The Chairman said he was impressed with the waste report which showed planned expenditure too and made it very clear what drove cost, but it was important to have a link between Committee budget and Head of Division budget.

There was debate about the best form monthly reporting should take to provide timely information without excessive detail. The Chief Executive commented that the progress was good in shortening the time between the facts and the reports about them.

The Chief Executive also gave details of the numbers of redundancy requests received, considered, and approved, and updated the meeting on the communication, capacity, development of the budget and the imminent launch of the staff suggestion scheme. He explained that he would report to the next meeting on financial health indicators.

The Chairman of the Committee commented, particularly for the benefit of the Auditors present, that Members could see good progress on interrogation of figures and development of systems for monitoring by appropriate people.

RESOLVED that

- 1 all Members of the Council receive monthly e mailed information to demonstrate
income monitoring against plan
expenditure monitoring against plan
cash reconciliation monitoring against plan
- 2 Members be asked whether they want to withdraw their names from the circulation lists for hard copies of committee etc papers
- 3 a group comprising Councillors Rolfe and Wilcock with the Head of Partnerships and Performance be deputed to make sure that the monitoring provides what is necessary for good governance without clouding the issues with too much detail.
- 4 a summary of the document on waste be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

PS38

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (INCORPORATING UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK NATIONALLY AND THE Q2 OUTTURN)

The Committee received the report of the Performance Improvement Officer on the second Quarter's statistics and Members asked questions in particular about recovery of rent arrears. The Head of Corporate Support and Revenue Services explained that recovery of housing benefit was often an issue too.

It was also noted that the Museum visitor figures had suffered due to closure of some nearby educational institutions, but that even so the figures outperformed many other Councils.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

PS39

UPDATE ON THE OPINION ON THE AUDITED ACCOUNTS – AUDIT COMMISSION

Members considered the Annual Governance Report of the Audit Commission and heard from Melanie Matthews, the Council's Audit Manager at the Audit Commission, that the report was an interim one pending resolution of issues

by further work on the part of the Commission and re-approval of the accounts by the Council.

Members were agreed that a further meeting would be needed to study and re-approve the accounts and that this could be held at 6.00pm on 11 December 2007.

Members stressed to the auditors the need for early warning of any dissatisfaction with the revised accounts, and an early comment on the satisfaction or otherwise with the budget-setting process for 2008/9.

Councillor Ketteridge expressed concern also about the state of the Council's reserves.

In answer to a question from Councillor Rolfe, Paul King said that the Members would get quarterly reports so they should be aware whether or not the auditing process was on schedule.

RESOLVED that the recommendations contained in the Report of the Auditors be accepted.

PS40

REVIEW OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS – AUDIT COMMISSION

Colin Rockall from the Audit Commission informed the Committee of his view of the Corporate Governance Arrangements and his draft conclusions as to the action the Council needed to take in the light of his review, prior to the issue of the final report.

He stressed the value of making an application for funds sooner rather than later to Building Capacity East. The Audit Commission's report would indirectly support this through observations on direction of travel which he would probably inspect in January 2008.

The Chief Executive informed the meeting that part-time Human Resources capacity had been obtained and he thanked Colin Rockall for the work he had done and the inquiries he had made for the Council.

RESOLVED that the contents of the letter from Mr Rockall be noted.

PS41

SHARED SERVICES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME WORK STREAM- UPDATE ON PROJECT

The Director of Business Transformation submitted an update on the progress of the shared services transformation programme work stream including the outline business case for shared services, the shared services project initiation document and some examples of other local authority shared service and collaborative working.

He gave details of preliminary discussions which had taken place with a number of other councils including Braintree District Council, Chelmsford Borough Council and East Herts District Council.

Members requested information regarding all councils with whom discussions had taken place by 30 November 2007 for comparison purposes. The Chief Executive commented however that most of the discussions to date had not progressed past an initial meeting.

Councillor Knight suggested sharing services with Cambridge but it was thought that the different County would pose a problem in the case of some services.

RESOLVED that the Director of Business Transformation contacts Members of the Committee by 30 November 2007, to update them on progress with making a template for discussions with the named District Councils as a foundation for a decision.

PS42

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Partnerships and Performance which set out proposed changes to the performance management framework in relation to performance indicator monitoring from April 2008.

A new national indicator set had been announced for local authorities and partnerships and to reflect this it was proposed that from April 2008 performance indicator monitoring be focused at three levels:

- SCS / LAA indicators
- Corporate indicators
- Service indicators

RESOLVED that the Committee agrees the proposed changes to performance indicator monitoring and reporting from April 2008.

PS43 PARTNERSHIPS PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Partnerships Manager which provided further information on good work begun with the working groups under the Local Strategic Partnership.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

PS44 LEISURE PFI CONTRACT

The Committee considered the report of the Leisure and Community Development Manager on what the Leisure PFI contract was and the question what performance monitoring the Committee wished to examine in future.

Members mentioned the need for fare concessions for young people using the Leisure Centres and in this connection provision of a cycle path with assistance from Carver Barracks.

RESOLVED that the suggested performance monitoring be accepted and considered at Committee twice a year.

PS45 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Audit Manager on the Council's risk management arrangements. In answer to questions she explained that ring fenced credit from Zurich Insurance was to provide risk management training for the Strategic Management Board.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Statement of Internal Control and Risk Register be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

PS46 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – HOMELESSNESS

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Audit Manager on a recent internal audit report of Homelessness with a completed management action plan. The item was included in the agenda in response to Members request that internal audit reports were discussed at the Performance Select Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the report and the Homelessness internal audit report and management action plan be noted.
- 2 a report on audit of Emergency Planning be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm.